UNIT 21 DIRECT AND PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY

Structure

21.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will learn about direct (ancient) and participatory (modern) democracy. After going through the unit, you should be able to:

* Explain the meaning of democracy;

* Distinguish between its various forms such as direct and participatory;

* Examine the strengths and weaknesses of different forms.

21.1 INTRODUCTION: MEANING OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is both a form of government and an ideal, an aspiration and a standard. The core element of democracy is self-rule. The origin of the term democracy can be traced back to ancient Greece. Derived from the Greek word '*demokratia*', it means rule by the people. In the literal sense, it rejects the separation of the two, i.e., between the ruler and the ruled. It is interesting to note that unlike the terms communism and socialism, which have a point of reference in Marxism, democracy has not been associated with a specific doctrinal source or ideology. Infact, it is a byproduct of the entire development of Western civilization and therefore, tends to be used rather loosely. Thus, the history of the idea of democracy is rather complex and is marked by conflicting and confusing conceptions. It is confusing because "this is still an active history" and also because the issues are complex. However, it has been justified and defended on the grounds that it achieves one or more of the following fundamental value or goods like equality, liberty, moral self-development, the common interest, private interests, social utility etc.

21.1.1 Various Meanings

Varied meanings have been attached to the word 'democracy'. Some of them are as follows:

- A form of government in which people rule directly;

- A society based on equal opportunity and individual merit, rather than hierarchy and privilege;

- A system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule;

- A system of rule that secures the rights and interests of minorities by placing checks upon the power of the majority;

- A means of filling public offices through a competitive struggle for the popular vote;

- A system of government that serves the interests of the people regardless of their participation in political life (Heywood, 1997:66).

- A system of government based on the consent of the governed.

21.1.2 Linking Government to the People

From the different meanings that are associated with democracy, one thing that becomes clear is that democracy links government to the people. However, this link can be forged in a number of ways depending upon the larger political culture of that society. Due to this, there have been ideological differences and political debates regarding the exact nature of democratic rule. Nonetheless, any discussion on democracy tends to address three important questions:

- Who are the people

- In what sense the people rule

- How far should popular rule extend (Heywood, 1997:66)

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What do you understand by democracy?

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2) Enumerate some of the various meanings of democracy.

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21.2 WHAT IS DIRECT DEMOCRACY?

Direct Democracy is a form of self-government in which all collective decisions are taken through participation of all adult citizens of the state in the spirit of equality and open deliberations. Deliberations or discussions are important because decisions arrived at through discussions are better informed, logical and rational. This is because discussions allow a group to reconcile different interests, inform members about various issues and draw on the group's expertise. In other words, debates enable people to both influence and to be influenced by the group (Hague et al 1998:20). According to the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle, the important aspect of direct democracy is the mechanism that "all command each and each in his turn all". It was achieved in ancient Athens through a form of government brought about as a result of a mass meeting. Its modern manifestation is the referendum. 'Gram Sabha', as envisaged in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, is an instance of direct democracy in rural India.

21.2.1 Principles governing Direct Democracy

In a direct democracy, therefore, the best decisions can never be arrived at through voting. The principle of direct democracy is to govern through consensus, which emerges from careful deliberations of options or alternatives. In the absence of formal representative institutions, people make decisions themselves through public discussions. In other words, the following principles apply in direct democracy:

- People are sovereign

- Sovereignty is inalienable and cannot be represented

- People must express their general will and make decisions directly through referenda

- Decisions are to be based on majority rule

To sum up direct democracy is based on direct, unmediated and continuous participation of citizens in the tasks of government. It obliterates the distinction between government and the governed and between state and civil society. In direct democracy, state and society become one. It is a system of popular self-government.

21.2.2 Merits of Direct Democracy

The merits of direct democracy include the following:

- It heightens the control that citizens can exercise over their own destinies, as it is the only pure form of democracy.

- It creates a better informed and more politically sophisticated citizenry, and thus it has educational benefits.

- It enables the public to express their own views and interests without having to rely on self-serving politicians

- It ensures that rule is legitimate in the sense that people are more likely to accept decisions that they have made themselves.

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Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

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21.3   GREEK DEMOCRACY AS DIRECT DEMOCRACY

The classic example of a direct democracy is that of ancient Athens during the 4th century BC. It can be considered as the only pure or ideal system of popular participation known so far. It had a specific kind of direct popular rule in which all-important decisions were taken though mass meetings. The Assembly or *Ecclesia* to which all citizens belonged made all major decisions. This assembly met at least 40 times a year to settle issues put before it. When full time public officials were required, they were chosen on the basis of lots. This process was adapted to ensure that they were a part of the larger body of citizens. The posts were, however, not fixed and were rotated in quite a frequency so that all citizens gained experience in the art of governing and thus, tried to achieve the broadest possible participation. A council consisting of 500 citizens acted as the executive or steering committee of the assembly and a 50 strong committee in turn made proposals to the council.

21.3.1 Athenian Democracy: Reasons for its Fame

It is important to understand what made Athenian democracy so remarkable. Athens, infact, symbolized a new political culture enfranchising the whole citizenry. The citizens not only participated in regular meetings of the assembly, but they were in large numbers, prepared to undertake the responsibilities of public office and decision-making. Formally, citizens were differentiated on the basis of rank and wealth in their involvement in public affairs. The demos held sovereign power, i.e., supreme authority to engage in legislative and judicial activities (Held, 1987:17). The Athenian concept of citizenship entailed taking a share in this function, participating directly in the affairs of the state.

Athenian democracy was marked by a general commitment to the principle of civic virtue which actually meant commitment and dedication to the republican city-state, the subordination of private life to public affairs and the achievement of common good. In other words, there was no separation of public and private life and individuals

could attain self-fulfillment and live an honorable life "in and through the polis", i.e. the city-state. For example, citizens had rights and obligations but not as private individuals, rather as members of the political community. There were, thus, public rights and good life was possible only in the polis. Thus, according to Robert Dahl, "In the Greek vision of democracy, politics is a natural social activity not sharply separated from the rest of life. Rather political life is only an extension of and harmonious with oneself". (Dahl, 1989:18). It seems that the Athenians believed in a "free and open" political life in which citizens could develop and realize their capacities and skill and the *telos* (goal or objective) of the common good. And justice meant securing and realization of the citizen's role and place in the city-states (Held, 1987: 18).

21.3.2 Aristotle's 'The Politics'

We find the most detailed and remarkable account of ancient democracy in Aristotle's famous work *The Politics* which was written between 335 and 323 BC. His work analyses the claims, ethical standards and aims of democracy and states distinctly, the key features of a number of Greek democracies. According to him, liberty and equality are linked together, particularly if you claim to be a democrat. Without the existence of one, the other is difficult to achieve. There are two criteria of liberty: a) to rule and in turn being ruled, and b) living as one chooses. If one wants to execute the first criterion as an effective principle of government, it is necessary that all citizens are equal. Without numerical equality, it is not possible for the majority to be sovereign. Numerical equality here means that everyone has an equal share in the art of ruling. The classical or the earlier democrats felt that numerical equality was possible to achieve because a) citizens are paid for their participation in government and therefore, are not losers because of their political involvement, b) citizens have equal voting power and c) in principle, everyone has an equal opportunity to hold office. In a nutshell, what we can understand from this is, that equality is the practical basis of liberty and it is also the moral basis. Thus, on the basis of Aristotle's account, classical democracy including direct democracy entails liberty and liberty entails equality.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Why is the Athenian Democracy considered remarkable?

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2) Briefly examine Aristotle's views as given in 'The Politics'.

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21.4 LIMITATIONS OF DIRECT DEMOCRACY

A distinctive feature of direct democracy as practiced in ancient Athens was its exclusivity. The City-State was marked by unity, solidarity, participation and a highly restricted citizenship. As mentioned before, there was no separation between public and private life and even though state and government were inextricably linked with the lives of the citizens, it only involved a small section of the population. It is interesting to note that the Athenian political culture was an adult male culture, i.e. only men over the age of 20 years were qualified to become citizens. It was a democracy of patriarchs in which women had no political rights and even their civic rights were strictly limited. There were also other types of residents who were ineligible to participate in formal proceedings; like 'immigrants' who had settled in Athens several generations earlier, but were not the original inhabitants. However, the slave population constituted, by far, the most politically marginalized people. Here, what we find is that 'political equality' as practiced in Athens did not mean 'equal power' for all. It was rather a form of equality that was applicable to those having equal status and in the Athenian context, it was meant for only males and Athenian born. Thus, many were a minority of the larger citizenry (Finley, 1983). Unquestionably, the politics of ancient Athens rested on a highly undemocratic base.

21.4.1 Flaws of Athenian Democracy

What we can conclude from the above description is that democracy practiced by ancient Athens had serious flaws. If modern democracy is based on the market economy, Athens was a democracy built on slavery; the labour of slaves created the time for the citizen elite to participate. The lack of permanent bureaucracy contributed to ineffective government, leading eventually to the fall of the Athenian republic after defeat in war. It is interesting to note that the most influential critic of this form of democracy i.e. direct democracy was the philosopher Plato. Plato attacked the principle of political equality on the grounds that the masses are not made equal by nature and therefore, cannot rule themselves wisely. This is because they possess neither the wisdom nor the experience to do so. The solution, according to him, as stated in his famous work *The Republic* was that the government be placed in the hands of a class of philosopher-kings, the Guardians, whose rule would be something similar to what can be called enlightened dictatorship. At a practical level, however, the principal drawback of Athenian democracy was that it could operate only by excluding the mass of the population from political activity. This was possible only in small city-states with limited populations and not in larger modern democracies with bigger populations as they exist today. Despite its flaws, the Athenian model was crucial in establishing the democratic principle. According to Finer, "The Greeks invented two of the most potent political features of our present age: they invented (a) the very idea of citizen as opposed to subject and (b) they invented democracy.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the limitations of a direct democracy. Give a suitable example.

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21.5 DIRECT DEMOCRACY IN MODERN TIMES

The classical model of direct and continuous popular participation in political life has been kept alive in certain parts of the world, notably in township meetings of New England in the USA and in communal assemblies which operate in smaller Swiss cantons. The most common method used in recent times is referendum as compared to the mass meetings of ancient Athens. Referendum is a vote in which the electorate can express a view on a particular issue of public policy. It differs from an election in that the latter is essentially a means of filling a public office and does not provide a direct or reliable method of influencing the content of a policy. A device of direct democracy, referendum is used not to replace representative institutions, but to supplement them. They may either be advisory or binding; they may also raise issues for discussions (propositions or plebiscites).

21.6 LET US SUM UP

Broadly speaking, the term democracy means rule by the people. However, varied meanings have been associated with it over a period of time. Debates about the nature of democracy have tended to focus on three important questions. First, to what extent should political power be distributed. Secondly, should the people in effect rule themselves or should the government be left in the hands of elected representatives. Thirdly, is it appropriate to decide collectively through the use of democratic process? In direct democracy as originated and practiced in ancient Greece, citizens make decisions themselves, without representative institutions. This interpretation stresses the value of public discussion, both for the participants and for the quality of decisions. This model of democracy has serious limitations and, therefore, is not a popular form of government in modern times.

21.7 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Dahl, R., *Democracy and Its Critics*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989

Finley, M.I., *Politics in the Ancient World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Hague R. et. al., *Comparative Government and Politics: An Introduction* London: Macmillan Press, 1998

Held David, *Models of Democracy*, Oxford: Polity Press; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996.

Heywood Andrew, *Politics*, London: Macmillan Press, 1997

21.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 21.1

2) See sub-section 21.1.1

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Section 21.2

2)   See sub-section 21.2.2

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See sub-section 21.3.1

2)   See sub-section 21.3.2

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See Section 21.4

UNIT 22   REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Structure

22.0   OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be reading about representative democracy, which is the form of democracy most familiar to all of us. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning of representative democracy,

- Discuss different views on it,

- Enumerate the fundamental principles of representative democracy,

- Examine democracy – election interface, and

- Critically comment on some contemporary and vital issues linked with representative democracy.

22.1   INTRODUCTION

This unit deals with representative democracy, the form of democracy that is prevalent world-wide. As the very name indicates, in a democracy of this type, the citizens

choose their representatives through elections that are held periodically. It is these citizens' representatives who articulate their aspirations in public forums such as legislatures. As you can make out, representative democracy is synonymous with electoral democracy.

22.2 WHAT IS REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY?

22.2.1 Limited and Indirect

Representative democracy is a limited and indirect form of democracy: It is limited in the sense that participation in government is infrequent and brief, being restricted to the act of voting every few years. It is indirect in the sense that the public does not exercise power by itself, but selects those who will rule on its behalf. This form of rule is democratic only as far as representation establishes a reliable and effective link between the government and the governed.

The strengths of representative democracy include the following:

- It offers a practicable form of democracy, as large populations cannot actually participate in the governmental process.

- It relieves the ordinary citizen of the burden of decision-making, thus making it possible to have division of labour in politics.

- It maintains stability by distancing the ordinary citizen from politics thereby encouraging them to accept compromise.

22.2.2 Synonymous with Electoral Democracy

However, although these features may be a necessary precondition for representative democracy, they should not be mistaken for democracy itself. The democratic content in representative democracy is the idea of popular consent, expressed through the act of voting.

Representative democracy is, thus, a form of electoral democracy, in that popular election is seen as the only legitimate source of political authority. Such elections must respect the principle of political equality based on universal adult franchise, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex, religion or economic status. Elections must be regular, open and above all competitive. The core of the democratic process is the capacity of the people to call politicians to account.

In short, the essence of representative democracy lies in:

- political pluralism

- open competition between political philosophies, movements, parties and so on

22.3 DIFFERENT VIEWS ON REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

There are different views on representative democracy. The first implies that in representative democracy, political power is ultimately wielded by voters at election time. Thus, the virtue of representative democracy lies in its capacity of blind elite rule with a significant measure of political participation. Government is entrusted to politicians, but these politicians are forced to respond to popular pressures by the simple fact that the public put them there in the first place, and can later remove them. The voter exercises the same power in the political market as the consumer does in economic markets. Joseph Schumpeter summed it up in *Capitalism, Socialism*

and Democracy (1976) by describing representative democracy as that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for people's vote.

22.3.1 Pluralist

According to another viewpoint, democracy is pluralist in nature. In its broader sense, pluralism is a commitment to diversity or multiplicity. In its narrower sense, pluralism is a theory of distribution of political power. It holds that power is widely and evenly dispersed in society, instead of being concentrated in a few hands as the elitists claim. In this form, pluralism is usually seen as a theory of 'group politics' in which individuals are largely represented through their membership of organised groups, ethnic groups and these groups have access to the policy process.

22.3.2 Elitist

It refers to a minority in whose hands power, wealth or privilege is concentrated justifiably or otherwise. Elitism believes in rule by an elite or minority. Classical elitism, developed by Mosca, Pareto and Michele, saw elite rule as being inevitable, an unchangeable fact of social existence.

What is majority rule? Some view democracy as a majority rule.

Majority rule is a practice in which priority is accounted to the will of the majority. What is majoritarianism? Majoritarianism implies insensitivity towards minorities and individuals.

22.3.3 Rival Views

There is a considerable amount of disagreement about the meaning and significance of representative democracy. Some questions raised by scholars are as follows:

- Does it ensure a genuine and healthy dispersal of political power?

- Do democratic processes genuinely promote long-term benefits, or are they self-defeating?

- Can political equality co-exist with economic equality?

In short, representative democracy is interpreted in different ways by different theorists. Most important among these interpretations are advanced by Pluralism, Elitism, the New Right and Marxism.

For many political thinkers, representatives democracy is simply superior to every other form of political organisation. Some argue that representative democracy is the form of government that best protects human rights, because it is based on the recognition of the intrinsic worth and equality of human beings.

- Others believe that democracy is the form of government which is most likely to take rational decisions because it can count on the pooled knowledge and expertise of a society's entire population.

- Others claim that democracies are stable and long-lasting because their elected leaders enjoy a strong sense of legitimacy.

- Still others believe that representative democracy is most conducive to economic growth and well being.

- Some believe that in representative democracy, human beings (because they are free) are best able to develop their natural capacities and talents. Yet, democracy remains a work in progress – an evolving aspiration rather than a finished product.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by representative democracy?

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2)   Discuss the different views on representative democracy.

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22.4 FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

22.4.1 Popular Sovereignty

It means that the ultimate source of all public authority is the people, and that the government does what the people want to be done. Four observable conditions can be recognised in popular sovereignty:

- Government policies reflect what the people want

- People participate in the political process

- Information is available and debate takes place

- Majority rules, i.e., policies are decided on the basis of what a majority of people want.

22.4.2 Political Equality

According to this principle, each person carries equal weight in the conduct of public affairs, irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex or religion. But political thinkers believed that great inequalities in economic circumstances can eventually turn into political inequality. Robert Dahl describes the problem in following words, 'if citizens are unequal in economic resources… they are likely to be unequal in political resources; and political equality will be impossible to achieve.' Particularly important in modern times is the unequal influence in the control of information, financial contributions to electoral campaigns. This unequal influence represents a serious barrier in achieving a complete democracy.

The ideal society for the practice of democracy, according to Aristotle, was the one with a large middle class – without an arrogant and overbearing wealthy class and without a discontented poverty-stricken class.

22.4.3 Political Liberty

According to this principle, the citizens in democracy are protected from government interference in the exercise of basic freedom, such as freedom of speech, association, movement and conscience.

It is said that liberty and democracy are inseparable. The concept of self-government implies not only the right to vote, right to run for public office but also the right to expression, to petition the government, to join any political party, interest group or social movement.

In the practice of democracy, however, it has emerged that liberty can be threatened by democracy rather than being an essential ingredient. Following are the main criticisms that are levelled against democracy:

a) 'Majority Tyranny' threatens Liberty: Majority tyranny implies the suppression of rights and liberties of a minority by the majority. It is believed that unbridled majority rule leaves no room for the claims of minorities.

 Nevertheless, the threat of majority tyranny can be exaggerated. Robert Dahl points out that there is no evidence to support the belief that the rights of ethnic and religious minorities are better protected under alternative forms of political decision-making.

b) Democracy leads to bad decisions: It is argued by some that representative democracy, which is majoritarian by nature, is not perfect. They say that there is no guarantee that representative democracy will always lead to a good decision. A majority, like the minority, can be unwise, cruel and uncaring and can be misled by unscrupulous or incompetent leaders.
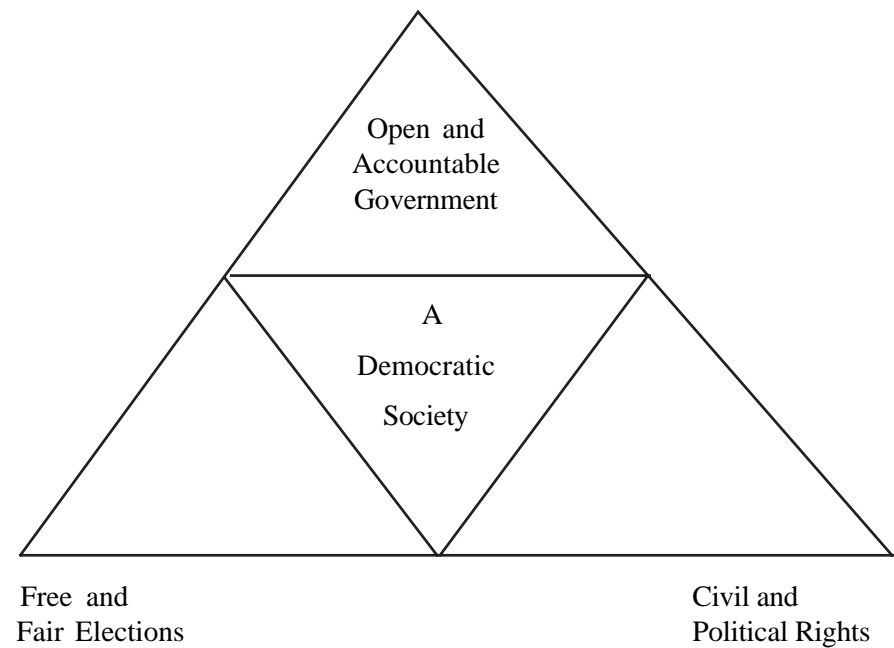
22.5 REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN PRACTICE

Having said this, let us now pay attention to the actual working of representative democracy.

The chief characteristics of a functioning democracy are:

- Free and fair elections
- Open and accountable government
- Civil and political rights

The table given below gives a good idea of these features.

A Democratic Pyramid

(from David Beetham and Kevin Boyle, *Democracy*, 1995, p.28)

Political Parties: Political parties play a crucial part in the political process. In a large measure, political parties determine the operational character of the democratic system. They provide a major political dynamic for the working of formal institutions of the system.

According to R.G. Gettell, a political party consists of a group of citizens more or less organised, who act as a political unit. By the use of their voting power, they aim to control the government and carry out their general policies. Some of the essential features of a political party are:

a) People constituting a political party have a certain degree of agreement on fundamental principles.

b) They seek to achieve their objectives through constitutional means.

c) A political party aims to further national interest rather than sectional interest.

d) It seeks to capture political power to enable it to further public interest.

Political parties constitute the backbone of democracy and perform the following *functions*:

i) *Parties mould public opinion:* Political parties stimulate the interest of public on different issues problems such as housing, living standards, education, foreign relations, budget etc.

ii) *Parties play a role in the conduct of elections:* Elections to the legislature are held on party lines. Political parties select suitable candidates for party tickets. On the day of voting, parties ensure the maximum turnout of voters.

iii) *Political parties form the government:* The party which secures the majority forms the government. If no single party secures the majority, then a combination of parties, called coalition, form the government.

iv) *The opposition acts as a check on government:* The opposition party keeps a vigilant eye on the actions and policies of government and highlights its lapses and failures.

v) *Political parties form a link between government and people:* Parties explain the policies of government to the people and convey reactions of the people to parliament and public officials.

vi) *Political parties impart education to people:* Political parties make the people aware of their political rights and stakes in government.

vii) *Political parties act as a unifying force:* Political parties are compelled to seek support of all sections of people, living in different parts of the country. Thus, they act as a unifying force.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is Popular Sovereignty? Explain in your words

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2) Write an essay on Representative Democracy in practice.

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22.6   DEMOCRACY AND ELECTIONS

Modern democratic states have representative governments. Large size and population of modern democratic states make it difficult to practise direct democracy as a form of government. Hence, all modern democracies have indirect or representative governments, which are elected by people. These representatives are chosen by people through elections. Thus, elections have assumed a very important role in the formation of modern representative democracy.

An election is a contest between different political parties for getting people's support. At times, an individual can also contest an election as an independent candidate.

The advantages of contesting elections as a party candidate are as follows:

i)   Political parties follow specific policies; therefore, when a candidate represents a party, it is easier for voters to know what he stands for.

ii)   Party candidates get funds from political parties to organise election campaigns.

iii)   Party volunteers may be provided by the party to the candidate during the process of electioneering.

iv)   Well-known leaders of the party canvass for party candidates and address their rallies.

22.6.1 The Election Process

Elections in a democratic system are based on the principle of equality i.e. *one person, one vote*. All persons irrespective of caste, colour, creed, sex or religion enjoy certain political rights. Among these rights, the most important right is the right to vote. In politics, everyone is equal-every person has an equal say in the formation of government.

Secret Ballot: The voter casts his vote secretly in an enclosure, so that no one comes to know of the choice he has made. In representative democracy, secret voting is preferred; otherwise, the voter may not exercise his true choice openly due to fear of intimidation and undue influence.

Constituency: Constituencies are marked in order to carry out the election process with efficiency. Constituency is the territorial area from where a candidate contests elections. If only one person is to be elected from a constituency, it is called a *single-member constituency*. If several representatives are elected from the same constituency, then it is called a *multi-member constituency*.

The entire election process, e.g. in India, is conducted, controlled and supervised by an independent body called the *Election Commission*. It ensures free and fair elections. The Election Commission fixes and announces the dates of elections in our country. The Election Commission has another very important responsibility. It makes sure that the party in power does not get undue advantage over other parties. The process of election runs through several formal stages. This process comprises of:

a)   Announcement of dates

b)   Filing of nomination papers

c)   Scrutiny of applications

d)   Withdrawal of applications

e)   Publication of the final list

f)   Campaigning

g) Casting of votes

h) Announcement of results

In fact, the moment the Election Commission announces the dates of elections, political parties start their activities. The first task of political parties becomes the selection of candidates who are going to contest in elections as their party candidates. Modern electioneering is a cumbersome process. It needs a huge organisation to manage it, which is provided by political parties. Moreover, elections require a reasonable amount of fund, which is also provided by political parties.

i) **Selection of Candidates**

In the functioning of representative democracy, the role of political parties has become both, indispensable and very important. Infact, political parties have given an organised shape to democratic politics. Political parties field and support their candidates, and organise their campaigns.

Every political party announces specific programmes and promises to implement these programmes in case it comes to power. Voters while casting votes for a candidate of a particular party do so knowing fully well the programmes and policies of that party.

ii) **Nomination**

Once election dates are announced, political parties have to choose their candidates through a process of selection. Then, candidates have to file their nominations to election offices which are appointed by the Election Commission. There is a last date for filing nomination papers. After all nominations have been filed, there is a process of scrutiny. It is done to check whether all information given in nomination papers is correct. If there is a doubt or a candidate is not found eligible, his/her nomination paper is rejected. Once the scrutiny is over, candidates are given a date for withdrawal.

The withdrawal process makes sure that (a) there is as little wastage of votes as possible and (b) that all names printed on ballot paper are those of serious candidates.

iii) **Symbols**

Political parties have symbols which are allotted by the Election Commission (EC). The EC allots symbols to each political party and makes sure that they are not similar because they can confuse voters. In India, symbols are significant for the following reasons:

- They are a help for illiterate voters who cannot read names of candidates.
- They help in differentiating between two candidates having the same name.
- They reflect ideology of the concerned political party.

iv) **Campaigning**

Campaigning is the process by which a candidate tries to persuade voters to vote for him rather than for others. Campaigning stops 48 hours before polling. Each political party and every candidate tries to reach as many voters as possible. A number of campaign techniques are involved in election process. Some of these are:

- Holding of public meetings which are addressed by candidates and a number of local and national leaders of a party.
- Pasting of posters on walls and putting up large and small hoardings on roadside.
- Distinction of handbills which highlight main issues of their manifesto.

- Taking out procession in support of different candidates.

- Door-to-door appeal by influential people in party and locality.

- Broadcasting and telecasting speeches of various party leaders.

v) **Counting of Votes and Declaration of Results**

After voting is over, ballot boxes are sealed and taken to counting centres. During counting, the candidate or his representative is present. After counting, a candidate getting a simple majority is declared elected. At times, simple majority leads to problems. The elected candidate represents majority when there are only two candidates, but not so if there are three or more candidates; e.g. if A gets 40 and B, C and D get 20 votes, then A is declared elected. Now, though A has got 40 votes he does not reflect the majority because 60 votes are actually against him.

Elections are a very important part of democracy because the entire fortification of a democratic system depends on how elections are held.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Why are elections important in a democracy?

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2)   Should a person be excluded from the right to vote?

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22.7   DEMOCRACY AND ALIENATION

Alienation amounts to separation from one's genuine or essential nature. In actual practice, the functioning of most democratic systems fare poorly by the standards of personal autonomy and popular rule. What passes for democracy in the modern world tends to be a limited and indirect form of democracy, thereby alienating the individual citizen. This democracy is little more than, what Joseph Schumpeter referred to as an 'institutional arrangement' for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for peoples' vote.

This institutional arrangement has been criticised by radical democrats for reducing popular participation to a near meaningless ritual i.e. casting a vote every few years for politicians who can only be removed by replacing them with another set of politicians. In short, people never rule and the growing gulf between government and people is reflected in the spread of inertia, apathy and alienation.

22.8   DEMOCRACY AND PUBLIC OPINION

To a great extent, democracy depends on public opinion. In a representative democracy, every government has to think of what will be the public reaction to its policies. All parties want to capture and retain power. Coming back to power in the next successive election depends on what people think about its work when the party was in power.

Strong public opinion plays a very significant role in capture of power and forming government by a single party or a combination of parties, called coalition. If the public is alert and intelligent and keeps itself informed, government cannot take the risk of disregarding people's aspirations. If it disregards their aspirations, it instantly becomes unpopular. On the other hand, if public is not alert and intelligent, government can become irresponsible. At times, this might threaten the very foundations of democracy.

Formulation of Public Opinion: Public opinion is formed in many ways and several agencies contribute in shaping public opinion. For a healthy public opinion, citizens should know what is happening around them, in their own country and in the world at large. A country's government makes policies not only about internal problems, but has a foreign policy also. A citizen must hear different opinions in order to make up his/her mind. Thus for democracy to work well, citizens need to apprise themselves of various views. Among the agencies, which help in formulating sound public opinion are the press, the electronic media and the cinema.

Democracy allows a person to contribute his/her share of opinion in decision-making. For all this, there is a necessity of free discussion and argument. Democratic government gives a lot of freedom to the ordinary citizen. However, citizens have to use freedom with responsibility, restraint and discipline. If people have some grievances, they must show them through channels provided by the democratic system. Acts of indiscipline on the part of citizens might wreck the democratic set up of a system.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Can anyone be excluded from citizenship in a democracy?

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2)   What is the role of public opinion in a democracy?

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22.9   GENDER AND DEMOCRACY: PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

The third wave of democratisation which began in the mid 1970s brought about competitive electoral politics to many countries in Latin America, East and Central Europe and parts of Africa and Asia. It was seen as a triumph for democracy as the number of electoral democracies increased from 39 in 1974 to 117 in 1998.

However, as in the earlier longstanding democracies, the levels of women's representation in new democracies are still low in both legislatures and executives. The struggle for political citizenship was for a long time an important goal of women's movements. The suffrage campaigns that took place in many parts of the world in the late 19th and early twentieth centuries were based on the assumption that right to vote and participate in electoral processes was an important part of being a citizen. If democracies now guarantee all citizens the right to participate in the political arena, why are women so poorly represented? Does the low participation of women mean that democracies are undemocratic?

Theorists of democratisation, as mentioned earlier, have a variety of definitions of what counts as a democracy.

- At one end of the continuum, there is a minimal definition which implies that all that is needed is competitive elections.

- Mid-range definitions also emphasise the need for freedom and pluralism, such as civil rights and freedom of speech, so that state may be considered a liberal democracy.

- Neither of these definitions makes the distinction between *right to participate and the ability to participate*. Only the more utopian definitions that consider the 'quality of democracy' emphasise that democracy also implies the enjoyment of full citizenship in its broadest sense.

Citizenship is defined not just in terms of civil and political rights, but also in terms of economic and social rights that can facilitate the full participation of all in the political sphere. Democracy can be vibrant and effective only when citizens take part in an active civil society.

The 'public' and the 'private': Feminists have argued for a long time that there are a number of problems with the ways in which democracy is defined, theorised and practised. Liberal political theory is based on a division between public and private sphere. Within this model, men appear as the head of households and as abstract individuals active in public sphere, while women are relegated annalistically to private sphere. The 'political' is, therefore, defined as masculine in a very profound sense.

In practical terms, the manner in which political activity is conducted in democracies and nature of most women means that they participate to a far lesser extent than men, particularly at higher levels of conventional political activity. For example:

- many women find style and substance of politics forbidding

- even if they do decide to pursue a political career, women often experience difficulties in getting selected on winnable seats on the party's list

- Further, as in other areas of public sphere, women find that constraints placed on them by their responsibilities in 'private' sphere also reduce their ability to participate in conventional political activity on same terms as men.

It would be incorrect to give an impression that there is an agreement on nature of democracy. Lenin, for example, has argued that liberal democracy is a screen which hides exploitation and domination of the masses. More recently, Carole Pateman has argued that democracy must also extend to the workplace – where most people spend a great part of their day – before we can be said to live under democratic conditions.

A different type of criticism of democracy argues, by pointing out that even democracy can go dangerously wrong. Aristotle reminded us that for its proper functioning, even a democracy needs a stable system of law.

Democracy can otherwise become the arbitrary dictatorship of the many i.e. the mob rule. In a similar vein, De Tocqueville argued that democracy creates the possibility of a new form of tyranny – the tyranny of the majority. Madison warned of the danger of factions, which means a group-large or small – whose interest does not reflect the general interest of the people, and who attempt to subvert the democratic system for their own purposes.

Modern democracies tend to create bureaucratic organisations around themselves. According to Max Weber, the interest of the bureaucratic organisations creates a tension in democratic practice, as the bureaucracy created by democracy will have

a tendency to choke off the democratic process. Pareto argued that, howsoever democratic a society may claim to be, it will be inevitably ruled by a powerful elite.

But, it can argued that the idea of separation of Powers and the concept of Checks and Balances can go a long way in avoiding despotism. Moreover, we need to ensure that those people who make laws do not enforce them also.

22.10 DEMOCRACY AND THE INTERNET

No other invention of this new technological era has proliferated as rapidly as the Internet. The internet has rapidly accelerated the development of transnational relations fostering a kind of mutual influence and interdependence.

The Internet affects democracy in a number of ways. Its role in combating totalitarian regimes is, indeed, positive, for it creates access to information and thus, undermines the monopoly of the government in question.

But on the other hand, the Internet creates problems for democracy insofar as it weakens the state's regulative capacity. The transnational interpretation of societies by the Internet undermines the capacity of government to govern effectively. Further, as far as national security is concerned, the Internet has opened up new possibilities for asymmetrical conflicts. States can sustain massive damage from net-based attacks, not from other states but from individuals. Nevertheless, the new information technology will probably, on balance, reinforce the existing power structures rather than weaken them.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Examine the reasons for the poor political participation and representation of women.

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2) How has the Internet impacted upon democracy?

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22.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read about representative democracy which is the modern form of democracy. You should be now in a position to explain its meaning as well as discuss different views on it. The unit, it is hoped, has also made clear to you the fundamental principles of representative democracy. How democracy actually works – the electoral process has been elaborated in the unit. Finally and equally importantly, vital contemporary concerns such as the issues of gender, alienation and public opinion have been discussed in the unit.

22.12 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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22.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 22.2

2) See Section 22.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See sub-section 22.4.1

2) See Section 22.5

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 22.6

2)   See Section 22.6

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See Section 22.7

2)   See Section 22.8

Check Your Progress 5

1)   See Section 22.9

2)   See Section 22.10

UNIT 23 SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

Structure

23.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, democracy is discussed as a form of government with socialistic principles and policy. Democracy is a way of life and represents a set of ideals. It is asserted that true democracy is socialistic and true socialism is democratic. The link between democracy and socialism is the most important single element in socialistic thought and policy. After studying this unit, you should able to:

- Understand the varied connotations / interpretations of democracy;

- Explain the difference between features of a liberal western democracy and socialist democracy;

- Define the concepts of Democratic Socialism and New Leftism; and

- Describe the methods adopted for the establishment of a new social order

23.1 INTRODUCTION

The term democracy indicates both a set of ideals and a political system, a feature it shares with the terms communism and socialism. 'Democracy' is harder to pin down, however, than either 'Socialism' or 'Communism', for while the latter labels have found in Marxism an ideological matrix, democracy has never become identified with a specific doctrinal source-it is rather a by-product of the entire process of liberalization of Western civilization. Not every political system claims to be a socialist system, but even the communist system claims to be democratic. Social democracy

is generally conceived as an endogenous state and style of society, and should, therefore, not be confused with 'Socialist Democracy' which is a policy enforced by the state upon society.

If we look into the history of socialism, we would find that successful socialist movements have grown up only in nations with strong democratic traditions, such as Great Britain, Holland, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia etc. This is so because, where democratic constitutional government is generally accepted, socialists concentrate on certain programme like creation of opportunities for the underprivileged classes ending inequality, opening educational opportunities, ending discriminatory practices, regulation of economy for the benefit of all, and finally the proposal to rebuild society based on cooperation instead of competition.

In this unit, we will attempt to make a comparative estimate between Western liberal democracy and socialist democracy, outline the tenets of democratic socialism and the ideology of New Leftism which has a socialist module, and finally understand, the imperativeness of socialist democracy for especially, developing and underdeveloped nations.

23.2 DEMOCRACY AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIALISM: A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Let us first examine the concept of modern democracy before Karl Marx. It is important to note that his close associate Friedrich Engels does not speak about democracy, but always about pure democracy. By this he meant a bourgeois state, in which general suffrage prevails, but private property is not touched. It meant that it was either possible to erect a socialist state directly after the overthrow of feudal and military monarchy or pure democracy, that is the bourgeoisie capitalistic republic, would first come into power. At that time, people came to accept a democratic state, as a bourgeoisie state governed by a method of general suffrage.

When Marx began his political activities, he found democracy to be already a great international movement. The history of European democracy extended back two and a half millennia. In the republics of ancient Greece, the political form of democracy was the contract to aristocracy or oligarchy, to the rule of the "minority" of the rich or noble. In contrast to this, democracy was the rule of majority, of the masses in general, whereby the owners of property or the bearers of nobility had no privilege to claim. Greek political science already occupied itself with the question, whether every state in which will of the majority of citizens decides is a democracy, no matter what the composition of this majority is and how it arises or whether a definite class character belongs to a democracy. Aristotle answered the question thus: that democracy is nothing more than the rule of poor in the state; just as oligarchy is the rule of the rich.

In the middle ages, democratic forms showed themselves in urban communes. During transition to modern times, the radical religious sects became the bearers of democratic ideas. Thus, democratic masses and their leaders were united in a distrust of modern development, and their view that both republic and democracy were primarily a moral matter, a moral renewal of the human race, already contained a condemnation of modern economic and social development.

Today, the democratic ideal is more than a mere composite of individualism, socialism and nationalism. It is based upon the acceptance and promotion of characteristics of life of each group of men, thus uniting individualism with a form of regionalism or nationalism and on the other hand, it implies an organization of any one group, which is less homogenous than that implied in the earlier forms of socialism. For democracy, implies a freedom of voluntary association and the performance by such associations of many functions which the earlier socialists would have left to the state.

Democracy is to begin with a principle of legitimacy. Power is legitimate only when it is derived from authority of the people and based upon their consent. From a normative standpoint, the definition of democracy strictly derives from the literal meaning of the term-"Power of the people". It is identified positively by the existence of developed representative institutions and by the establishment of constitutional government. It presupposes not a direct exercise of power, but delegation of power; that is a system of 'control' and 'limitation' of government. From the time the term 'demokratia' was coined in the fifth century B.C until roughly a century ago, democracy was used as a political concept. Tocqueville was struck, however, by the social aspect of American democracy and we thus speak of 'social democracy'. Marxism has popularized the expression 'economic democracy' and guild socialism; Webb's book *'Industrial Democracy'* (1897) has given currency to the label 'industrialist democracy'. The labels people's democracy, soviet democracy and the like, pose a special democracy. When the socialist movement revived in Europe in the late 1860's, most socialist leaders were under the influence of Marxism. In 1881, the German Social Democratic Party and in 1897 the Swedish Democratic Social Party, accepted public ownership of all means of production, distribution and exchange as their objectives. Other socialist parties adopted the same objectives in their constitutions or manifestoes, and even the British labour movement, which had not accepted socialism till 1918, adapted to some extent the aim of public ownership.

Now after a lapse of a little over three decades from the end of the Second World War, the picture is different. In all developed democratic countries of the West, except Italy and France, communist parties have been reduced to nullities, and even the Italian and French communist parties have been diminishing in strength. In the communist countries of Eastern Europe, there are growing revisionist tendencies while in Russia itself, there appears to be an increasing acceptance of Khrushchev's dictum that it is possible for communist parties to ignore the question of means. On the other hand, social democratic parties have grown in strength in all European countries. They have either been in power or have formed the main opposition. They no longer seek to replace the whole capitalist order by an economy based on public ownership of means of production, distribution or exchange. They are reconciled to a mixed economy accompanied by full employment and social security. The authors of 'twentieth century' socialism have stressed that socialism should be defined in terms of basic values of equality, freedom and fellowship and not in terms of any particular means by which those values may be realized. Similar changes have taken place in the programs of all European Socialists – these parties are taking a much more discriminating attitude towards public ownership; however, social democracy supports the public demand that it is necessary to safeguard important public interests.

Thus, the socialists in the underdeveloped world can draw some valuable lessons from a survey of these changes in the fortunes of communism and social democracy in Western countries and the altered objectives of social democratic parties.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

  ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by democracy?

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2) In what manner has the perception of democracy changed in erstwhile Communist countries?

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23.3 WESTERN LIBERAL DEMOCRACY

Modern liberal conception of politics acquired a realistic, pragmatic, secular and scientific orientation. State became the pivotal political organization. Rousseau introduced the idea of popular sovereignty and democracy. It was established that within the reach of the people, institutions such as state, government and semi–official institutions etc began to be treated as centers of political activity. Rights of private property, and individual liberty began to be asserted. In the advanced liberal concept, the state is viewed as a positive welfare organ. Liberal democracy assured a competitive party model as essential to represent the wishes of people. This involves eliciting people's opinion through periodic elections to legislatures. Further, government is seen as limited and as operating in a world of voluntary associations. Society is viewed as pluralistic, which means that it is composed of autonomous sections and associations. Hence, government sets out to rule in common interest.

Western liberal democracy is a political theory that emerged in Europe during the seventeenth century and has continued to this day as one of the dominant theories and ideologies in the world. This excludes the socialist countries with dictatorships of different kinds. In the development of this concept, mention must be made of John Locke, Jeremy Bentham and J.S Mill. Locke contributed the ideas of limited government, constitutionalism, individual rights and the rule of law. Bentham's contribution lay in the utilitarian conception of majority interest calculated in terms of individual utility. Mill contributed the idea of individual liberty, plurality of opinions, and the principle of development of individual personality.

When we define the liberal state to be politically democratic, we should note that it refers not only to the electoral process, but also to aspects like the rule of law and right to property. In a liberal system without any written constitution such as in the United Kingdom, this means the law enacted by parliament is supreme. And the property rights granted in liberal democratic states prevent the government from making drastic changes in economic matters. This is the reason that the radical view criticizes liberal democracy, for not laying emphasis on economic equality. They called themselves people's democracy, which implies that the means of production are socially owned.

Thus, the above gives a fairly good picture of liberal conception of democracy which is based on a number of assumptions; first, it holds that an individual is endowed with an autonomous mind, reason and will; that is, he is a rational being. So, he can decide what is best for him. Second, the individual is a moral being, which means that they

are all equal. Each one should have an equal opportunity to participate in politics. Third, truth is relative and multi–dimensional and is not absolute. Therefore, at a particular moment, truth can be established only through a free inter-play of ideas. That, tolerance is the essence of democracy was strongly argued by Mill in 'On Liberty'. Truth in a democracy implies that every one can participate in politics and it is the government of all people; therefore, a democratic government acts in the interest of all. Competition among leaders and parties ensures popular control over government and maximum liberty for individuals. Rule of law, equality before law and basic minimum rights are characteristics of a Western liberal democracy.

23.4   NON-WESTERN FORMS OF DEMOCRACY

It may be surprising to some that countries like the erstwhile USSR (Soviet Russia), Communist China, North Korea and North Vietnam, to name but a few, claim to be democratic. Indeed, they claim to be the only true democracies. In order to understand that exact nature of this claim, it is important to go back to Marx. He believed that the politics of the West was characterized by class conflicts, and that competition between parties would be no more once the feud between classes ended. True democracy he thought, would exist only where one class predominated, embodying the overwhelming mass of the people. All other forms of democracy were denounced as bourgeois. If a power conflict existed on a competitive basis, so that it might be influenced by wealth, Marx considered that democracy to be bourgeois, and therefore, unworthy of any name.

Competitive politics is condemned by communists for being a fraud. They themselves claim to have no other classes because they say that all the exploiting groups were eradicated in the early days of the Russian revolution. Soviet lawyers and political apologists argue that the West's version of democracy is a sham and fraud because of the existence of an economic system- Capitalism- which favors the rich.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are the salient features of Western liberal democracy?

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2)   What do you understand by non-western forms of democracy?

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23.5   SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

In the west where capitalism has prevailed, this takes the form of accommodation of progressive dilution of the socialist principle. We all know what socialism is. In company with other ideological concepts, socialism has a double reference. On one hand, it refers to the ideals, values, properties of what is often called the socialist vision. On the other hand, it refers to empirical features of social and political institutions which embody the vision. At the level of values, the important ones are those of freedom, equality, community, brotherhood, social justice, a classless society, co-operation, progress, peace, prosperity, abundance and happiness. Sometimes, the value components are stated negatively: socialists are opposed to oppression, exploitation, inequality, strife, war, injustice, poverty, misery and dehumanization. At the level of institutions, the adherents and opponents alike would say that socialism is opposed to capitalist private enterprise system, which it seeks to replace by a system of control over wealth and property and the social supervision of organization of economic activity; this is summarized in the formula, the common or public ownership of means of production.

Names in political discourse have shown themselves to be unstable over times. John Ruskin, for example, proudly called himself a communist, while he repudiated socialism, republicanism and democracy. For H.M Hyndman, the term socialism denoted mild, Christian-liberal do-goodery, while the term social democracy meant for him militant Marxism. Today, of course, the opposite would be the case. It was Proudhon, not Marx and Engels, who first called his doctrine 'scientific socialism'. Bakunin, at one time, held an organization which was called the Alliance for Socialist Democracy. Marx himself in his youth dismissed communism as being only an "imperfect realization of socialism"; later Marxian usage became more systematic, though never entirely free from ambiguity.

23.6   FOUR BASIC TENDENCIES OF SOCIALISM: THE ESSENCE OF SOCIALIST DEMOCRACY

An attempt is made in this unit to give a more systematic outline to the tendencies, which together make up socialist thought, reflected in the concept of socialist democracy. *Egalitarianism* is the first tendency, which is the classical principle of socialism. The dominant notion of equality culminates in a conception of community. Politically, egalitarianism obviously demands complete democracy, but democracy in its simple, classical, unitary sense, without enduring party divisions.

Moralism, the next tendency, constitutes the Christian principle of socialism; that is, it stresses on high ideals which seek to bring justice by replacing enmity with mutual help, and fostering feelings of brotherly love and understandings among human beings. The political form most harmonious with moralist values is, again democracy, perhaps tempered by mild notions of paternalism and certainly presupposing a sense of moderation and responsibility on the part of individual principles. Small and large communities governed by a majoritarian system are fitting vehicles for the realization of the moralist ideal.

Rationalism is the third tendency, in representing the principle of enlightenment. Here, the chief values are individual happiness, reason, knowledge, efficiency in production and the rational purposeful organization of human society in the interest of progress. The political form that rationalism leads towards is also democracy, since this tendency tends to acknowledge the fundamental equality of human beings and believes in self –sufficiency of individual human reason. It believes, however, that

democracy should be tempered with meritocracy, constant guidance by experts, scientists, technicians, and intellectual people who are to be trusted with the promotion of general happiness.

Libertarianism, which could be termed the romantic principle of socialism, is the last of the basic tendencies in the sense that it is extreme and radical among socialist principles. It centers on the ideal freedom, in the sense of total absence of restraint, internal and external. Here, it would be difficult to talk in terms of a favored political arrangement, since this tendency would repudiate politics in toto. Anarchy is what comes nearest to its ideal; but again libertarianism too goes with the acceptance of equality in a fundamental sense. Libertarianism is the gentlest and the most tolerant of socialist tendencies.

These are the four tendencies of socialism, which reflect the essence of socialist democracy. The relative weight of each tendency, however, varies from case to case. In other words, we find that one or another tendency assumes predominance over others in the case of a given country, doctrine, movement or historical period. This is why the predominance of libertarianism in the Western New left is in a large part due to the increasing moderation and integration of social democracy.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

    ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are the salient features of a socialist democracy?

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2)   What do you understand by egalitarianism?

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23.6.1 Democratic Techniques and Socialism

The rise of fascism in Europe and the continuance of dictatorship of the Communist Party in erstwhile Soviet Union also led many socialists during the thirties to give increasing attention to the techniques of democracy under a collectivist regime. While the socialist movement in general had for many years maintained that collectivism without democracy was a far cry from socialism and that there could be no socialism without the accompaniment of thorough-going democratic procedures in the economic, political and social institutions of the country, there were many who took the position prior to the thirties that all that was necessary to do was to transfer industry from private to public ownership and democracy would take care of itself. Experiments in state ownership and control in communist and fascist countries and even in lands with a democratic form of government, both in times of peace and war, proved a rude awakener to these students of the movement and caused large numbers within and without to think through ways and means of safeguarding and strengthening the democratic process under a co-operative system of industry. This examination caused them to lay increasing emphasis on:

1) The need for preserving and strengthening democratic forces of the population such as the trade and industrial-union movement, the consumers and producers co-operatives, laboures, socialist and progressive political parties, educational and cultural movement of the masses, and for endeavoring to make these movement thoroughly democratic.

2) The need for bringing about a close co-operation among industrial workers, the so-called middle class, the farming population, in the struggle for better social arrangements.

3) The need for applying effective democratic techniques to local, state, and federal governments so as to make them thoroughly responsive to the will of the people.

4) The need for encouraging, under a co-operative system of industry, an extensive system of voluntary co-operative enterprises, as a supplement to publicly owned industries, especially in agriculture, the distributive trades and in cultural activity.

5) The need for establishment within each industry of procedures whereby consumers, workers, and technical and administrative groups would be adequately represented in determination of policies.

6) The need of experimenting with the corporate of public ownership of a semi-autonomous character, and of decentralizing control and administration of public ownership as much as seemed compatible and socially efficient.

7) The need for developing administrative procedures directed toward efficient, honest, and democratic administration through a sound system of civil service, public accounting, collective bargaining, personal relations etc. Techniques should be devised for stimulating industrial incentives through a proper system of rewards for work well done.

8) The need for freedom of consumer choice.

9) The necessity of preserving civil liberties and preventing discriminatory practices against any section of population because of race, religion, color, or national origin.

10) The need for co-operating with other countries with a view to eliminate the causes of war, of abolishing imperialistic controls, and of raising living standards throughout the world.

23.6.2 Trend towards Democratic Socialism

The goals of democratic socialism have one thing in common; that is to make democracy more real by broadening the application of democratic principles from

political to non-political areas of society. Freedom of worship and freedom of political associations are still the most essential foundations of democracy. The Socialists concentrate on the promotion of these "finer points of democracy". In contrast, socialist parties have fought an uphill and generally a losing struggle in nations were democracy is not a living thing, but an aspiration, a hope, an idea yet to be realized. This happened for example, in Germany, Italy and France.

23.6.3 Democratic Socialism in England

England developed parliamentary institutions, which were conductive to the growth of socialism. England moved with the times, and brought about a compromise between democracy and socialism. Socialism was allowed to emerge peacefully without the need to have a bloody revolution. Democracy tolerated the rise of social principles.

In Britain, there was no need for workers to revolt on a mass scale against the government, as the government itself took necessary steps to promote their interests. British soil was suitable for the growth of democratic socialism, while on the other hand, in Russia and China the climate was not favourable as the government neglected the interests of the poor and tried to suppress them. As a result, revolutionary socialism rose and its tide swept the government off its feet.

Democratic socialism has no high priest like totalitarian communism. It has no Marx or Lenin. The most influential socialist thinkers in England have frequently been without any official position. Their impact has been due to their moral authority and felicitous literary style.

The movement owes much to the ideas of Robert Owen, Sidney and Beartrice Webb, R.H. Tawney, G.D.H Cole, Harold Laski and many others. But the philosophy still remains undefined. According to Bhaktavatsalam, "the nature and content of democratic socialism cannot by any means be defined. It is a broad framework wherein we have to fit in our ideas of democracy and socialism in tune with our political background and cultural and spiritual heritage." So there is no definite shape of democratic socialism. It is to be different in different countries according to their needs and conditions. Still we can point out certain broad principles of democratic socialism.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Enumerate some of the techniques for reconciling democracy with socialism.

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2)   Trace the evolution of democratic socialism in England.

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23.7   BROAD PRINCIPLES

Democratic Socialism lays great stress on the importance of the larger interests of society as a whole, against the narrow and selfish interests of the individual. It is against individualism or laissez-faire, it is a theory of community welfare. It promotes cooperation instead of competition and removes antagonism between the employer and the employee.

Socialism stands for the principle of economic equality. The state should prevent the concentration of wealth in the hands of a few individuals so that the gulf between the rich and the poor classes may not be wide. However, democratic socialism does not aim at establishing absolute equality, which is almost impossible. Its aim is to remove glaring inequality of wealth by progressive taxation of the rich. It stands for equitable opportunities for all.

Democratic socialism also stands for common ownership of important means of production, which are to be utilized for common good. It is in favor of granting full civil, political and economic rights. The individual is free to lead his own way of life, outside intervention. It stands for extension of democracy from political to economic and social fields. Thus, there is a desire to widen the base of democracy. According to it, if democracy is to be real, it should go far beyond the frontiers of politics and enter the economic field.

It is against the ownership of land, factories and other means of production by a few at the cost of the community. It must be clearly noted that democratic socialism is not against all forms of private property, but only against such private property, which becomes the means of exploitation. It allows small plots of land, houses and other limited property, as these cannot be put to anti-social uses. In conclusion, we may say that democratic socialism is neither merely anti-capitalism nor statism. According to J.P Narayan, "there is no exploitation of man by man, no injustice, oppression, or denial of opportunities."

One of the remarkable results of the victory of democratic socialism in Britain was the elimination of communism as an important factor in British politics. Even in developing countries, democratic socialism provides an alternative to the extremes of communism and capitalism by bringing about the much needed socio-economic transformation of societies.

23.8   NEW LEFTISM: ATTACK ON SOVIET MARXISM

The New Left has a particular characteristic of its own. It believes in socialism and yet strives to promote and protect humanism that had become a scapegoat under the 'socialist' system of the former Soviet Union. That is, while the achievements of socialism is the bedrock of traditional Leftism, socialism integrated with democracy and humanism is the keynote of, what is generally known as, New Leftism. What keeps the New left at a fundamental variance with the Old left is its stern emphasis on pursuing positive social and political goals. It believes in freedom and democracy, and is prepared to fight for these ideas.

The New Leftism is a product of the post–Second World period. Its growth is on account of three factors: stern reaction against the version of official Marxism as given by the great comrades of the former Soviet Union, vehement protest against the social, economic and political make up of affluent societies of advanced Western countries, and very strong emphasis on the worth and dignity of man. That is, the movement came as a result of a multi-level protest—protest against Stalinist excesses, against the dogmatic and mechanistic version of Marxism as given by the Soviet

leaders, against centralized and undemocratic ways of doing things and against anti-humanistic, bureaucratic and bourgeoisie society of oppression.

The most recent land mark is the reappearance of the New left, which may be termed 'New Socialism'. The fight of the American Negroes for civil rights, the student revolt in France aimed at changing the education system, the struggle of workers in Spain for democratization of the political system are some of the momentous events that inspired New Leftist thinkers to say that youthful elements can bring about the desired state of affairs. What is needed is change: change towards real democracy, which can be brought about by youthful sections of people. This is because they alone can understand the pernicious dimensions of a socialist system and then fight for restoration of a free, democratic and dignified life.

In brief, the aim of the New Leftists is to attack the variety of Marxism that developed in the former Soviet Union. Instead, they think in terms of a new variety of socialism based on practicable portion of Marxism. Socialism of this type must be in consonance with premises of a democratic system. So that people may have the boons of freedom, development and happiness.

23.9 CHALLENGES/DIFFICULTIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIALISM THROUGH DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES

To say that it is possible to achieve a change over to socialist rule with democratic means does not necessarily imply, however, that it is possible also to implement and maintain socialism with such means. Communist theory has persistently alleged—and on this point it has not yet changed—that it is impossible to carry through socialism under a system of free elections, freedom of speech, free association and free majority decisions.

Soviet theorists do not stand alone in their contention that the implementation and maintenance of socialism are impossible with democratic means. Right-wing liberals, like Friedrich Hayek, agree with them on that count. Their interest is, of course, the opposite: they hope to see democracy maintained and socialism abandoned. But on the major issue under discussion here–whether it is possible to have both democracy and socialism—the two opponents are agreed. It is impossible, they say. In his 'Road of Serfdom' Hayek predicts that socialism will inevitably lead to the abolition of democratic liberties.

One of his chief arguments is that socialism requires centralized planning and that, even in the event that there is a large majority for socialism, there frequently will be no majority able to agree on particulars ends and means. In such a case, he says, a democratic parliament "cannot direct".

In appraising the Lenin-Hayek theory of incompatibility between democracy and socialism, we must not underestimate the strength of their combined arguments. They competently point to grave difficulties and dangers. But they fail to prove the impossibility. Their allegations are half-true at best.

It is a strong argument that those who are to lose their privileges are likely to rise in violent resistance when a radically socialist legislation issues from a pro-socialist majority in a democratic legislature. This was strikingly illustrated after the Spanish Revolution of 1931, when the democratic majority in the newly elected parliament engaged in simultaneously frontal legislative attacks against all vested interests-monarchists, army, church, big land owners and big industrialists- before it had built up sufficiently strong armed forces of its own for support of the republican government. However, there is no justification for a scientific verdict that it was impossible to

avoid a similar outcome when an attempt is made to carry through socialism with democratic procedures.

Another strong argument of this problem is that workers who have won parliamentary majorities may be impatient in their desire to secure tangible benefits quickly and beyond reasonable limits. In order to cope with this danger, it will be necessary to educate people in advance so as to prepare them for a meaningful exercise of majority powers. That may not be easy, but it is not necessarily impossible.

Finally, it is a weighty argument when Hayek warns that the majority is likely to split whenever major decisions on planning become necessary. But once this danger has been well understood in advance, it may not be impossible to meet it by proper device, such as a careful preparation of master plans and delegation of the power to make current economic decisions under such plans to some board or commission.

The question of compatibility of democracy and socialism, therefore, is still an open one. There is good reason to believe that it is necessary to go all the way along the totalitarian road, if a majority should be bent on carrying through socialism, although certain modifications in the process of economic legislation and administration will be necessary.

Establishment of a penetrating and reassuring political theory regarding the compatibility of socialism and democracy could also offer encouragement to whatever tendencies there may develop in present Soviet Russia or some of its satellites towards introduction of more democratic institutions. It would make possible a stronger and more precise language in international political discussion about both democracy and socialism, and coexistence as well.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are the broad principles of Socialism?

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2)   What is New Leftism?

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3)   What are the challenges and difficulties in implementing socialism through democratic procedures?

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23.10   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed at length the differences between Western liberal democracy and socialist democracy, together with the essential ingredients and essence of both the ideologies, i.e. democracy and socialism.

The concept of socialist democracy embodies within itself a system, that builds society based on cooperation instead of competition.Since the last decade, communism as an ideology has been diminishing in strength, in Italy, France, Eastern Europe and Russia. On the other hand, social democratic parties have grown in strength in almost all European countries. Socialist democracy should be defined in terms of basic values such as freedom, equality and fellowship. It supports the demand for public control of resources and enterprises. The essence of socialist democracy lies in four basic tendencies of socialism. They are*: egalitarianism*, meaning the notion of equality, *Moralism* meaning feelings of brotherly love and understanding among human beings, *rationalism* meaning reason and knowledge leading towards democratic functioning and lastly, *libertarianism* which goes with acceptance of equality.

There has been an increasing trend towards democratic socialism in recent times. The concept lays stress on larger interests of society, cooperation, economic equality, common ownership of production utilized for common good and on avoiding extremes of communism. During the first three decades after independence democratic socialism developed into India's most influential political ideology. Democratic socialist orientation of Indian politics was spelled out in concrete terms in the constitution of the republic, in the five year plans since 1952 and generally, in the conduct of Indian government both in domestic and international affairs. However, in the wake of globalization and consequent economic reforms, the situation has undergone a sea change.

The reappearance of the New Left was termed as "New Socialism". This was so, because it aimed to attack the type of Marxism that developed in the erstwhile Soviet Union. The New Left emphasized the premises of a democratic system, meant for freedom and development.

The establishment of a penetrating and reassuring political theory regarding compatibility of socialism and democracy is an encouragement towards the introduction of more democratic institutions. Today, if socialist democracy is to be made more realistic, it can be done by broadening the application of democratic principles from political to non-political areas of society. Socialism of this type must be in consonance with premises of a democratic system.

23.11   KEY WORDS

Oligarchy	:	State governed by a few persons.
Liberalization	:	ideology of extreme liberty and freedom.
Communism	:	order of society in which means of production are to be owned in common.
Egalitarian	:	asserting equality of mankind.
Leftism	:	political views of the Left.

23.12   SOME USEFUL REFERENCE

Arthur Rosenberg, *Democracy and Socialism*, London, G. Bell and Sons Ltd., 1939

Francis. W Coker, *Recent Political Thought*, New York, 1934

R.N. Berki: *Socialism*, New York

Socialism: *The First 100 Years*; Analyst: The Center for Labour and Social Studies Inc., Italy

23.13   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXCERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1)   See Sections 23.1 and 23.2

2)   See Section 23.2

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Section 23.3

2)   See Section 23.4

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 23.5

2)   See Section 23.6

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See sub-section 23.6.1

2)   See sub-section 23.6.3

Check Your Progress 5

1)   See Section 23.7

2)   See Section 23.8

3)   See Section 23.9

UNIT 24   INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNITARIANISM

Structure

24.0   OBJECTIVES

Our objective in this unit is to understand and assess one of the major ongoing debates in contemporary political theory; namely, the debate between liberal individualism and communitarianism. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the individualistic theory of the nature and functions of state;

- Describe and assess the communitarian critique of liberal individualism;

- Compare the major theoretical positions of individualism and communitarianism; and

- Understand the relevance of this debate to contemporary political theory and practice.

24.1   INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will be introduced to one of the central debates in contemporary political theory, namely, the debate between liberal individualism and communitarianism.

The debate between individualism and communitarianism developed and became central to political theory during the 1980s with the publication of Michael Sandel's *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982). In this book, Sandel develops one of the most forceful critiques of Rawlsian liberalism, the statement of which is found in John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Since then, this debate has continued in one way or the other to inform a great deal of political theory. Infact, some of the major developments and concerns of contemporary political theory are based on arguments which emanate from this debate.

At the center of the debate between individualism and communitarianism is the question: should the just state be constructed from the standpoint of how to foster the well being of individuals or from the standpoint of how to realise an ideal community? Is political reality shaped by decisions and actions of individuals, defined as persons standing at a distance (or separate) from community bonds or is it shaped by social beings whose identity and behaviour is defined by social groups/communities to which they belong? In other words, is the basic unit of political analysis the individual or the community?

24.1.1 Individualist Versus Communitarian Position

In responding to this question, individualists and communitarians hold different and apparently conflicting positions. While the individualists see political reality as being shaped by decisions and actions of free and rights-bearing individuals, communitarians emphasize the relationship between the person and the community and see this relationship to be the basis of politics. This debate may then be characterised as one between those who favour individual rights and autonomy and those who emphasize the bonds of community in political life.

24.1.2 Relevance in the Indian Context

The debate between individualism and communitarianism is particularly relevant to the Indian context. The Indian Constitution deviates from the traditional liberal framework, which guarantees individual rights and ignores the rights of community membership. It endorses and accepts the twin ideals of individual autonomy and community membership. The Constitution contains both the guarantee of individual civil rights and liberties and the principle of equal respect for all communities. A study of the debate between individualism and communitarianism is, therefore, also important for understanding some of the questions and issues in contemporary Indian political theory and practice.

It would be helpful to note that there are different varieties of individualism and communitarianism. In this unit, we shall study some of the key arguments and themes contained in these theoretical positions.

We begin with an introduction to the meaning and origin of liberal individualism. We then go on to understand some of the main arguments of individualistic perspective, namely, the conception of self and understanding of the nature and functions of the state. This is followed by an introduction to the communitarian critique of liberal individualism. We, then, examine the positions held by communitarians on the conception of the person and the nature and functions of the state. The unit concludes by highlighting some of the main contributions and limitations of individualism and communitarianism.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is the fundamental difference between Individualism and Communitarianism?

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2) How is the debate between Individualism and Communitarianism relevant to the Indian Context?

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24.2 MEANING AND DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALISM

Individualism is one of the several theories of relationship between the citizen and the state and of the proper scope of state activities. Other theories of this relationship, which oppose the theory of individualism are socialism, sarvodaya, fascism and communitarianism, which we will study later in this unit. What distinguishes individualism from these other theories is its emphasis on the individual as the primary unit in political and social theory.

Some of the main advocates of individualism have been Adam Smith, David Ricardo, Herbert Spencer and more recently, F.A. Hayek and Robert Nozick. In India, Mahadeo Govind Ranade and the Swatantra Party mainly supported the individualistic view.

24.2.1 Atomism and Methodological Individualism

The concept of individualism is one of the main features of liberal political thought, the other features being universalism, egalitarianism, secularism and the separation between the public and the private. The idea of individualism covers a wide variety of ideas, attitudes and doctrines. At the heart of these ideas and doctrines is the systematic according of primacy to the individual over any social group, community or collective. The individual is regarded as an <u>end</u> in itself while political, economic and social institutions are considered as a mere <u>means</u> to that end. This idea of individualism is called 'Atomism' - a view of society constituted by individuals for fulfillment of ends, which are primarily individualistic and which exist antecedently or prior to any particular form of social life. Individualism also refers to the doctrine about the centrality of individual to any political theory or social explanation. This doctrine is called 'Methodological Individualism' – a doctrine that asserts that no explanation in social science or history can be fundamental unless based upon facts and features of individuals, their properties, goals, beliefs and actions. In other words, social wholes or the aggregate pattern of behavior must always be explained in terms of the individual.

More importantly, the theory of individualism relates to the principle of laissez-faire - a French phrase that means 'leave alone' or 'allow (us) to do'. The principle of laissez faire is a principle of economic individualism and is a part of the broader theory of relationship between the state and the citizen. It was the battle cry of tradesmen, moneylenders and small manufacturers of 18th century France and England, who felt constrained by the controls and regulations of the mercantilist state. The mercantilist state was characterised by a great deal of state intervention in the economy. In contrast, economic laissez-faire stood for the policy of non-intervention or minimal intervention by state in the economic sphere. The economy, it was felt,

should be left to operate in accordance with the demand and supply mechanism of the market. Laissez-faire or economic individualism, in other words, stands for limited government and free trade.

24.2.2 Views of Contractualists including John Rawls

Individualism is essentially a modern phenomenon that began to take shape in the 17th century in the writings of Hobbes and Locke. Since the times of Hobbes and Locke, liberal political theory has made it its primary purpose to explore the relationship between the individual and the state. According to most liberal political theories, all individuals have inalienable rights. Government derives its powers from the consent of those who are to be governed. This consent is expressed by and established on the basis of a social contract between the governed and those who govern. The distinctive feature of the individualistic position, however, is the claim that the parties to the social contract are essentially people acting as <u>individuals</u>, and not as representatives of a cultural or collective group. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau spoke of a number of men establishing the state through a social contract and were explicit about eliminating associations and groups intermediate between the individual and the state. Infact, Rousseau maintained that if the General Will is to be truly expressed, it is essential that there are no subsidiary groups within the state. The most recent major exponent of the contractarian point of view, John Rawls, likewise assumes that the parties in the 'Original Position' who work out the principles of justice are individuals who speak for themselves. Moreover, the justice that they speak of is only for individuals. While Rawls does show some concern for social classes, he does not raise the question of whether community/groups should be considered as entities with claims to justice.

24.2.3 Views of Utilitarians

Emphasis on the individual is not confined to the social contract perspective in liberal political thought. In speaking of the greatest happiness of the greatest number, utilitarians such as Jeremy Bentham and J.S.Mill also had individuals in mind. In fact, in his work *On Liberty,* Mill emphasized the liberty of the individual and the need of the state to stay out of private concerns. Similarly, those who speak of the consent of the governed usually take it as an obvious assumption that the consent is to come from individuals. Further, the theories of democracy which deal with the concept of one man-one vote, one vote-one value and majority rule clearly have individuals in mind.

As seen above, individualism has guided much of modern liberal political thought. However, the theory of individualism is not universally accepted or is free of criticism. Political theory today is deeply divided about the relationship between the state and the citizen as well as about the proper scope of state activities. In the next section, we will examine some of the major assumptions about liberal individualism, which have come under attack from communitarianism.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

    ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by 'Atomism' and 'Methodological Individualism'?

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2) Discuss the views of contractualists on Individualism.

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24.3 THE INDIVIDUALIST CONCEPTION OF THE SELF

Central to the theory of individualism is its conception or understanding of the self. Infact, individualism builds its understanding of relations between the state and the citizen as well as the proper scope of state activities on the basis of its conception of the self. In this section, we will study the individualist conception of the self or person.

In the individualist view, people are free, rational and capable of self-determination. People are <u>rational</u> in that they are the best judges of their interest. They are capable of <u>self-determination</u>; that is, they are capable of determining their own conception of good life. A person's conception of good life is his set of beliefs and values about how he should lead his life and about what makes life worthwhile. People are <u>free</u> in the sense that they possess the ability as well as the right to question their participation in existing social practices and to opt out of them, should these practices no longer remain worthwhile. Individuals, in other words, are free to question and reject or revise any particular social relation. We, as individuals, have the ability to detach ourselves or step back from any particular social practice and question whether we want to continue pursuing it or not. No particular task or end is set for us by society; no end is exempt from a possible revision or rejection by the self. A person's goals, aims and ends are always things that he <u>chooses</u> to attach himself to and therefore, detach himself from, when they are no longer worthy of such attachment. A person is, thus, related to his ends, goals by an exercise of will. Rawls expresses this argument in the following phrase: 'the self is prior to the ends, which are affirmed by it'.

In the individualist view then, individual freedom of choice is needed precisely to find out what is valuable in life, to form, examine and revise our beliefs and values. People must have necessary resources and liberties needed to live their lives in accordance with their beliefs and values without being penalised (thus civil and personal liberties). They must also have cultural conditions necessary to acquire an awareness of different views about the good life and to acquire an ability to examine these views intelligently (thus concern for education and the freedom of expression).

On the basis of the conception of the individual as free, rational and capable of self-determination, individualists develop their theory about the relationship between the citizen and the state and of the nature and functions of the state.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the individualist conception of the self.

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24.4 THE INDIVIDUALIST THEORY OF THE NATURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE

The individualist theory of the nature and functions of the state is based on its conception of the self as free, rational and self-determining. According to individualism, since individuals are free, rational and capable of self-determination, their interests are better promoted by letting them choose for themselves what sort of life they want to lead. Individual interests are harmed by attempts by the state to enforce a particular view of good life. In the individualist view, the conception of the self as free, rational and self-determining necessarily requires a conception of the state as neutral and minimalist. The primary value in the political order for individualism must, then, be the neutrality of the state. Infact, a distinctive feature of liberal individualism is its emphasis on the state as a neutral and minimal political authority.

A neutral state may be defined as a state, which does not favour, protect, promote or contrarily, discriminate against or penalise any particular individual conception of good. Rather, such a state provides a neutral framework within which different and potentially conflicting conceptions of good can be pursued. It is committed to tolerating different views and conceptions of good life held by its citizens. In other words, the neutral state does not enforce a particular conception of good life. Instead it stays out of the peoples' decisions regarding the best way to lead their lives, thereby leaving each individual free (to an extent possible) to pursue his/her own conception of good or way of life.

24.4.1 Functions of State and Government

What, according to individualism, are the legitimate functions of state and government? In the individualistic view, people have their natural or pre-political freedom. Government arises out of the consent of the governed. State is not a natural entity; rather, it is an artificial but necessary construct. State, infact, is defined as a necessary evil. Since it is a necessary evil, the government that rules the least is considered the best. The functions and role of state are, therefore, limited to guarantee and protection of individual rights and freedom. In other words, the role of state is minimal and limited to the maintenance of law and order and the provision of security to its citizens, beyond which they should be left free. The state should interfere in the liberty of citizens only to prevent one individual from unnecessarily interfering in the liberty of others.

The understanding of the state as neutral and minimalist corresponds to the principle of laissez-faire discussed above, which argues for leaving the individual free from excessive and unjustifiable state intervention and control. In the individualist view, a state that defines its duties beyond that of security and the protection of individual rights restricts freedom and the self-determination of its citizens.

Individualism, thus, sees an <u>inverse</u> relation between the expansion of state activities and the enlargement of the sphere of individual rights and freedom.

The individualist conception of self, its understanding of relationship between the state and the citizen and the proper scope of state activities have been criticised by a number of theoretical perspectives, some of which are fascism, sarvodaya, communism and feminism. However the most profound critique of the individualist perspective is found in the theory of communitarianism. Below, we examine the communitarian critique of individualism.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss the role/functions of the state in the individualist theory.

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24.5   COMMUNITARIANISM: AN INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, the theory of liberal individualism has found its most distinctive and rigorous challenge and critique in what has been labelled as communitarianism. As mentioned above, the term *communitarian* was first elicited by Michael Sandel in his work *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (1982) in which he developed a critique of the liberal individualist foundations of John Rawls's theory of liberal justice. Some of the other communitarian critics of liberal individualism are Alisdair MacIntyre, Michael Walzer and Charles Taylor. These communitarian thinkers are highly inspired by Hegel and Rousseau.

Communitarians are first and foremost concerned with community. Two or more people constitute a community when they share a common conception of good and see this good as partly constitutive of their identity or selves. Such a "constitutive community" may be a close friendship, family relationship, neighbourhood or even a comprehensive political community.

Communitarians insist that each of us as individuals develops our identity, talents and pursuit in life only in the context of a community. We are by nature social beings. Since the community determines and shapes the individual nature, political life must start with a concern for the community, and not the individual. In other words, the locus of philosophical concern in reflecting on the ideal and the just state must be the community and not the individual.

The main fault of liberal individualism according to communitarian thinkers, is then that it is mistakenly and irreparably individualistic. The liberal conception of the relationship between the individual and the state is, according to communitarianism, unduly limited as well as misrepresentative of the true nature of society. In the communitarian view, it is not enough to think in terms of a two-level relationship; with the individual at one level and the state at the other. Groups and communities occupy

an intermediate position between the individual and the state and should be included among the kinds of rights-and duty-bearing units whose inter-relationships are explored. According to communitarians, by emphasising rights and freedom of individuals over society, liberal individualism neglects the importance of community membership and identity to social and political life. It ignores the extent to which the society/community in which people live shapes who they are and the values they have.

Although communitarian critics focus on different aspects of liberal individualism, it is possible to identify some of the main themes and arguments, such as the critique of the liberal-individualist conception of self and its understanding of the nature and functions of the state. Below, we will study the communitarian critique of liberal individualism with reference to these arguments.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is Communitarianism? Explain.

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24.6 THE COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUE OF THE INDIVIDUALIST CONCEPTION OF THE SELF

A great deal of communitarian thought has presented itself in terms of an explicit reference to and a rejection of the individualistic conception of self. The general shape of this communitarian claim is that individualistic political theory takes us (as individuals) to be too distant/separate from our social ends and conceptions of the good in a way that simply fails to correspond to the way in which we actually relate to these ends.

24.6.1 Two Main Limitations of Individualism

Communitarians point to two main limitations of the liberal individualist understanding of the self as detached and separate from social ends: first, it devalues, discounts and downgrades the importance of the community; and second, it presupposes a defective conception of the relation between the self and its ends.

Regarding the first criticism, communitarianism challenges liberal individualism for downgrading and discounting the importance of the community and more specifically, for ignoring the extent to which it is the society or the community which people live in that shape who they are and the values they have.

As seen above, individualism understands people to be self-sufficient outside of society and not in need of any community context in order to develop and exercise their capacities for self-determination. In other words, individualism does not recognise the importance of community membership in shaping a good life for the individual. Communitarians argue that the liberal picture of individuals picking and choosing their conceptions of the good is facile. Sandel and MacIntyre argue that Rawls exaggerates our capacity to stand back from and question our social roles and views the self as 'unencumbered'. On the contrary, communitarians argue that the self is 'embedded' in existing social practices.

For communitarianism, however, the community is a fundamental and an irreplaceable ingredient in the good life of the person. However resilient and independent people may be human existence outside social and community life is unthinkable. People, according to communitarians, are not Robinson Crusoes able to live in complete and permanent isolation. Rather individuals are constituted, and their identity shaped, by the community to which they belong. We, as human beings, are essentially members of a family, religion, tribe, race and nation. As such, rather than being distant from social and community ends and values, we have a history and are placed in specific social circumstances. The attachments and the moral engagements from these community membership determines "who we are" and shape "the values we have". Communitarians, thus, criticise liberal individualism for producing a particular conception of self, which is divorced from the social reality that constitutes it.

As for the second criticism, communitarianism criticises individualism for holding a mistaken or a false understanding of the relationship between the individual self and its ends. As discussed above, individualism understands 'the self to be prior to its ends' in the sense that individuals reserve the right to question, revise and reject their most deeply held convictions about the nature of good life, if these are found to be no longer worth pursuing.

According to communitarianism, to accept this understanding of self is to see oneself as disembodied, unencumbered and sharing a voluntary relationship with one's social ends and attachments. They oppose this voluntaristic picture of the relationship between the self and its ends assumed by individualism. According to them, this picture ignores the way we are embedded or situated and partially constituted by social roles and community membership.

Criticising the individualist conception of the self, communitarians ask whether we can really step back from particular values that we have and change them for new ones, or are we rather made the very people that we are by the values that we endorse so that detachment is impossible? Human beings, they argue, are essentially social beings. As such, we neither <u>choose</u> nor reject our social and community ends and attachments; rather we <u>discover</u> them. We are neither <u>free</u> nor standing at a distance from our social and community ends; instead, we find ourselves <u>located/situated</u> in them. For instance, we do not choose our family, caste or nation; we find ourselves located in them. We, then, determine our conception of the good and ends given our place, position and situation in a family, religion and nation. According to communitarianism, we are never free from all social roles and community identities. Our membership of social groups and communities determine and constitute our identity and understanding of good life. We cannot always stand back and opt out of social relations and community membership. Our social relations and roles, or at least some must be taken as given. As Sandel notes 'I can interpret the meaning of the roles I find myself in, but I cannot reject the roles themselves, or the goals internal to them as worthless. Since these goals are constitutive of me as a person, they have to be taken as given in deciding what to do with my life; the question of good in my life can only be a question of how best to interpret their meaning. It makes no sense to say that they have no value for me, since there is no 'me' standing behind them, no self prior to their ends or constitutive attachments. The self is constituted by and not prior to its ends'.

In this way, communitarians denounce the historical, asocial and disembodied conception of the person found in individualism. According to them, this conception overlooks the way in which it is the kind of society in which people live that affect their understanding, both of themselves and of how they should lead their lives. A valuable life, they argue, is one that is filled with commitments and relations. And what makes them commitments is precisely that they are not the sort of things that people can question every day.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the communitarian critique of the individualistic conception of the self.

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24.7 THE COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUE OF THE IDEA OF STATE NEUTRALITY

The other main focus of communitarian critique of liberal individualism is the latter's understanding of the nature and functions of the state. As discussed above, liberal individualists characterise the state as a minimal and neutral political authority, whose functions are limited to protection of individual rights and maintenance of law and order. Since individuals are free, rational and capable of self-determination, the primary value in political order, according to individualism, ought to be neutrality of the state. As mentioned above, a neutral state is one that is not committed to any particular conception of the good, and remains equidistant from and tolerant of all conceptions of the good.

Communitarians oppose this connection between individual self-determination and state neutrality. According to them, the view that the state should be value-neutral and individuals should be free to make their own choices stems from an atomistic belief that autonomy is protected only when judgements about the good life are taken out of political realm and made on an individual basis. Rejecting such "atomism", communitarians argue that, in reality, individual judgements require sharing of experiences, the give and take of collective deliberation and collective evaluation of shared practices. In other words, individual choices about good life can only be exercised in a particular sort of community and not a cultural marketplace guided by freedom and neutrality, of the type guaranteed by liberal individualism.

The communitarian perspective, therefore, argues for abandonment of liberal neutrality in favour of politics of the common good. Communitarians conceive of the common good as a substantive conception of good life that defines the community way of life.

Rather than being neutral to different individual conceptions of good life, the common good provides standards by which individual preferences and values are evaluated. In other words, the common good forms the basis on which individual conceptions of good are ranked, and the weight given to an individual's conception depends on how much it conforms or contributes to the common good.

In the communitarian view then, a just state is not one that remains neutral towards all individual conceptions of good. Rather, a just state is one which encourages its citizens to adopt conceptions of good that conform to the common good, while discouraging conceptions of good that conflict with it. According to communitarianism, the nature of the state should not be neutral or minimalist; rather it ought to play a role in guiding its citizens in leading a good life. Hence, while liberal individualism encourages each person to define and seek his own "good", communitarianism believes that a political structure has an important role to play in defining and in helping people seek the "good".

Further, communitarians argue that the common good is required not only for guiding people's decisions about the good life, but also for establishing a just and legitimate political community. According to Taylor, the idea of the common good is required to enable citizens to accept the demands of justice demanded by a welfare state. At the heart of the theory of justice in a welfare state is the claim that the privileged ought to sacrifice a portion of their rights and rewards for the sake of others (the underprivileged). For instance, in a liberal capitalist society, the propertied classes are required to sacrifice some of their property (derived in the form of taxes) for the benefit of the non-propertied and for sustaining a just society. According to Taylor, however, the demand for such a sacrifice, in a individualistic society would seem improper as citizens would be required to sacrifice their rights for the sake of those with whom they share no community identity or common way of life. If we are distanced from a community or a shared way of life, we would necessarily be unwilling to shoulder the burdens of liberal justice. In the communitarian view then, justice is rooted in a community whose primary bond is the shared understanding of the good of both man and community.

Check Your Progress 7

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

  ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Examine the communitarian critique of the idea of state neutrality.

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24.8 LET US SUM UP

Above, we have examined the main ideas of the debate between individualism and communitarianism. We shall now conclude this unit by pointing to some of the contributions and limitations of individualism and communitarianism.

As already discussed, the debate between individualism and communitarianism is one between those who favour individual rights and autonomy and those who emphasize the bonds of community and social attachments. While individualism sees political reality as being shaped by decisions and actions of free and rights-bearing individuals, communitarians emphasise the relationship between the person and the community and see this relationship to be the basis of politics. Inspite of this opposition, both individualism and communitarianism have contributed in a big way to the theory and practice of politics.

Historically, the individualist ideas and policies constituted an emancipatory movement against the excesses of organised religions, social hierarchies and the absolute state. It asserted the worth, dignity and freedom of the individual against the absoluteness of the state. This in turn brought about the democratisation of vote. However, there are certain limitations of the principle of individualism. The central assumption of laissez-faire individualism, that it would promote economic progress and social harmony did not come through. Instead, the freedom of the individual, which had been won earlier from the absolutist state, was later denied to the non-propertied class by the system of a free market economy. In this situation, the deprived turned to the state for supportive intervention or welfare. Hence, in the 19th century, the idea of laissez-faire or economic individualism gave way to that of welfare liberalism. Today, once again there are arguments in favour of restoring freedom of the individual by replacing the idea of the welfare state with the principle of laissez-faire. Mainly, the libertarians or the neo-liberals hold this argument.

The communitarian perspective has contributed to the study of politics by rightly emphasising the importance of social/community membership and values in determining the good life of the citizen. Moreover, in societies like India which are basically made up of communities, it is imperative to recognise and respect different community values and identities. However communitarianism, if not complemented with individual rights, may some times have conservative and repressive connotations because of its respect for securing existing communities and their traditions. It can result in the exclusion of some groups whose way of life does not conform to the common good or shared way of life.

In contemporary political theory, there are attempts to highlight the complementarity between individualism and communitarianism. Some of the political theorists who made such attempts are Will Kymlicka, Bhikhu Parekh and Charles Taylor. These theorists attempt to underscore the possibility of a liberal position which does not conflict with and which perhaps take on board the arguments which communitarians have to offer. Such attempts at locating the complementarity between individualism and communitarianism are important for settling some of the major disputes in contemporary political theory and practice.

24.9   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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Kymlicka, Will, 1990, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, Clarendon, Oxford.

Mulhall & Swift, 1992, *Liberals and Communitarians*, Blackwell, Oxford.

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24.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 24.2 and especially, subsection 24.2.1

2) See sub-section 24.2.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See sub-section 24.3.1

2) See sub-section 24.3.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) See Section 24.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) See Section 24.5

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1) See Section 24.6

Check Your Progress Exercise 6

1) See Section 24.7

Check Your Progress Exercise 7

1) See Section 24.8

UNIT 25   FASCISM

Structure

25.0   OBJECTIVES

The basic purpose of this unit is to make you understand the development of fascist ideas and states as extreme right wing political mobilisation. After reading this unit, you will be able to understand:

- Some general features of fascism and the nature of mobilisation to achieve dictatorial aims;

- Multiple ideological strands that contributed to the evolution of the fascist state and its organisational style;

- The socio-economic forces responsible for the emergence of fascism; and

- The nature of state and society under fascist regimes.

25.1   INTRODUCTION

The project of Enlightenment in Europe posed a serious challenge to the older order of society and state based on the notion of divine sanction. By the 18th century, the idea of representation and a state organised around elected representatives had taken roots. This marked the inauguration of modern politics or mobilisation of people around some specific idea or policy to achieve a specific political aim. The institutional forms of this modern politics were elections, parties and modern newspapers with all the political insignia and trappings of modern political culture, which created a public space. This led to a whole range of political choices available and competing with each other for occupying this public space. By the end of the 19th century, this had crystallised in the triple ideological division of Europe into the Left, the Right and the Center. It is important to bear this in mind in order to understand the processes of political mobilisation that brought extreme right wing organisations or fascists to power in a number of European countries during the inter-war period. The growth of monopoly capitalism and resultant intense imperialist rivalries fuelled extreme nationalist ideologies and militarism after the 1870s. In the new political context, appeal for political support was made on the basis of new, seemingly non-class identities, especially, outside the workplace. As a result, unique mass-constituencies such as "war-veterans", "tax-payers", "sport-fans", or simply "national-citizens" were

created. The transformation of these latent social-cleavages into open conflict must also be seen as the necessary background for the growth of right-wing fascist dictatorship in Europe after World War I. The unit begins with some general features of fascism and then, details the ideological and social bases of fascism.

25.2 GENERAL EXPLANATIONS AND FEATURES OF FASCISM

Fascism has been interpreted in multiple ways. A favourite Marxist position is to explain it as a violent, dictatorial instrument of monopoly finance capital, which emerged in the form of brutal attack on workers, rights in a period of intensification of class struggle and acute crisis in the capitalist economy. Another interpretation views fascism as the product of cultural and moral breakdown in the aftermath of brutality and savagery of World War I. According to Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, World War I destroyed the foundations of 19th century Europe and unleashed a long period of crisis marked by war-mobilisation, privation and dislocation. Oswald Spengler wrote his *Decline of the West in 1918* and argued that Western civilisation, characterised by industrialism had reached a period of decline in the 20th century. Spengler attacked the rational strains of modernity in order to celebrate the 'Philosophy of Life' as an alternative. Wilhelm Reich, a neo-psycho analyst, in his *Mass Psychology of Fascism* explains Fascism as a result of extreme neurotic or pathological impulses that lay dormant in the patriarchal family set-up. Another liberal interpretation traces fascism as a product of mass society where traditional solid identities based on kinship, religion, craft and guild and residence break down and a new amorphous mass-society is created. Some others relate it to a unique expression of middle-class radicalism against monopoly business houses' profit-motive. Lastly, it has been seen as a form of Bonapartism or an autonomous authoritarian state led by a charismatic leader independent of any specific class-interests or class-domination.

Fascism emerged as a radical movement based on the rejection of liberalism, democracy and Marxist socialism. However, it differed from the conservative authoritarian groups. The conservative right invoked traditional legitimacies based on the church, the monarchy, kinship etc. whereas the Fascists wanted a radical institutional change and mobilised people in the name of *Organic Nationalism*, a belief in the harmonious collectivity of nation privileged over all other forms of human-identification. As in the human body, the structural relationship of the various organs or parts of the body to each other only serves to define and delimit their roles; so in the organic view of the fascist state, the state as the embodiment of national will takes precedence over the identities and rights of the individuals. This view also accounts for the deep-rooted hostility of fascism to inter-nationalism and to organisations and movements based on inter-nationalism such as communism, freemasonry, the League of Nations and to the multi-national Jewish community. In general, Fascism symbolised the rejection of political culture inherited from Enlightenment and its ideas such as rationalist materialism, the philosophy of individualism and pluralism. The fascist opposition to the democratic-bourgeois institutions and values did not rule out their use of mass, constitutional and plebiscite forms of politics, but they made use of these democratic institutions only to wreck them from inside and in order to undermine their value. Fascism was opposed, in all its forms, to the notion of democracy based on respect for pluralism, individual autonomy and the existence of civil and political liberties.

The mass- mobilisation of fascists was based on the pattern of militarisation of politics. They made use of military insignia and terminology in their mobilisation. As military-organisations are based on unity of command and order and perfect subordination of rank and file to the higher command, so the fascist organisations had their quasi-sacred figure of the leader-the Duce in Italy and the Fuhrer in Germany-whose will was supreme in all matters.

A party militia was often used to reinforce the sense of nationalism and wipe out opposition to their dictatorships. The extreme stress on the masculine principle or male-dominance in the fascist ideology and the exaltation of youth were also related to this militarisation of politics.

Another significant feature of fascism was the organisation of some kind of regulated, class-collaborationist, integrated national-economic structure. The idea of corporatism as a community of people free from class-conflict emerged in reaction to the growth of individualism and the new centralising states. It was a residue of the feudal ideology of mystical 'community' of personal ties. But gradually it acquired a modern, class-collaborationist form. The ideology of societal corporatism believed in giving full autonomy to the corporations, but fascist ideology emphasized state corporatism or the complete subordination of corporations to the needs and requirement of the fascist state.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are the different ways in which fascism has been interpreted?

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2)   Distinguish between fascism and conservative right wing authoritarianism.

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25.3   IDEOLOGICAL STRANDS OF FASCISM

At the ideological level, there was no single unifying idea that guided the fascist movement and state. Fascism emerged from heterogeneous borrowings from various ideas. The basic ingredient of fascism, as we have noted above, was a kind of synthesis of organic nationalism and anti-Marxist ideas. The influence of Sorel's philosophy of action based on intuition, energy and élan was also discernible in the pattern of fascist mass-mobilisation. The fascists also tried to apply Darwin's ideas

to the development of society. They believed that people in any society compete for survival and only superior individuals, groups and races succeed. This belief directly fed into the anti-Jewish politics or anti-semitism practiced mainly under German fascism, but also elsewhere. Such application of Darwin's ideas in the realm of society came to be known as 'Social Darwinism'. Adolph Hitler's autobiographical statement in *Mein Kampf* (1924) made out an explicit case for the application of such Social-Darwinist racial ideas. In this book, Hitler characterised parliamentary democracy as a sin against 'the basic aristocratic principle of nature' and depicted all human culture as the exclusive product of the creative Aryan race and condemned the Jewish community as inferior and lacking in creativity. The mass–extermination of millions of Jews grew out of this insanity of Nazi ideology in Germany where completely impersonal bureaucratic 'extermination' of a people classified as a species of inferior inhumans was put into practice. The political theorist Carl Schmitt wrote his critiques of parliamentary democracy in the 1920s arguing for a plebiscitary dictatorship. The Philosopher Martin Heidegger attacked Western modernity for its technological violence and for a contempt of being. In various ways, these philosophies of the right were to become justifications for the Fascist and Nazi regimes in the 1930s.

Fascism in Italy emerged as the convergence of three different trends. The radical Syndicalist Confederation of Trade Unions split in 1914 over the issue of Italian participation in war (World War-I). The Syndicalists had believed in the 'self–emancipation' of the 'producers' through regulation at factory level. The workers associations or syndicates would replace the state at an appropriate time and these would act as the instruments of self–government. Now the right wing syndicalists moved towards extreme nationalism. They described nations in class terms, i.e., as 'plutocratic' or having colonies or 'proletarians' or 'have not' nations without colonies. Italy was described as a proletarian nation. The Futurists who rejected traditional norms and existing institutions and exalted 'violence', and who were fascinated by speed, power, motors and machines or all the modern technological possibilities, contributed a second major ideological factor. Mussolini's 'socialistic' views and ideas on 'national revolution' was the third major ideological strand of Italian fascism. This heterogeneity of ideas along with local political exigencies was responsible for variations in the form of the fascist movement and state.

25.4 SOCIAL BASES OF FASCISM

In the following sub–sections, we will describe the nature of political and institutional forces that helped in the development of the fascist movement and state and sustained it.

25.4.1 War, Diplomacy and Nationalism

World War I provided the sociological and psychological conditions for the crystallisation of the fascist state. It revealed the capacity of nationalism in the mobilisation of masses and economic resources. It further demonstrated the importance of unity of command, of authority, and moral mobilisation and propaganda in the service of the modern state. After the war, fascism emerged as a vision of a coherent and reunited people, mobilised on the basis of a whole communal liturgy of songs and torch- light procession, highlighting the cult of physical force, violence and brutality.

At the Versailles, the victorious Allied powers tried to extract the terms of defeat from Germany. Severe reparations were imposed on Germany. Germany's military might was reduced to 100,000 men. Germany also suffered in terms of territorial possessions including loss of its colonies. Discontent over the severity of the Allies' peace terms and conflicts and squabbles over the newly drawn frontiers contained

seeds of future conflicts. There was no mechanism to adjudicate rival claims and resolve conflicts. The League of Nations lacked the executive powers to impose peaceful solutions. Hitler was ready to use military force to achieve union with Austria and to get sufficient 'living space' (Lebensraum) for the German people. Italian fascism claimed colonies for a 'proletarian' Italy. Japanese militarists demanded an 'equitable distribution of world resources' and were willing to favour a military action to achieve their aim. Nationalism, war and diplomacy forced individuals and groups within national boundaries to take sides. It also made it possible to restrict the public democratic space. Any person or group could be identified as the 'national enemy' or 'traitors' and wiped out for not owing allegiance or loyalty to the fascist 'national' state. Earlier defeat was attributed to the betrayal of these elements in the fascist propaganda.

25.4.2 The Economic Crisis of 1929

World War I resulted in mass destruction, of resources both physical and human, and hence, productive capacities of societies involved in it. Reconstruction and 'recovery' in Europe after the war was financed by US loans. The process went on smoothly till a crisis began in the US over the rapid drop in agriculture prices. As the world agriculture production began to rise with 'recovery' in Europe, North American agriculture was hit by a rapid drop in the prices and many faced bankruptcies. Soon the stock markets in America were affected in October 1929. As a result of the global integration of the markets, the crash affected all the economies. Plantations, farms and factories closed down throwing millions out of jobs and restricting output. The Industrialists who had taken advances and loans from banks and financial institutions found it difficult to repay. Many banks and financial institutions started facing bankruptcies. With millions out of jobs and factories, there was no demand for goods and services as the purchasing power of the people deteriorated. The economies showed no sign of recovery. In such circumstances, re-militarisation advocated by fascist leaders created jobs not only in the armies, but also in the armament industries. As this stimulated a demand for goods and services, the fascist programme appealed to people in crises-ridden times-especially when it also satisfied their 'national pride'.

25.4.3 The Political Mobilisation for Fascism

The initial programme of fascists in Italy, launched as 'Fasci Di Combattimento' (1919) called for the installation of a republic and reflected demands for radical democratic and socialistic reforms including confiscation of huge war- time profits of capitalists, the suppression of big joint-stock companies and land for landless peasants. These leftist elements of the programme were dropped in 1920 and only an emotive mixture of strident patriotism, justification of war, a concern for national greatness and aversion to the socialist party were retained. The growth of fascist squads, with the support and connivance of state officials and army was directly linked to actual or perceived threats of the left. The support of the traditional conservative elites such as army officers, bureaucrats, and businessmen was utilized and left its imprint on the fascist party and state. In order to achieve a broader mobilisation of people, the military type militia, semi-military propaganda type organisations and regimented fascist trade unions were also created. The Party and its grand Council controlled all these organisations.

Similarly, chauvinist sentiment and popular radical demands in Germany were used by Hitler's fascist organization, the German National Socialist Worker's Party (NSDAP) in order to gain mass political support. It called for a greater Germany with land and colonies, the annulment of the treaty of Versailles, nationalisation of big monopoly business, profit sharing in big enterprises, the abolition of unearned incomes and agrarian reforms. German fascism capitalised on the growing unease created by the Great Depression of 1929 and its impact on the German economy. They made use

of the political instability of the Weimer republic, whose own constitution was used as an instrument to subvert it from within. All these factors created conditions for the rise of the Nazi Party, the organisation of German fascism. It had a particular appeal for those patriotic Germans whose national pride had been hurt by the defeat of Germany in World War I and its subsequent humiliation at Versailles.

25.4.4 The Question of Hegemony and Coercion

The German fascist state associated with the Fuhrer Adolph Hitler earned for itself the distinction of being the most barbaric and destructive regime that used industrial techniques for the execution of planned mass murder and genocide. The secret state police office, or 'Gestapo' as it came to be known in Germany was created in 1933 under the Prussian Interior Ministry, and rapidly attained autonomy from the provincial government. From 1934, Heinrich Himmler became the head of this nation-wide fascist organ of terror. Its Prussian section was headed by Reinhard Heydrich, who was also in charge of the SD, a party intelligence organisation affiliated to the dreaded SS, with a nation-wide network of informers. It became the internal disciplinary executive of the German fascist state. Such organisations of terror acquired the complete power of life and death over every German. Any opposition to the fascist state was ruthlessly suppressed. Absolute power was concentrated in the hands of the Fuhrer. The use of a rational bureaucratic mechanism in order to exterminate the gypsies, Jews and political opponents through concentration camps is a well-known aspect of the fascist state. All this points towards overwhelming dependence of the fascist state on the coercive machinery of state power. Similarly, in Italy, Spain and other fascist regimes, every attempt was made to dismantle democratic institutions of the civil society and replace them with institutionalised dictatorships based on the personal command of the dictators. All this necessitated more and more regimentation of the civil society. Some scholars even characterise fascism as a 'totalitarian state' or a state, which acquires day-to-day control over the life of its citizens. But despite the dictatorial rule, fascism made use of certain consent-building experiments. At the ideological level, use of nationalist sentiments and even anti-Semitism had a popular sanction behind it.

Apart from this, some new methods were also tried. The fascist state in Italy created the Opera Nazinale Dopolavoro in 1925. Its main concern was the organisation of leisure time for the working people. It ran a huge network of local clubs and recreational facilities with libraries, bars, billiard halls and sport grounds. The Dopolavoro circles arranged concerts, plays, films shows, and organised picnics and provided cheap summer holidays for children. By the 1930s, there were about 20,000 such circles in Italy. Moreover, although the Syndical Law of 1926 brought labour under the control of the state in the interest of production and confirmed the fascist trade unions in their monopoly of negotiations with employers and banned strikes, the fascist state also introduced some welfare schemes for the workers in the 1930s. Family allowances were given in 1934, largely to compensate for the loss of income resulting from the imposition of a forty-hour week. Insurance against sickness and accident was incorporated into wage agreements, and later in the 1930s, Christmas bonus and holiday pay were introduced. All such measures were meant to establish legitimacy of the state that had abolished civil liberties and democratic rights. Compared to Italy, German labour was more tightly regimented under the Nazi regime.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Explain what ideological strands contributed to the growth of fascism.

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2)   How was Italian fascism different from its German counter-part?

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25.5   STATE AND SOCIETY UNDER FASCISM

The fascist state emerged as the institutionalisation of personal dictatorship. In Italy, all opposition parties and organisations were banned in October 1926. The Public Safety Law (1926) made the security of the state take precedence over personal liberties. The Fascist Party itself was bureaucratised and syndicalist ideas were suppressed within the party. Many industrialists from North Italy including the owner of Fiat Company, Giovanni Oienyale, had financed Mussolini's fascist organisation. Private capital was a beneficiary of the fascist control of labour. The "Corporate State" was formally created in 1934 with 22 combined corporations of employers and employees, but they lacked the real power to take economic decisions. State intervention in the economic life of the Italian nation was marginal in the early part of fascist regime. The Great Depression and the need to fulfill imperialist ambitions, especially in the Mediterranean Sea and Africa for its aggressive nationalist-militarist project led to an increased state intervention in the economic life. The foundation of the Institute for Industrial Reconstruction (IRI) and Instituto Mobiliare Italiano (IMI) in the 1930s reflected this trend of economic regulation in the service of modern warfare. However, even in 1940, IRI possessed only about 17.8% of the total capital assets of Italian industry. The state, in particular, focused on the growth of chemical, electrical and machine industries and gave impetus to modernisation through electrification of railways and telephone and radio industry. However, compared to Germany, investments in military-production were low despite the regime's rhetoric of Italy "being in a permanent state of war". Moreover, despite early radical denouncements of the monopoly capitalist class, the fascist state helped in cartelisation and trusticisation i.e. creation of large industrial federations.

Mussolini also tried to appease the Church. Large grants were made for the repair of war-damaged churches. In 1923, religious education was made compulsory in all secondary schools. The Roman question was finally settled in 1929. The Lateran Pacts were signed with the Church, giving virtual control of religious-education to the

Church and the Pope's right to govern the Vatican was recognized. The Church's main lay organization, Catholic Action, was guaranteed freedom provided it stayed out of politics.

The personal absolutism and party's control of social life was more stringent in Germany. In Italy, big business, industry, finance, army and professional bureaucracy retained a large degree of autonomy and fascism came to power on the basis of a tacit compromise with these established institutions and elites. In Germany, the Enabling Act (March 1933) became the legal basis for Hitler's dictatorship. Legislative power was transferred to the executive. The bureaucracy was purged of politically undesirable and 'non-Aryan' elements. The federal character of the state was destroyed. The basic constitutional rights were suppressed. The "rule of law" was transformed into the 'rule of leader'. The extra-legal notion of the Fuhrer, to whom bureaucracy and the army swore 'unconditional obedience', assumed crucial importance in the administrative functioning and signified burial of constitutionalism. The will of the leader became the basis for the legitimacy of law. The independence of the judiciary was completely destroyed. Furthermore, the press was completely controlled. Liberal and Jewish-owned newspapers and the Socialist Press were forced to close down. Any type of literature, and art that was found anti-thetical to the fascist perception was banned. The control of cultural life of citizens through propaganda and education became one of the chief goals of the Nazi regime. All education was transformed in accordance with fascist ideals. Text- books were re-written. Jews were forbidden to teach and racial theories of 'Aryan- German' master race supremacy became a part of the curricula.

The fascist state in Germany also attempted to achieve a complete regimentation of labour. "Trustees" appointed by the owners fixed wages. A labour front was created in October 1934. It operated not as a trade union, but as a propaganda machine, and included employers and professionals as members. Its stated aim was the maximisation of work, and the fascists controlled it. The fascist state's attitude to women was based on ultra-conservative patriarchal sentiments. The social role of women was defined by the slogan of "Kids, Kitchen and Church".

The most oppressive aspect of fascism in Germany was a systematic persecution of Jews. The ideology of Nazi party in Germany was informed by a strong hatred of the Jews and an intense obsession with the maintenance of the Aryan purity of the German Master race. The Jews were stereotyped as inferior, racially impure and a source of all ills of Germany. They were deprived of citizenship, places in the universities and administration. Their businesses were attacked. They were subjected to all sorts of unprecedented discrimination. Later on, millions of them were sent to concentration camps and massacred during World War II. Italian fascism in contrast, lacked any systematic policy of racial anti-semitism, at least, up to 1937. However, in November 1938, under the influence of the Nazis, racial anti-Jews laws were also passed in Italy.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Describe the salient features of the fascist state and society.

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25.6   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have learnt the basic features of the fascist movement and the state, the role of war in preparing the conditions for the emergence of fascism and the basic ideological strands that contributed to fascism and its organisational styles. We should understand fascism as distinct from the conservative right-wing movements, it should be viewed as a radical attempt from a rightist perspective to restructure society and its institutions. Extreme nationalism bordering on imperial designs to obtain colonies, complete subordination of institutions like the judiciary, the press, labour-organisation and concentrations of all executive, legislative and judicial powers in the hands of dictators, and deep rooted hostility to democratic rights were some of the key elements of fascist polities. However, there were subtle variations within the fascist practices due to local specific conditions. Fascism was not a homogenous movement. Moreover, although coercive-machinery of the state was used to eliminate all political oppositions, fascist states also used certain measures to maintain legitimacy of dicatorial regimes, even if this legitimacy was based on chauvinistic and popular racial feelings.

25.7   KEY WORDS

Anti-Semitism	:	prejudice against Jews.
Corporatism	:	A semi-collectivist creed that attempted harmonious relationship between employees and employers by binding them in a common organisation.
Militia	:	A semi-military organisation.
Mobilisation	:	preparing people for action around a particular idea.
Social-Darwinism	:	application of Darwin's ideas to the development of society, a belief that people in society compete for survival and only superior individuals, groups and races succeed.
Syndicalism	:	A belief in the self-emancipation of the producers through regulation at the factory level by workers' syndicates or associations.

25.8   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Heywood, A, *Key Concepts in Politics,* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000

Laqueur, W.(ed), *Fascism: A Reader's Guide*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1979

Goldhagen, D.J., *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust,* New York: Random House, 1996

Hayes, Paul, *Fascism,* Allen & unwin, 1973

Weber, Eugene, *Varieties of Fascism,* Van-vest Rand Rainhold, 1964.

25.9   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1)   See Section 25.2

2)   See Section 25.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1)   See Section 25.3

2)   See Sections 25.3, 25.4 and 25.5

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1)   See Section 25.5

UNIT 26   MARXISM

Structure

26.0   OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will read about the theory and practice of Marxism, propounded by Karl Marx and others. The basic tenets of the philosophy comprising of dialectical and historical materialism, the theory of surplus value, class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and communism are discussed at length. After going through the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the pre-Marxian strands of socialism such as utopian socialism;

- Enumerate, describe and discuss the basic postulates of Marxism;

- Comment on other important components of the Marxist theory such as the theories of alienation and freedom and finally; and

- Critique Marxism as well as comment on its contemporary relevance.

26.1   INTRODUCTION

The present unit aims at examining and explaining the principles of Marxism, which is the most revolutionary ideology of our age. Along with liberalism, Marxism ranks as the most important philosophy of our time. Liberalism, Idealism and Marxism are the three important theories of Political Science. C.L Wayper has divided various views regarding the state into three parts, viz., the state as a machine, as an organism and as a class. In other words, the organic view of the state, the mechanistic view of the state and the class view of the state. The organic view is idealism, the mechanistic view is liberalism and the class view is marxism.

The present unit is subdivided into the definition of Marxism, Utopian and Scientific Socialism, Revolutionary and Evolutionary Socialism, the main principles of Marxism, a critique and a conclusion. The main principles of Marxism, are seven, viz., Dialectical

Materialism, Historical Materialism, Theory of Surplus Value, Class Struggle, Revolution, Dictatorship of the Proletariat and Communism. The concept of Alienation and freedom generally associated with younger Marx or the humanist face of Marxism have also been dealt with.

26.2   WHAT IS MARXISM?

Marxism generally refers to the ideas of the German philosopher, Karl Marx. But Marxism does not mean exclusively the ideas of Marx. It includes the ideas of Marx, Friedrich Engels and their supporters, who call themselves Marxists. Thus, Marxism refers to the body of ideas, which predominantly contains the ideas of Karl Marx. Marxism is a living philosophy. Marxist thinkers are continuously contributing to the philosophy of Marxism. Thus, it is said that Marx is dead, but Marxism is still alive.

The Marxist philosophy existed even before the birth of Karl Marx. This is the reason David Mclellan has written three volumes on Marxism, viz., *Marxism before Marx*; *Thought of Karl Marx* and *Marxism after Marx*. Similarly, the Polish thinker Leszek Kolakowski has authored three volumes on Marxism. The point once again is that Marxism does not mean only the ideas of Karl Marx.

26.2.1 Utopian and Scientific Socialism

As said earlier, Marxism existed before Marx. These are known as the early socialist thinkers. Karl Marx calls them Utopian Socialists. They were utopian, because their diagnosis of the social ills was correct, but their remedy was wrong. It was impracticable, and therefore, they were called utopian. The world 'utopia' was derived from a novel of Thomas Moore titled, 'Utopia.' It refers to an imaginary island, called Utopia, where a perfect socio-economic- political system existed. There was no exploitation and people were happy. Some important utopian socialist thinkers are Robert Owen, Charles Fourier, Louis Blanc, Saint Simon, Sismondi and Proudhon.

Marx calls his socialism as 'Scientific Socialism'. It is scientific, because it offers the economic interpretation of history by using the scientific methodology of dialectical materialism. It explains not only the true causes of exploitation, but also offers the scientific remedy of revolution and dictatorship of the proletariat to cure the social ills of exploitation. It not only offers scientific reasons for class division and also struggle in society, but also provides for a scientific mechanism to establish a classless and exploitation less society.

26.2.2 Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism

Socialism is further divided into evolutionary and revolutionary socialism. Evolutionary socialism does not believe in revolution and wants to attain socialism through peaceful means. Evolutionary Socialists have faith in parliamentary democracy and want to bring social change through the ballot. They eschew violence and so, are opposed to a violent revolution. They also do not subscribe to the dictatorship of the proletariat and advocate a peaceful democratic transition from a class divided to a classless society. Fabian Socialism, Guild Socialism, Democratic Socialism are all various types of evolutionary socialism.

Revolutionary socialism, on the other hand, believes in class struggle, revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. According to them, social change cannot be peaceful. It has to be violent. A peaceful revolution is a contradiction in terms. Revolution is the midwife of social change, and this revolution must be violent. Revolutionary Marxism is generally identified with the scientific socialism of Karl Marx. Syndicalism is also a type of revolutionary socialism.

Evolutionary socialism also traces its roots from the ideas of Karl Marx and Engels. They have talked about the withering away of the state. Exponents of evolutionary socialism have picked up the theory of withering away of the state, and argued that gradually through peaceful means, social change can be effected and an exploitationless and classless society can be established. However, the critics of evolutionary socialism do not accept this thesis, and argue that the idea of withering away of the state applies only to the socialist state or the dictatorship of the proletariat and not to the capitalist state. It will never wither away. It has to be smashed through a violent revolution. Therefore, the logic of evolutionary socialism is flawed.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

    ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Distinguish between Utopian and Scientific Socialism.

                Or

Distinguish between Evolutionary and Revolutionary Socialism.

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26.3   BASIC PRINCIPLES OF MARXISM

The basic tenets of Marxism are the following: dialectical materialism, historical materialism, the theory of surplus value, class struggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat and communism. Now, these principles will be discussed in detail.

26.3.1 Dialectical Materialism

Dialectical materialism is the scientific methodology developed by Marx and Engels for the interpretation of history. Here, Marx has borrowed heavily from his predecessors, particularly, the Geman philosopher Hegel. Dialectics is a very old methodology, employed to discover truth by exposing contradictions, through a clash of opposite ideas. Hegel refined it by developing the trilogy of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis. It is popularly known as the *Dialectical Triad*. Progress or growth takes place through the dialectical process. At every stage of growth, it is characterised by contradictions. These contradictions induce further changes, progress, and development. The thesis is challenged by its anti-thesis. Both contain elements of truth and falsehood. Truth is permanent, but falsehood is transitory. In the ensuing conflict of the thesis and the anti-thesis, the truth remains, but the false elements are destroyed. These false elements constitute contradictions. The true elements of both the thesis and the anti-thesis are fused together in a synthesis. This evolved synthesis during the course of time becomes a thesis and so, it is again challenged by its opposite anti-thesis, which again results in a synthesis. This process of thesis, anti-thesis, and synthesis continues until the stage of perfection is reached. In this evolutionary process, a stage will come, when there will be no false elements. These will be destroyed at different stages of evolution. Ultimately, only the truth remains,

because it is never destroyed. It will constitute the perfect stage and there will be no contradictions and so, there will be no further growth. The dialectical process will come to an end after arriving at the perfect truth. It is the contradictions, which move the dialectical process and a complete elimination of contradictions marks the end of the dialectical process itself.

For materialism, Marx is highly indebted to the French school of materialism, mainly the French materialist thinker Ludwig Feuerbach. It is the matter, which is the ultimate reality and not the idea. The latter is a reflection of the former. How we earn our bread determines our ideas. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence but, on the contrary, it is their social existence that determines their consciousness. Marx has observed that "Hegel's dialectics was standing on its head and I have put it on its feet". Hegel has developed dialectical idealism. For him, it is the idea, which ultimately matters. Idea lies in the base or the sub-structure, which determines everything in the superstructure. Society, polity, economy are in this superstructure which is shaped by the prevalent dominant ideas of the age. Ultimately it is the idea, which matters, and the other things are only its reflection. Marx replaced idea with matter. According to Marx, the material or the economic forces are in the substructure and the idea is a part of the superstructure. Idea is the reflection of material forces. The economic forces determine the idea and not vice-versa. Thus, Marx has reversed the position of idea and matter. This is the reason that he claims that "in Hegel it was upside down and I have corrected it".

The base or the substructure consists of the forces of production and the relations of production. These two together constitute the mode of production. When there is a change in the forces of production because of development in technology, it brings changes in the relations of production. Thus, a change in the mode of production brings a corresponding change in the superstructure. Society, polity, religion, morals, values, norms, etc. are a part of the superstructure and shaped by the mode of production.

26.3.2 Historical Materialism

Historical materialism is the application of dialectical materialism to the interpretation of history. It is the economic interpretation of world history by applying the Marxian methodology of dialectical materialism. The world history has been divided into four stages: primitive communism, the slavery system, feudalism and capitalism.

Primitive communism refers to the earliest part of human history. It was a propertyless, exploitationless, classless and stateless society. Means of production were backward, because technology was undeveloped. The community owned the means of production. They were not under private ownership and so there was no exploitation. Stone made hunting weapons, the fishing net and hooks were the means of production. The entire community owned these. Production was limited and meant for self-consumption. There was no surplus production and so there was no private property. Since there was no private property, there was no exploitation. Since there was no exploitation, there was no class division. Since there was no class division, there was no class struggle. Since there was no class struggle, there was no state. It was, thus, a communist society, but of a primitive type. Though life was difficult, it was characterised by the absence of exploitation, conflict and struggle.

Technology is not static; it evolves continuously. Technological development results in the improvement of production. This leads to surplus production, which results in the emergence of private property. Means of production are now not under the community, but private ownership. Society is, thus, divided into property owning and propertyless classes. By virtue of the ownership of the means of production, the property owning class exploits the propertyless class. Class division in society and exploitation lead to class struggle. Since there is class struggle, the dominant class, that is the property

owning class creates an institution called the state to suppress the dissent of the dependent class, that is the propertyless class. Thus, the state is a class instrument and a coercive institution. It protects the interests of its creator, that is the property owning class.

In the beginning, this society is divided into masters and slaves. Masters are the haves and the slaves are the have nots. The slaves carry out all the production work. The masters live on the labour of slaves. They exploit the slaves and whenever the slaves resent, the state comes to the rescue of the masters. Thus, the state serves the interests of the master class. It uses its coercive powers to suppress the voice of the slaves.

The slave system is succeeded by feudalism. Technological development leads to changes in the means of production and this brings about corresponding changes in the relations of production and the superstructure. The slave system is replaced by the feudal mode of production and it is reflected in the society, polity, morality and the value system. The division of society into feudal lords and peasants characterises feudalism. The feudal lords own the means of production, that is land, but the peasants carry out the production work. By virtue of ownership of the land, the feudal lords get a huge share of the produce without doing anything. Thus, the feudal lords are like parasites, who thrive on the labour of peasants. Feudal lords exploit the peasants and if the peasants ever resist their exploitation, their resistance is ruthlessly crushed by the state, which protects and serves the interests of the feudal lords. The peasants are a dependent and exploited class, whereas the lords are a dominant and exploiting class.

Capitalism succeeds feudalism. Technological development continues and so there is change in the forces of production, which leads to a mismatch between the forces of production and the relations of production, which is resolved through a bourgeois revolution. Thus the contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production is resolved. The feudal mode of production is replaced by the capitalist mode of production. Division of society into the bourgeois and the proletariat class characterises capitalism. The bourgeois class owns the means of production, but the proletariat class carries out the production. Proletariats are the industrial workers. They sell their labour in lieu of meager wages. It is usually a subsistence wage, which is sufficient only to support them and their families, so that an uninterrupted supply of labour force can be maintained. Production is not for consumption by the self, but for profit. The desire to maximise profit leads to a reduction in wages and a rise in working hours. This further deteriorates the lot of the working class, which is eventually pushed into a situation, where it has nothing to loose except its chains. This paves the way for the proletariat revolution.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Explain in your own words the meaning of Dialectical Materialism.

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2) Enumerate and describe the salient features of either primitive communism or feudalism.

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26.3.3 Theory of Surplus Value

Marx has developed the theory of surplus value to explain the exploitation in the capitalist society. Here, Marx was influenced by the theories of classical economists. He subscribed to the labour theory of value. The value of a commodity is determined by the amount of labour consumed in its production. Labour is also a commodity. It can be bought and sold like other commodities. Out of the four factors of production, labour is the most vital. In its absence, the other factors of production are useless. Land, capital and organisation are the other factors of production. It is the application of labour to these factors of production, which makes them productive. In the absence of labour, they are sterile.

If a wage is paid in proportion to the amount of value created by a labourer, then there is no exploitation, But this is not the case in capitalism. Labour is unique in the sense that it creates more value than is required for its maintenance. The difference between the value created by the worker and the value paid to the worker, as wages, constitute the surplus value and the profit of the capitalist. For instance, if a worker has created a value of say Rs. 25,000 in a month and has been paid Rs. 15,000 as wages, then the remaining Rs. 10,000 will constitute the profit of the capitalist. Thus, the worker always creates more value than he is actually paid. This surplus value created by the worker is the profit of the bourgeois, which has been defended by the classical economist, because it leads to capital accumulation, which is invested further in new industries and enterprises and leads to growth and prosperity. For the Marxists, it is the exploitation of the workers, which has to be abolished.

With the growth of capitalism and the rise in competition, the wages of the workers continue to fall and reach the stage of subsistence level. Subsistence wage is the minimum possible wage; beyond this the wage cannot be reduced. It is the minimum possible wage for the survival and perpetuation of the labour force. Thus, cut throat competition in capitalism leads to deterioration of the lot of the proletariat. This intensifies class struggle and eventually leads to revolution.

26.3.4 Class Struggle

According to Marx, the history of all hitherto existing society has been the history of class struggle. Except the primitive communist stage, all historical ages have been characterised by the antagonism between the dominant and dependent classes or the haves and the have nots. This antagonism is caused by class contradictions; it is the result of exploitation by the property owning class of the property less class. Throughout history, there have been two contending classes in every epoch. In the slavery system, they were the masters and the slaves, in feudalism, the feudal lords and the peasants and in capitalism, the bourgeois and the proletariat. The masters, the feudal lords and the bourgeois are the owners of the means of production. However, it is the slaves, the peasants and the proletariat, who carry out production,

but their produce is taken away by their exploiters and in return, they are given just enough for their survival. By virtue of the ownership of the means of production, the property owning class exploits the propertyless class. This is the main source and cause of class struggle. The interests of the contending classes are irreconcilable. No compromise or rapprochement is possible between the contending classes. The inherent contradictions of contending classes of every epoch can be resolved only through the annihilation of the exploiting classes.

26.3.5 Revolution

Class struggle paves the way for revolution. Class struggle is imperceptible, but revolution is perceptible. Intensification of class struggle prepares the ground for revolution. Class struggle is a long drawn affair, but revolution is short, swift and violent. In the words of Marx, 'revolution is the indispensable mid-wife of social change'. Transition from one historical stage to another occurs through revolution. Feudal revolution brought an end to the slavery system; the bourgeois revolution ended feudalism and the proletariat revolution will bring an end to capitalism. Thus, any epoch making social change is always brought about by a revolution.

Revolution occurs when there is incompatibility between the means or forces of production and the relations of production. To resolve this incompatibility, revolution occurs, which brings corresponding changes in the relations of production and the superstructure to make it compatible with the forces or means of production. Technological development brings changes in the means of production. The handmill gives you a society with the feudal lord, and the steam-mill, a society with the industrial capitalist.

Proletarian revolution will be the last revolution in the annals of history. Revolution occurs to resolve contradictions. So revolution will not take place, if there is no contradiction in society. After the proletarian revolution, there will not be any further revolution, because there will be no contradiction. However, revolution will take place only when the forces of production have fully matured. Revolution cannot be advanced or postponed. It will occur when the forces of production have matured and do not match the relations of production. Revolution brings an end to this mismatch.

The sequence and direction of social evolution cannot be changed. No stage can overleap an other stage. No stage can be short-circuited. Primitive communism will lead to the slavery system, the slavery system to feudalism and feudalism to capitalism. Dictatorship of the proletariat or socialism will succeed capitalism, which is the penultimate stage of social evolution. Dictatorship of the proletariat will eventually lead to the establishment of communism. With the proletarian revolution, revolution itself will come to an end.

26.3.6 Dictatorship of the Proletariat

The proletariat revolution will lead to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is also known as the *socialist state*. The state apparatus created by the bourgeois to oppress the proletariat will be taken over by the proletariat themselves. Now, the table will be turned and the proletariat will use the state apparatus against the bourgeois. The bourgeois will try to stage a counter-revolution to restore the old system and so, the coercive institutions of the state are needed to restrain the bourgeois.

The state has always been the instrument of oppression. The dominant class to oppress the dependent class has created the state. It is a class instrument. The state protects and serves the interests of its creator, which is the property owning class. This class has always been in a minority, whether it is the masters or the feudal lords or the capitalists. Thus, a minority has been oppressing a majority viz., the slaves or

the peasants or the proletariat through the coercive organs of the state. Under the dictatorship of the proletariat, for the first time the state comes under the control of the majority. Now, for the first time, the state's coercive apparatus is used by the majority against the minority.

According to Marx, all states have been dictatorships and so the socialist state is no exception. It is also a dictatorship. The state has always been used by one class to suppress the other class. In the socialist state, the proletariat class will use the coercive organs of the state such as the army, the police, prison, judicial system etc., against the bourgeois class. Marx argues that if democracy means the rule of the majority, then the proletariat state is the most democratic state, because for the first time in the annals of history, power comes into the hands of the majority. Before the proletariat state, power has always been in the hands of the minority. So if majority rule is the criterion, then only the proletariat state can be called a democratic state.

26.3.7 Communism

Under the living care of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialist state will blossom forth into communism. Socialism is a transitory stage. It will pave the way for the eventual emergence of communism. Which is stable and permanent. This will be the phase of social evolution. After the establishment of communism, there will be no further social change. The dialectical process will come to an end. A perfect, rational social system will be established, free from antagonisms and contradictions. There will be no class contradictions and so, no class struggle. Infact communism will be a classless, stateless, private propertyless and exploitationless society.

In a communist society, there will be no private property in the form of private ownership of the means of production. The means of production will be under the ownership of the community. Cooperation and not cutthroat competition will be the basis of communist society. Production will be for consumption and not to earn profit. Profit motive will be replaced by social needs. Since there will be no private property, there will be no exploitation. Since there will be no exploitation, there will be no class division, no property owning and propertyless class, no haves and have nots or no dominant and dependent class. Since there is no class division, there is no class struggle and so no need of the state. This is the reason why a communist society will be a classless and stateless society.

State is the instrument of exploitation. It is a class instrument and a result of class division in society. Since there is only one class of workers in communism and no other class to suppress or oppress, there will not be any need of the state. It will become redundant in a communist society. It will be relegated to the museum. The state, however, will not be smashed; it will gradually wither away.

Communist society will be governed by the Louise Blanc principle of 'from each according to his capacity to each according to his need'. There will be no place for parasites. He who will not work will not eat also. There will be only one class of workers. The entire society will be converted into the working class. There will be no place for exploitation. It will be an egalitarian society. There will be harmonious relationship among the people.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is the theory of surplus value?

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2) Explain the concept of class struggle.

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3) Enumerate and describe the salient features of a communist society.

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26.4   THEORY OF ALIENATION

There have been two distinct phases in the Marxist philosophy. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, present the human face of Marxism. In the *Manuscripts,* capitalism has been analysed without reference to class antagonism, class struggle and violent revolution. Here, the evil influences of capitalism have been explained through alienation and loss of identity and freedom. These views of Marx have been identified with a younger Marx. There occurs an epistemological break in Marx's philosophy with the writing of *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. The later Marx is known as mature Marx, who developed the theory of scientific socialism. Marx's earlier ideas were discovered only in 1932, with the publication of the *Manuscripts.*

The theory of alienation is an important Marxian concept. The Hungarian Marxist George Lukacs had developed the theory of alienation entirely on his own even before the publication of *Manuscripts* in 1932. However, the concept of alienation became popular only after the publication of the *Manuscripts.* Marx has identified four levels of alienation. Firstly, man is alienated from his own product and from his work process, because the worker plays no part in deciding what to produce and how to produce it. Secondly, man is alienated from nature. His work does not give him a sense of satisfaction as a creative worker. Under mechanisation, work tends to become increasingly routinised and monotonous. Thirdly, man is alienated from other men. The competitive character of the capitalist system forces everyone to live at someone else's expense and divides society into antagonistic classes. Lastly, man is alienated from himself. The realm of necessity dominates his life and reduces him to the level of an animal existence, leaving no time for a taste of literature, art, and cultural heritage. The capitalist system subordinates all human faculties and qualities

to the conditions created by the private ownership of capital and property. The capitalist himself, no less than the worker, becomes a slave of the tyrannical rule of money.

26.5 THEORY OF FREEDOM

As a humanist philosophy, Marxism is primarily a philosophy of human freedom. Freedom consists not only in securing material satisfaction o f human needs, but also in removing the conditions of dehumanisation, estrangement and alienation. The capitalist system is characterised by necessity as opposed to freedom. Necessity refers to the conditions under which the inevitable laws of nature govern the life of man. These laws of nature exist independent of man's will. Man can acquire scientific knowledge of these laws, but cannot change them at his will. Freedom does not consist in an escape from necessity. Freedom lies in the knowledge of these laws of nature and the capacity to make these laws work towards the definite end of the emancipation of human society.

Thus, a sound knowledge of the productive forces operating behind the capitalist system and a programme to make these forces work toward human ends were essential instruments of human freedom. Only a programme of socialist revolution would accomplish humanity's leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom. The emancipation of human society and the realisation of true freedom is possible only with the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of communism.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss either the theory of alienation or the theory of freedom.

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26.6 A CRITICAL APPRAISAL AND AN OVERVIEW

Marxism has been subjected to severe criticism. It has simplified the class division of society into two classes, the haves and the have nots. This is far from the reality. Society is very complex and is divided into numerous groups. There is no clear cut division of classes as envisaged by Marxism. Moreover, there exists a huge middle class. Marxian thinkers predicted that with the advancement of capitalism, the middle class would disappear and merge with the proletariat class. But this has not happened so far and there is no possibility of it ever happening. Infact, the reverse has happened; the middle class has strengthened its position and increased its size. Marxists also predicted the narrowing of the capitalist class. Here again, just the opposite has happened. Instead of shrinking, the base of the capitalist class has been enlarged. Marx predicted the accumulation of capital, but there has been the dispersal of capital. The condition of the proletariat class has not deteriorated as predicted by Marx. Thus, the actual working of the capitalist system has proved the Marxist theory of classes to be wrong.

Marxists had predicted that the inherent contradictions of capitalism would lead to its collapse. But this has not happened so far. No advanced capitalist system has collapsed. Capitalism has proved its resilience. It is the socialist system, which has collapsed in various parts of the world. Capitalism has the tremendous capacity of adaptation. This is the main reason for its survival. Marx failed to assess capitalism correctly.

According to Marx, the proletarian revolution will occur only when capitalism has matured. There is no chance of the proletarian revolution occurring and succeeding in a backward feudal society. But this is exactly, what has happened in reality. Revolution has taken place only in feudal societies such as Russia, China, Vietnam, Cuba etc. This was the main issue of debate between two factions of Russian Marxists, the Mensheviks led by Plekhanov and the Bolsheviks led by Lenin. Ultimately, the Bolsheviks prevailed over the Mensheviks, but the latter were closer to classical Marxist teachings. According to Marx, his teachings can lessen the birth pangs, but cannot short circuit the various stages of social evolution. However, Lenin and Trotsky in Russia and Mao in China established communism in a feudal society without going through the process of first establishing capitalism. To resolve this obvious contradiction, Trotsky developed the 'theory of Permanent Revolution'. He fused the bourgeois revolution with the proletarian revolution in his theory. These two revolutions can occur simultaneously in the view of Trotsky. Though this seems to be a more practical view, it does not confirm to the basic Marxian principles.

The Marxian theory of economic determinism has been severely criticised. It is not only the economic factor, but other factors also that are equally important in bringing about social change. If economy determines polity, society, morality, value system etc., then economy itself is shaped by these. It is a *two way* process. Economic forces are not immune to the influences of polity, society, culture, religion, values, norms etc. If the base or the substructure shapes the superstructure, then the superstructure also shapes the substructure. Thus, the theory of economic determinism cannot be accepted. Later Marxist thinkers like Gramsci accepted the important role of the superstructure.

The Marxian concepts of the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism suffer from several flaws. After the proletarian revolution, the proletariat will seize the state apparatus from the bourgeois. With the establishment of communism, the state will become redundant and will gradually wither away. This has not happened. In socialist society, the state infact became all-powerful. Instead of weakening, the state has consolidated its position and there is no possibility of its fading away. The Marxian dream of a stateless society will never be realised. The state will continue to play a leading role in a socialist and communist society and there is no possibility of it ever being relegated to the museum.

The socialist state wherever it has been established, has either been overthrown or discredited. Wherever, it is still surviving, it has been compelled to introduce wideranging changes, which do not confirm to the teachings of classical Marxism. The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe, disintegration of the Soviet Union and economic reforms in China have led thinkers like Francis Fukuyama to write the obituary of Marxism. Fukuyama in his famous book *End of History* proclaims the triumph of capitalism over communism in the post-cold war world. According to him, with the victory of capitalism over communism, history has come to an end. Here, Fukuyama talks of history in the Hegelean sense. After capitalism, there will be no further economic and political evolution. Capitalism is the most rational and perfect system. It is the most perfect ideology and philosophy. So ideological and philosophical evolution comes to an end with the emergence of capitalism. Its main challenger communism has been defeated and this further proves its claim that it is the best possible social, economic and political system ever evolved by humanity.

It is very difficult to accept the thesis propounded by Fukuyama. The importance of Marxism lies in two fields. Firstly, it has been used as a tool for social analysis. Secondly, it gives a voice to the voiceless. It is the philosophy of the poor, the oppressed and the suppressed people. If the contribution of Marxism is analysed in these two fields, we will reach the conclusion that it is still relevant and has not become redundant as claimed by the liberal critics. Marxism as an approach of social analysis is still relevant as it was in the past. Its importance as a method of social analysis will never diminish, irrespective of whether the socialist state survives or not.

Marxism as an ideology has definitely lost its edge, but it has not become totally redundant. As long as exploitation will continue, people will be oppressed and suppressed, Marxism will remain relevant. Marxism as a philosophy of the exploited and the oppressed will continue to inspire the masses to strive for their emancipation. So there is no question of its defeat and irrelevance. Infact the systems, which have collapsed, were not organised on classical Marxian principles. They were a variant of Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism. So it is the Leninist-Stalinist systems, which have collapsed in Europe and elsewhere and not classical Marxism.

Marxism as an approach will continue to be used by scholars for social analysis and the exploited-oppressed people will continue to espouse Marxist philosophy for their emancipation. Here, Marxism will never become irrelevant. It will always provide an alternative philosophy to liberalism. Marxism will also act as an effective check on the excesses of liberalism. It will mitigate the rigors of the capitalist system.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss the major grounds of attack on the Marxist theory.

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2)   Examine the contemporary relevance of Marxism.

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26.7   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed various kinds of socialism such as utopian and scientific socialism, evolutionary and revolutionary socialism. The basic principles of Marxism such as dialectical materialism, historical materialism, surplus value, class straggle, revolution, dictatorship of the proletariat, communism have been discussed in detail. These principles constitute the foundation of scientific and revolutionary socialism.

Marxism is not only the philosophy of class antagonism, class conflict, class struggle and violent revolution. It is basically a philosophy of humanism and freedom. Capitalist society has led to the estrangement, alienation and loss of identity and freedom. We find the human face of Marx in his early writings, particularly in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. In the theory of alienation and freedom, we find a humanist Marx. In *the Communist Manifesto* and *Das Capital*, which are his later writings, we find a mature and revolutionary Marx. Thus, there are two Marx's, a younger and humanist Marx and a mature and revolutionary Marx. However, there is no dichotomy between the two. There is a continuity of thought between the two and so any distinction is superficial.

Marxism is a living philosophy. After Marx it has been enriched by Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Rosa Luxembourg, Gramsci, Lukacs, Althusser, Mao etc. Exponents of the end of ideology and the end of history have written off Marxism. But Marxism as an approach for social analysis and the philosophy of the oppressed class will continue to be relevant. It will inspire the masses to strive for their emancipation. Marxism is a revolutionary philosophy. It is a philosophy of social change. In the words of Marx, philosophers have sought to interpret the world; what matters, however, is to change it. It aims to establish an egalitarian society, free from exploitation of one class by another. Only through Marxism, arguably, humanity will take a leap from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom.

26.8   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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Berlin, Isaiah, *Karl Marx: His Life and Environment*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1996

Fukuyama, Francis, *The End of History and the Last Man,* New York, Free Press, 1992

Tucker, Robert, *Philosophy and Myth of Karl Marx*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1961

McClelland, J.S., *A History of Western Political Thought*, London, Routledge, 1996

26.9   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERICISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1)   See sub-sections 26.3.1 and 26.3.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1)   see sub-section 26.4.1

2)   see sub-section 26.4.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1)   see sub-section 26.4.3

2)   see sub-section 26.4.4

3)   see sub-section 26.4.7

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1)   see Sections 26.5 and 26.6

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1)   see Section 26.7

UNIT 27 GANDHISM (DHARMA, SWARAJ, SARVODAYA AND SATYAGRAHA)

Structure

27.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit, our aim is to acquire a contextual understanding of the meaning and significance of the moral-political theory of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (1869-1948), who is rightly revered as a *Mahatma*. His main political ideas are *swaraj, sarvodaya* and *satyagraha*. Regarding these political ideas, let us raise the following questions, to which we shall seek answers from this unit:

> What does Gandhian *swaraj* mean? How is it a richer or better ideal than mere political independence or political freedom? How is it related to parliamentary democracy, self-control, self-realisation, etc.?

What, according to Gandhi, does *sarvodaya* mean? What, according to him, is the connection between *sarvodaya* and self-realisation? How is *sarvodaya* different from the political theory of utilitarianism and communism?

What are the distinctive principles and methods of the *satyagraha* way of political resistance and social transformation? How does *satyagraha* differ from passive resistance?

27.1 INTRODUCTION: GANDHI'S WRITINGS

Gandhi's moral-political ideas can be found in his books as well as in his articles, letters and editorials in the four weekly journals, which he edited or published at different times during his public life in South Africa and India. These weekly journals were: *Indian Opinion, Young India, Harijan,* and *Navajivan.* Gandhi's books, some of which were first serialised in his journals, were: *Hind Swaraj, Satyagraha in South Africa, The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Ashram Observances in Action, A Guide to Health, Discourses on the Gita* and *Constructive Programme.* Gandhi also wrote and published paraphrases and/or translations (in Gujarati) of Plato's *Apology*, W. Salter's *Ethical Religion,* John Ruskin's *Unto this Last,* Henry David Thoreau's *Principles of Civil Disobedience* and Leo Tolstoy's *Letter to a Hindoo.* Almost all of Gandhi's writings, including his numerous speeches, interviews

and correspondence, can be found in the 100 volumes of the *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Publications Division, Government of India).

Gandhi's writings were produced, not in any academic setting, but in the midst of actual political struggles by huge masses of people against racial discriminations, colonialism, economic exploitation, untouchability and communalism. Gandhi led those struggles in South Africa (1893-1914) and India (1915-1948). He also campaigned for them during several visits to England, where, incidentally, he had studied for and passed the bar-at-law examination. He did some of his writing on his days of silence and fasting and during several terms of imprisonment in South Africa and India. His famous book, *Hind Swaraj,* was written on board the ship *Kildonan Castle* during a return journey from England to South Africa in November 1909.

27.2 SOME INFLUENCES WHICH SHAPED GANDHI'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

For a historical-contextual understanding of Gandhi's moral-political theory, it is necessary to bear in mind that during the years from 1905 to 1918, his attitude towards the British imperial system went through a protracted process of change from loyal support to, first, disenchantment and, then, to radical opposition. Some of the events which contributed to this change in Gandhi's political ideology were: the Partition of Bengal, racial discriminations against Indians in South Africa, the Rowlatt Acts, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre and the Khilafat issue.

The change in Gandhi's political thinking during this period was also influenced by the following books, which he read:

i) **Critical Writings on Modern Civilization (including some books on non-conformist Christianity)**

During this period, Gandhi read the works of Tolstoy, Ruskin, Carpenter, Maitland, Salter, R.P.Dutt, Dadabhai Naoroji, etc. Of these, Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* and *The Gospel in Brief* and John Ruskin's *Unto This Last* had a very great impact on Gandhi. They and to a lesser extent, the writings of other authors contributed to his becoming disenchanted with modern western civilisation. From these writings, Gandhi also derived some normative ideas of an alternative to the individualistic, utilitarian and authoritarian principles on which the imperial/colonial government rested. Gandhi's ideas of swaraj and sarvodaya, meaning self-realisation through service to others (see below), were greatly influenced by Tolstoy and Ruskin.

ii) **Hindu Religious Philosophy**

Gandhi also studied the **Bhagavad Gita** and several other holy books of Hinduism, some of which were recommended to him by his Jain mentor, Rajchand Mehta, also called Raychandbhai. These were books on yoga, *advaita vedanta,* Jainism, Buddhism, Samkhya, etc. These books led Gandhi to espouse a set of religiously inspired norms or principles of personal and collective conduct, e.g., the values of *satya, ahimsa, aparigraha and samabhava*. Gandhi saw in them an alternative or corrective to the dominant, modern/western values or principles of individualism, utilitarianism and violence. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, for instance, he found an "infallible guide of conduct." The hymns of Narsinh Mehta, a saint-poet of the fifteenth century, also instilled in him the value of service to others, especially the poor and the needy.

These readings and the aforementioned events turned Gandhi into a radical opponent of the imperial/colonial government in 1919-20. At a special session of the Indian National Congress held at Calcutta in 1920, Gandhi successfully moved a resolution

on non-co-operation against the government. India's goal, he said, is nothing less than *swaraj*.

It was through this process of change in his thinking and actions during this decisive phase in his life that he developed his moral-political theory and practice of *satyagraha, swaraj* and *sarvodaya*. Together, these seemed to him to be providing an emancipatory alternative to the political theory of colonial/imperial modernity. He also believed that his conception of swaraj and sarvodaya is an emancipatory alternative to illiberal traditionalism as well.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Enumerate some of the important writings/authors who influenced M. K. Gandhi.

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2)   Briefly trace the influences which shaped Gandhi's socio-political thought.

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27.3   SWARAJ: INWARD FREEDOM AND OUTWARD FREEDOM

By Swaraj, Gandhi meant both outward or political freedom and inward or spiritual freedom. In "outward freedom," he included national political independence and parliamentary swaraj. They are forms of outward freedom in that they seek to free people from external control or rule by others, be they foreigners or one's own compatriots.

By "inward freedom," he meant freedom from such inner impediments as ignorance, illusions, selfishness, greed, intolerance and hatred. These, according to Gandhi, impede or obstruct the individual's self-realisation or attainment of *moksha*, i.e. the *atman*'s realisation of its identity with the *Brahman* or *paramatman*. Hence, he writes: "Government over self is the truest Swaraj, it is synonymous with *moksha* or salvation."

Gandhi made an original contribution, both in theory and in practice, with regard to both these types of swaraj. He talked of his ideal of *swaraj* as a square, of which the four inseparable sides are: (i) political independence; (ii) economic independence; (iii) non-violence in social relations and moral obligations toward others; and (iv) Truth as *dharma*. Gandhi's description deserves quoting:

> Let there be no mistake about my concept of *swaraj*. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So at one end, you have political independence, at the other the economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is *dharma,* i.e. religion in the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognise it by the name of Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognised by the term we are used to, i.e. non-violence. Let us call this the square of *swaraj,* which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. In the language of the Congress, we cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without truth and non-violence, in concrete terms without faith in God and hence, moral and social elevation.

27.4 INDEPENDENCE AND PARLIAMENTARY SWARAJ

The first component of Gandhi's conception of swaraj as outward freedom is national political independence. He made a greater contribution than any other single individual to the transfer of political power from the imperial government to the Indian national leadership. He is rightly called the 'Father of the Nation'.

While maintaining that national political independence was an essential meaning of his conception of *swaraj*, Gandhi argued that it is only a partial or incomplete meaning or component of it. In his view, a fuller or deeper conception of *swaraj* "is infinitely greater than and includes independence." That fuller conception of swaraj includes, besides national political independence, the following additional components: a "parliamentary or democratic swaraj" and swaraj as self-realisation through service to others. Of these two additional components of comprehensive swaraj, the former is discussed in this section, leaving the latter to the next section.

In 1931, Gandhi declared that he was "wedded to adult suffrage." On another occasion, he said: "Swaraj of a people means the sum total of the swaraj (self-rule) of individuals." He elaborated it in the following words:

> By Swaraj I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained by the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native-born or domiciled…. [R]eal swaraj will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority.

What is conveyed in the above passages is a model of what Gandhi called "parliamentary or democratic swaraj," for the attainment of which, he devoted a considerable part of his political work.

In *Hind Swaraj* (1909*)*, Gandhi had taken an extremely negative view of the value or role of the institutions of modern civilization, namely, the parliament, law-courts, the police, the military, machinery, hospitals, railways, etc. These institutions of modern

civilization, he said, were divorced from morality, whereas, by contrast, "the tendency of Indian civilization is to elevate the moral being." Accordingly, in place of the institutions of modern western civilization, he put forward an alternative ideal of "real home rule … [namely] self-rule and self-control" by the individuals in accordance with the spiritual values of truth and non-violence.

However, within a year of his active involvement in mobilising the Indian masses into the freedom struggle, Gandhi made a partial revision of his earlier views on the institutions of modern civilization. That revision was due not only to his active involvement in the freedom struggle, but also to the criticisms which many political thinkers and political leaders had made of Gandhi's booklet. At any rate, within about a year of his final return to India from South Africa in 1915, Gandhi came to adopt a rather positive attitude towards the institutions of modern life, including the parliament, law-courts, machinery, railways and hospitals. Rather than dismissing them outright as he had done in his *Hind Swaraj*, he now reluctantly included them in what he called his "pardonable programme for the attainment of parliamentary swaraj."

He said that his *Hind Swaraj* was to be taken, not as "an attempt to go back to the so-called ignorant dark ages", but as an attempt to examine modern civilization "in the scale of ethics." He declared that in the name of his ideal swaraj, he would *not* dream, as he had been accused of doing, "of no railways, no machinery, no army, no navy, no laws and no law courts." He would rather have them re-structured so that they operate "for the benefit of the people," and "not as now for draining the masses dry." He now viewed "parliamentary", i.e., "democratic swaraj" as a very necessary and valuable component of his conception of comprehensive swaraj. "So far as I can see," he wrote in 1920, "Swaraj will be a Parliament chosen by the people with the fullest power over finance, the police, the military, the navy, the courts and the educational institutions."

As to the organisational features of "parliamentary swaraj," Gandhi preferred it to be a village-based, decentralized set-up, in which all but the lowest level of government was to be indirectly elected by the immediately lower level. This decentralised, village-based model of parliamentary/democratic swaraj was not the model that was favoured by the Congress and adopted by the Indian Constitution. The Constitution, however, does incorporate some so-called Gandhian institutions such as the village panchayats. Moreover, the personal and civil liberties as well as the democratic rights component of the liberal-democratic political philosophy of the Constitution are basic to Gandhi's own moral-political philosophy.

27.4.1 Some Features of Parliamentary Swaraj

In his practical and theoretical work for establishing Parliamentary Swaraj, Gandhi concentrated on endowing it with four features: universal adult franchise, civil liberties, minority rights, and a primary commitment to justice for the poor and the exploited. These, he believed, are the necessary ingredients of paliamentary swaraj.

Gandhi regarded personal and civil liberties to be the "foundation" and "breath" of Parliamentary Swaraj. In a speech before the all India Congress Committee in September 1940, he said, "Freedom of speech and pen is the foundation of Swaraj". It is the "only means", he added, for the non-violent way of attaining swaraj.

The famous Karachi Resolution of the Congress on Fundamental Rights (1931) which was drafted by Jawaharlal Nehru, in consultation with Gandhi, was moved for adoption by Gandhi himself who incorporated many suggestions and revisions made by Gandhi. In fact, Gandhi was the mover of the resolution. The resolution included a most impressive list of personal and civil liberties and democratic, political rights.

Concerning the primacy of personal and civil liberties, Gandhi wrote:

> Civil liberty consistent with the observance of non-violence is the first step towards Swaraj. It is the foundation of freedom. And there is no room there for dilution or compromise. It is the water of life. I have never heard of water being diluted.

Now, let us turn to the Minority Rights component of the Gandhian conception of Parliamentary Swaraj. Gandhi was acutely aware of the danger of parliamentary democracy lapsing into majoritarian tyranny over, or intolerance of, minority groups or communities. While he held resolutely to the procedural, majority rule principle of democratic government, he was equally committed to its other, twin or inseparable principle, namely the principle of the guarantee or protection of fundamental, cultural or religious rights of minority communities. In 1931, he said:

> It has been said that Indian Swaraj will be the rule of the majority community, i.e., the Hindus. There could not be a greater mistake than that. If it were to be true, I for one would refuse to call it swaraj and would fight it with all the strength at my command, for, to me *Hind Swaraj* is the rule of all the people, is the rule of justice. Whether under that rule the ministers were Hindus or Mussalmans or Sikhs, and whether the legislatures were exclusively filled by the Hindus or Mussalmans or any other community, they would have to do even-handed justice. And … no community in India need have any fear of Swaraj being monopolised by any other…

Gandhi maintained that "matters of first rate importance" to the religious and cultural life of the minority communities should be kept outside the purview of the democratic, procedural principle of majority rule. Very insightfully, he wrote:

> Democracy is not a state in which people act like sheep. Under democracy, individual liberty of opinion and action is jealously guarded. I, therefore, believe that the minority has a perfect right to act differently from the majority.

> The golden rule of conduct … is mutual toleration, seeing that we will never all think alike and we see *Truth* in fragment and from different angles of vision. Conscience is not the same thing for all. Whilst, therefore, it is a good guide for individual conduct, imposition of that conduct upon all will be an insufferable interference with everybody's freedom of conscience.

A very special feature of Gandhi's conception of parliamentary/democratic swaraj is the justice of its basic institutions, which seeks to promote the welfare of all by giving primacy to the interests of the poor and needy. "A non-violent system of government," he said, " is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists." Let us quote him again:

> Economic equality…is the master key to non-violent independence. …It means the levelling down of the few rich in whose hands is concentrated the bulk of the nation's wealth, on the one hand and a levelling up of the semi-starved naked millions on the other. A non-violent system of government is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists.

Gandhi often spoke of his ideal of swaraj as "the poor man's swaraj." At the time of independence in 1947, he advised his countrymen to adopt a preferential approach to the poor not merely at the public-policy level, but at the personal level as well. He said:

I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to swaraj for the hungy and spiritually starving millions?

Gandhi's conception of social/distributive justice, which he often referred to in terms of "economic quality," is rooted in his trusteeship doctrine of property. He believed that statutory trusteeship is a form of organising economic life, which, without depriving the individuals of their legitimate incentives for greater productivity and without depriving the society of the increases in wealth, brings about a non-violent, equitable distribution of wealth.

In March 1946, Gandhi wrote: "Supposing India becomes a free country tomorrow, all the capitalists will have an opportunity of becoming statutory trustees." He further stated:

> As for the present owners of wealth, they would have to make their choice between class-war and voluntarily converting themselves into trustees of their wealth. They would be allowed to retain the stewardship of their possessions and to use their talent to increase the wealth, not for their own sake but for the sake of the nation and therefore, without exploitation. The state would regulate the rate of commission which they would get commensurate with the service rendered and its value to society. Their children would inherit the stewardship only if they proved their fitness for it (*Harijan* 31.3.1946).

In an article entitled "Theory of Trusteeship" (*Harijan*, 16 December 1939), Gandhi wrote:

> I am not ashamed to own that many capitalists are friendly towards me and do not fear me. They know that I desire to end capitalism almost, if not quite, as much as the most advanced socialist or even the communist. But our methods differ, our languages differ. My theory of 'trusteeship' is no makeshift, certainly no camouflage. I am confident that it will survive all theories. It has the sanction of philosophy and religion behind it.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What were the four basic components of Gandhi's Swaraj?

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2) Discuss Gandhi's critique of modern western civilization.

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27.5 SARVODAYA: SWARAJ AS SELF-REALISATION THROUGH SOCIAL SERVICE

Let us begin this section by noting that while *swaraj* conveys Gandhi's idea of freedom, *sarvodaya* (welfare of all) conveys his idea of equality. We may also note that Gandhi's doctrine of sarvodaya (which is often rendered as non-violent socialism) is a corrective to utilitarianism, communism and the doctrines which justify inequalities and exclusions on the basis of caste, race, colour, gender, etc.

"*Sarvodaya*" is the title, which Gandhi gave to his paraphrase of *John* Ruskin's *Unto This Last.* In that book, Ruskin gave a moralistic critique of the science of political economy of self-interest. He brought out the role of "social affection" in our lives. Reading Ruskin brought about "an instantaneous and practical transformation" of Gandhi's life. He learned three lessons from Ruskin's book, namely : (i) that the good of the individual is contained in the good of all; (ii) that a lawyer's work has the same value as the barber's in as much as all have the same right of earning their livelihood from their work; and (iii) that a life of labour, i.e., the life of the tiller of the soil and the handicraftsman is the life worth living.

Of these three principles, the first is the main principle of *sarvodaya* (welfare of all). It is also the source of the other two principles. Gandhi clarified that he had known the first principle before reading Ruskin's book, which only served to confirm it and give it a modern articulation. As we shall see below, a good deal of Gandhi's ideas on sarvodaya were derived, as in the case of swaraj, from the holy books of Hinduism.

There are several steps in Gandhi's thinking on *sarvodaya* (welfare of all). They are:

1) Our aim in life is self-realisation or *moksha*.

2) Self-realisation or *moksha* means identification of the self or *atman* with *Brahman* or God. This requires a discipline or *yoga* of self-purification.

3) The way of realising our identification with *Brahman* or, in other words, the way of finding God is to see God in all his creation or manifestation.

4) Love or service of all is the way to self-realisation or *moksha* in this world.

Conveying these ideas, Gandhi wrote as follows:

• Man's ultimate aim is the realisation of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God... The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by the service of all.

- I am impatient to realise myself, to attain *moksha* in this very existence. My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh. Thus considered, my service may be regarded as purely selfish. For me, the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and there through, of humanity.

Gandhi derived many of these ideas from the holy books of Hinduism. In them, he found a clear enunciation of the value of "disciplined rule from within," which he understood to be the "root meaning" of swaraj. He wrote:

> The root meaning of *swaraj* is self-rule. *Swaraj* may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined rule from within…. 'Independence' has no such limitation. Independence may mean license to do as you like. *Swaraj* is positive. Independence is negative…. The word *swaraj* is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which 'independence' often means.

Gandhi interpreted the *Bhagavad Gita* as depicting the futility of war and violence. Besides non-violence and truth, the other principles of morality which, according to Gandhi, the *Gita* teaches are: *tapas, dana and yajna*. He saw a "gospel of service" in the third chapter of the Bhagavad Gita. It taught him to desire the welfare of others. In his *Discourses on the Gita,* he *pointed* out that the Lord or Brahman dwells in all, including "the lame, the crippled and the afflicted."

On the idea of service to all, Gandhi was also deeply influenced by his parents, the teachings of the Vaishnava saint-poets, especially, Narsinh Mehta, and the writings of Ruskin and the non-conformist Christians, especially Leo Tolstoy.

Gandhi believed that without self-restraint or self-purification, we could not render moksha-oriented service to others. Refuting the charge that these are ideals for the ascetics, he said that they are meant "for acceptance by mankind in general." He wrote:

> No worker who has not overcome lust can hope to render any genuine service to the cause of Harijans, communal unity, Khadi, cow-protection or village reconstruction. Great causes like these cannot be served by intellectual equipment alone, they call for spiritual effort or soul-force.

According to Gandhi, the terrain on which the connection between one's moksha-realisation and one's disinterested service of all takes place is the field of politics; namely, the field of "toil in the service of my country and therethrough of humanity." This connection between moksha-realisation and service-centred politics was a constant theme in Gandhi's writings and public work. Appropriately, he concluded his *Autobiography* with the following statement:

> To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face, one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means. Identification with everything that lives is impossible without self-purification; without self-purification, the observance of the law of ahimsa must remain an empty dream.

In a 'Foreword' he wrote to *Gokhale's Speeches*, Gandhi urged the *sadhus, rishis, munis, maulvis* and priests to become *political sanyasis.* He also called upon political workers to become spiritually and morally engaged. In his 'Last Will and

Testament', he recommended the disbanding of the existing Congress organisation and its flowering into a Lok Sevak Sangh. He wished that its members would, thereby, devote themselves to the remaining tasks of the programme of swaraj and sarvodaya, which he delineated as follows:

> India has still to attain social, moral, and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns.

Gandhi also stipulated that the *loksevaks* would abjure untouchability and must believe in "the ideal of inter-communal unity, equal respect and regard for all religions and equality of opportunity and status for all irrespective of race, creed or sex."

Gandhi's moral-political conception of sarvodaya is a corrective both to Western utilitarianism and to the inequalities and exclusions of the traditional caste system. His critique of utilitarianism can be found in his Introduction to his *Sarvodaya,* which was his paraphrase of Ruskins's book, *Unto This Last.* Gandhi wrote:

> People in the West generally hold that the whole duty of man is to promote the happiness of the majority of mankind, and happiness is supposed to mean only physical happiness and economic prosperity. If the laws of morality are broken in the conquest of this happiness, it does not matter very much. Again, as the object sought to be attained is the happiness of the majority, westerners do not think there is any harm if this is secured by sacrificing a minority. The consequences of this line of thinking are writ large on the face of Europe.

In 1926, Gandhi brought out the difference between utilitarianism and sarvodaya in the following words:

> A votary of ahimsa cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula [of the greatest good of the greatest number]. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realise the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die, so that the others may live. He will seve himself with the rest, by himself dying. The greatest good of all inevitably includes the good of the greatest number, and therefore, he and the utilitarian will converge in many points in their career, but there does come a time when they must part company, and even work in opposite directions. The utilitarian to be logical will never sacrifice himself. The absolutist [i.e. the universalist or the votary of ahimsa] will even sacrifice himself.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are the essential elements of Gandhian Sarvodya?

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2)   Trace the influence of Bhagvad Gita on the concept of Sarvodya.

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27.6   SATYAGRAHA VERSUS PASSIVE RESISTANCE

Satyagraha is the name of the Gandhian, non-violent way of political action to resist and transform untruthful and violent systems of social or political power. During 1906-14, Gandhi successfully used such a way of political action to resist the policy of racial discrimination, which the British colonial government of South Africa had adopted against the Indian immigrants. In India, he led many local satyagraha campaigns, some notable ones being those of Champaran, Ahmedabad, Vaikom, Bardoli and Kheda. He also led a number of all-India satyagraha movements, beginning with the one against the Rowlatt Act in 1919.

Gandhi acknowledged that his theory of satyagraha was influenced to some extent by Henry David Thoreau's writings. In Thoreau's essay, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience", Gandhi found confirmation of his views on coercive features of state and on the individual's obligation to his own conscience. "From Thoreau and Ruskin", Gandhi wrote, "I could find out arguments in favour of our fight."

Gandhi's initial struggles against racial discriminations in South Africa were described as 'Passive Resistance'. But, he soon found the English term to be unsatisfactory, partly because it was not intelligible to ordinary Indians and partly because it did not convey the special characteristic of his method of political struggle. Hence, in 1906, he invited the readers of his weekly, *Indian Opinion*, to suggest an alternative name. The best of the suggestions received was *sadagraha,* meaning "firmness in a good cause." Gandhi changed it to *satyagraha* as it conveyed his preferred idea of "truth-force." He explained his choice in the following words:

> Truth (*satya*) implies love, and firmness (*agraha*) engenders and therefore serves as a synonym for force. I thus began to call the Indian movement "*satyagraha*" that is to say, the force which is born to Truth and Love or non-violence, and gave up the use of the phrase "passive resistance."

Gandhi distinguished between body-force = brute-force = the force of arms from soul force = love force = truth force. He referred to the former as the method of violence, which, he said, is celebrated in and by modern civilization. Satyagraha, he said, relies on soul-force or truth-force and is appropriate to **swaraj**. He wrote:

> Satyagraha…. is a method of securing rights by personal suffering; it is the reverse of resistance by arms. When I refuse to do a thing that is repugnant to my conscience, I use soul-force. For instance, the Government of the day has passed a law, which is applicable to me. I do not like it. If by using violence I force the Government to repeal the law, I am employing what may be termed body-force. If I do not obey the law and accept the penalty for its breach, I use soul-force. It involves sacrifice of self.

According to Gandhi, satyagraha was both practically necessary and morally desirable for the Indian Freedom Movement. He said that since the "English are splendidly armed", it would take many, many years for the Indians to arm themselves in a matching or effective manner. More than this practical difficulty, Gandhi disapproved of the immorality of the method of violence. He pointed out that "to arm India on a large scale is to Europeanise it" or, in other words, to continue to be seduced by the morally flawed modern European civilization.

According to Gandhi, the distinctive features of satyagraha, in comparison with "passive resistance," are as follows:

i) While the passive resisters harbour hatred toward their adversaries, the satyagrahis view their opponents with love.

ii) The passive resisters, unlike the satyagrahis, may harass and injure their opponents.

iii) Satyagrha, unlike passive resistance, can be offered even to one's nearest and dearest ones.

iv) Passive resistance is a resistance by the weak and helpless, and it does not exclude the use of violence, whereas satyagraha is a moral-political action by the strong, and it excludes the use of violence. Believing themselves to be weak, the passive resisters would tend to give up the struggle at the earliest opportunity. "On the other hand," Gandhi wrote, " if we offer satyagraha believing ourselves to be strong, two clear consequences follow. Fostering the idea of strength, we grow stronger and stronger every day. With the increase in our strength, our satyagraha too becomes more effective and we would never be casting about for an opportunity to give it up."

27.6.1 Principles and Methods of Satyagraha

Satyagraha is based on the principles of satya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence) and tapas (self-suffering). Gandhi clarified this in his oral submission before the Disorders Inquiry Committee, presided over by Lord Hunter at Ahmedabad on 9 January 1920. The relevant questions and answers are reproduced below:

Q) I take it, Mr. Gandhi, that you are the author of the Satyagraha movement.

A) Yes, Sir.

Q) Will you explain it briefly?

A) It is a movement intended to replace methods of violence and a movement based entirely upon Truth. It is, as I have conceived it, an extension of the domestic law on the political field and my experience has led me to the conclusion that the movement and that alone can rid India of the possibility of violence spreading throughout the length and breadth of the land, for the redress of grievances.

Q) People differ as to the justice or injustice of particular laws?

A) That is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a Satyagrahi gives his opponent the same right of independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves to himself and he will fight by inflicting injuries on his person.

Gandhi believed in the dharmasastra tradition according to which dharma, derived from 'dhr' (to be firm, to sustain or uphold) refers to the moral law governing the cosmos. Its essence is satya (truth), the root of which is sat (being, reality, right, what is and what will be). Gandhi writes:

The word satya (truth) is derived from sat, which means being. And nothing is or exists in reality except Truth. That is why sat or Truth is perhaps the most

important name of God. In fact, it is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth… it will be realised that sat or satya is the only correct and fully significant name of God.

Since "nothing is or exists in reality except Truth", the practico-political field too, says Gandhi, must partake of it. For Gandhi, in other words, the dissociation of politics from truth or morality is untenable. He said:

Some friends have told me that truth and non-violence have no place in politics and worldly affairs. I do not agree. I have no use for them as a means of individual salvation. Their introduction and application in every-day life has been my experiment all along.

Gandhi's satyagraha is an experiment for the introduction of truth and non-violence into political conduct.

According to Gandhi, although Truth is absolute, our knowledge and experience of it is relative and partial. What we take to be truth may be untruth for others. Infact, the satyagrahi assumes that his opponents or oppressors are also truth-seekers, acting on the basis of what they perceive to be the truth. It is for this reason that ahimsa (non-violence) is the means of discovery of truth. "The basic principle on which the practice of non-violence rests", writes Gandhi, "is that what holds good in respect of oneself equally applies to the whole universe. All mankind in essence is alike. What is therefore possible for one is possible for everybody." Acting on the basis of relative truths, the satyagrahis seek to resolve basic conflicts and ensure social harmony through the non-violent path of vindicating the validity of rival truth claims. Gandhi writes:

It appears that the impossibility of the full realisation of truth in this mortal body led the ancient seeker after truth to be appreciative of ahimsa. The question, which confronted him, was shall I bear with those who create difficulties for me, or shall I destroy them? The seeker realized that he who went on destroying others did not make headway but simply stayed where he was, while the man who suffered those who created difficulties marched ahead, and at times even took the others with him… The more he took to violence, the more he receded from truth. For, in fighting the imagined enemy without, he neglected the enemy within.

Satyagrahis use truth-force or love-force not to eliminate the opponents or oppressors, but to bring about a restructuring of the total conflictual or oppressive relationship so that both parties to the initial conflict can realize a heightened mutuality or moral interdependence. Through satyagraha, the victims of oppression seek to liberate themselves by aiding in the emancipation of their oppressors from their self-deceptive truth-denying beliefs and actions. *Satyagraha*, Gandhi wrote in *Hind Swaraj,* "blesses him who uses it and him against whom it is used."

By ahimsa, Gandhi did not mean merely non-injury to others. That would be a more negative or passive connotation of ahimsa, which has also a positive or active meaning, namely, love or charity. Gandhi writes:

In its negative form it (ahimsa) means not injuring any living being whether in body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. In its positive form, *ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of **ahimsa,** I must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would my wrongdoing father or son. This active ahimsa necessarily includes truth and fearlessness.

In the light of what has been said earlier, we may conclude that for Gandhi, action based on the refusal to do harm to others is a negative test of moral or practical truth. Its positive test is action meant to promote the welfare of others.

> Our desires and motives may be divided into two classes – selfish and unselfish. All selfish desires are immoral, while the desire to improve ourselves for the sake of doing good to others is truly moral. The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind.

We have so far considered two elements of satyagraha, namely, satya (truth) and ahimsa (non-violence). A third element is Tapas (self-suffering). Action based on love toward others, we saw earlier, is a positive test of truth. From this Gandhi goes on to say that tapas or self-suffering is the test of such love. Suffering injury in one's own person, writes Gandhi, "is… the essence of non-violence and is the chosen substitute for violence to others". Self-suffering by satyagrahis, it must be understood, is not out of their cowardice or weakness; it is based on a higher form of courage than that of those who resort to violence and it is meant to aid in the moral persuasion of one's opponents or oppressors.

In the satyagraha mode of conflict resolution, self-suffering plays a complimentary role to that of reasoning. Persuading others through reasoning is indeed the essence of satyagraha. But satyagraha recognizes the limits of reason in resolving fundamental social, religious, political or ideological conflict, in which a rational consensus may not be easily or quickly forthcoming. Infact, Gandhi insisted that the direct action techniques of satyagraha are to be resorted to only after employing the usual processes of reasoning with the opponents or oppressors and only for securing their rational consent or conversion. He writes:

> Since satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a *satyagrahi* exhausts all other means before he resorts to *satyagraha*. He will, therefore, constantly and continually approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him; and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to *satyagraha.*

In a *satyagraha* campaign, the satyagrahis seek to validate the truth of contested social "system" or norms through (i) reasoning, i.e., persuading the opponents about the untruth of their position and at the same time remaining open to their counter-arguments; and (2) appealing to the opponents through the self-suffering of the *satyagrahis.*

The various methods of satyagraha are: (1) purificatory or penitential actions by the *satyagrahis*, such as pledges, prayers and fasts; (2) acts of non-cooperation, such as boycott, strikes, hartal, fasting and *hijrat* (i.e. voluntary emigration); (3) acts of civil disobedience, such as picketing, non-payment of taxes and defiance of specific laws; and (4) a constructive programme of social reform and social service, such as the promotion of inter-communal unity, the removal of untouchability, adult education, and the removal of economic and social inequalities.

At each stage of the programme, the satyagrahis, while holding on to truth as they see it, assume their own fallibility and give the opponents every chance to prove that the satyagrahi's position is erroneous. Satyagraha "excludes the use of violence because man is not capable of knowing the absolute truth and therefore not competent to punish." The ideal to be kept in mind is that of a self-regulated society of communitarian truth, in which every one "rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour". "The claim for satyagraha", writes Joan Bondurant, "is that through the operation of non-violent action, the truth as judged by the fulfillment of human needs will merge in the form of a mutually satisfactory and

agreed-upon solution." Hence, the important operative principles to be observed by satyagrahis are the admission of truths as relative, non-violence and toleration, and the self-suffering of satyagrahis. Gandhi justified these operative principles in the following passages:

> In the application of Satyagraha, I discovered that in the earliest stages that pursuit of truth did not admit of violence being inflicted on one's opponent, but that he must be weaned from error by patience and sympathy. For what appears to be truth to one may appear false to the other.

People's conceptions of true interests and just laws differ. This is the main reason why violence is eliminated and a Satyagrahi gives his opponent the same right of independence and feelings of liberty that he reserves to himself and he will fight by inflicting injuries on his person.

Evolution of democracy is not possible if we are not prepared to hear the other side. We shut the doors of reason when we refuse to listen to our opponents, or having listened, make fun of them. If intolerance becomes a habit, we run the risk of missing the truth. Whilst, with the limits that nature has put on our understanding, we must act fearlessly according to the light vouchsafed to us, we must always keep an open mind and be ever ready to find that what we believed to be truth was, after all, the untruth. This openness of mind strengthens the truth in us.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   How did Gandhi distinguish between passive resistance and satyagraha?

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2)   Briefly enumerate the methods of Satyagraha.

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27.6.2 Some Evaluative Comments on Satyagraha

Concerning Gandhi's theory and praxis of *satyagraha,* several critics maintain that non-violence and self-suffering are impractical methods against violent oppression.

The Gandhian way, they way, is "other-worldly" and "anti-humanist". Gandhi maintained that non-violence and self-suffering were "not for the unworldly, but essentially for the worldly." He did admit that these principles were very difficult to practice, but insisted that we need to, and can, keep on moving along these lines. "Perfect non-violence whilst you are inhabiting the body, he wrote, "is only a theory like Euclid's point or straight line, but we have to endeavour every moment of our lives". Gandhi rightly maintained that it is desirable and possible to bring about a predominantly non-violent society.

It may still be objected that *satyagraha* demands of the satyagrahis, self-suffering even unto death. It is true that self-suffering is a major element of satyagraha. However, self-sacrifice is also involved in case of violent resistance. Sacrifice even unto death is, thus, the common element in both violent and non-violent resistance against oppression. That is why Gandhi approved of the use of satyagraha only in cases of conflict over fundamental issues and only after all milder methods of non-violence have failed. "I should be deeply distressed," he wrote in 1921, "if on every conceivable occasion every one of us were to be a law onto oneself and to scrutinise in golden scales every action of our future National Assembly. I would surrender my judgement in most matters to national representatives." But when a situation of violent oppression persists even after all milder methods of non-violent resistance have been tried, Gandhi maintained that self-suffering even unto death of the non-violent fighter for truth is a better assertion of individual freedom than is the death-in-defeat of the violent resister.

Gandhi has himself given several explanations of the merits of the satyagraha way of political resistance and social transformation, in comparison with the methods of violence. In 1924, reacting to rumours that he was likely to be invited to visit the Soviet Union, Gandhi wrote:

> I do not believe in short violent cuts to success. Those Bolshevik friends who are bestowing their attention on me should realize that however much I may sympathise with and admire worthy motives, I am an uncompromising opponent of violent methods even to serve the noblest of causes. There is, therefore, really no meeting ground between the school of violence and myself.

Two years later, Gandhi gave the following explanation of the real difference between violent and non-violent methods:

> My non-violent resistance is activised resistance on a different plane. Non-violent resistance to evil does not mean absence of any resistance whatsoever, but it means not to resist evil with evil but with good. Resistance therefore, is transferred to a higher and absolutely effective plane.

As we saw above, Leo Tolstoy's *The Kingdom of God is Within You* exerted a tremendous influence on Gandhi's views on the repressive character of the modern state and his commitment to non-violent resistance. Gandhi acknowledged that reading Tolstoy made him realise the "infinite possibilities of universal love" and made him a "firm believer in ahimsa". Gandhi and Tolstoy corresponded with each other. In his last letter to Gandhi, Tolstoy acknowledged that his satyagraha movement in South Africa was a new and most important mode of emancipatory struggle by the oppressed.

Like Tolstoy, Einstein too has written in deep appreciation of Gandhian satyagraha. In a tribute published in a *festschrift* for Gandhi's seventieth birthday, he wrote:

> Gandhi is unique in political history. He has invented an entirely new and humane technique for the liberation struggle of an oppressed people and carried it out with the greatest energy and devotion. The moral influence which he has exercised upon thinking people through the civilised world may

be far more durable than would appear likely in our present age with its exaggeration of brute force. For the work of statesmen is permanent only in so far as they arouse and consolidate the moral forces of their peoples through their personal example and educating influence.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Critically asses the concept of Satyagrah.

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27.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read about the major intellectual components of Gandhism, viz, Dharma, Swaraj, Sarvodya and Satyagraha. The unit has introduced you to some of the prominent thinkers whose ideas and writings shaped Mahatma Gandhi's social and political thought. The concept of Swaraj, you have learnt, has both an outward and inward dimension. The idea of Parliamentary Swaraj has been separately dealt with in detail. As also Sarvodaya. Last but not the least, the concept of Satyagraha and Passive Resistance has been elucidated as well as the principles and methods of Satyagraha. The unit ends with a critical assesment of Satyagraha. It is hoped that you would be now in a better position to the understand the fundamentals of Gandhian thought.

27.8 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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27.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1)   See Section 27.1

2)   See Section 27.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1)   See Section 27.3

2)   See Section 27.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1)   See Section 27.5

2)   See Section 27.5

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1)   See Section 27.6

2)   See sub-section 27.6.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1)   See sub-section 27.6.2

UNIT 28   STATE AND GLOBALISATION

Structure

28.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit examines the state-globalisation interface. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

● Define and explain the meaning of globalisation;

● Discuss the various dimensions of globalisation;

● Define the state and discuss the threats to its sovereignty in the wake of globalisation;

● Discuss the role of multinational corporations in the context of globalisation; and

● Comment on the future of the state consequent to globalisation.

28.1   INTRODUCTION

In the context of globalisation, the modern state is undergoing a tremendous transformation. Many forces unleashed by the global processes have affected the state as the centre of popular imagination. The nation-state has come to redefine its relationship with its people at different levels. Though the sovereignty of state still remains important, it is severely constricted by fragmentation at the local level and integration at the global level.

The transformation of the nation-state in different regions of the world assumes different forms depending upon the specificity of regional formations. This lesson explains the multiple meanings of globalisation and its implications for the nation-state in the first part. Later, it brings out different dimensions of the transformation of the nation-state.

28.2 GLOBALISATION AND ITS CONTEXT

For our clarity, similar sounding terms like globalisation and globalism must be classified. The term globalisation refers to a process, where as globalism is a term which refers to a set of ideas, values, practices which seek to uphold the goals of what has been taking shape in the name of globalisation today. In a nutshell, globalism means an ideology or a framework of justification for globalisation.

It is also important to dispel some of the misperceptions of globalisation of the present day. In some quarters, globalisation is understood in a generic sense that globalisation has been in existence as an idea and a practice since the time immemorial. This understanding lacks a proper historical sense, as it does not recognise the specificity of globalisation in the present context. Globalisation emerges out of a complex historical process engendered by the logic of capitalist expansion. It seeks to thrive on a specific kind of political and cultural environment at the global level. It has brought about profound changes at levels ranging from global, national, and regional to local. It has changed the world radically during a decade or two.

In its economic form globalisation stands for an integrated international market with national economies being opened up. It implies homogenisation of values and cultures at the cultural level. And it subscribes to a global political order seeking to marginalise or cut short the sovereign power of the nation-state in the political sense of the term. Paradoxically, globalisation also celebrates diversity and fragmentation at the local level. Universal at the global and fragmentation at the local as a characteristic feature makes globalisation as homogenous as contradictory.

There are two apparently contradictory trends that can be discerned in the present globalising world. First, states seem to be giving up sovereignty in their rush to sign regional trading and political agreements. Second, groups are agitating for greater sovereignty within existing states, intent on some measure of independence. Is the world becoming more integrated or is it becoming more fragmented? Are we becoming more international or more local? The answer, in all cases, is manifestly yes. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the single European market and the newly emerging multilateral agency, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are all steps towards greater integration. The international economy's move towards globalism is inexorable. Consumerist capitalism needs ever-expanding markets and ever more efficient ways of producing and distributing goods and services. Transnational companies are becoming increasingly adept at finding ways of circumventing national borders in their search for cheap labour, and efficient sourcing of raw and processed materials.

Similarly, ethnic, caste, class, gender, tribals and ecological groups in South Asia or in other regions of the world have been struggling for greater autonomy within the existing states. The local assertions have truly become a global phenomenon. Culturally, the idea of national identity for individuals or groups is fast eroding in favour of fortification of ethnic, regional, caste and religious identities.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by globalisation?

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28.3   DIMENSIONS OF GLOBALISATION

28.3.1 Economic Globalisation

What does globalisation mean today? In the current context, economically speaking, it means the homogenisation of prices, products, wages, rates of interest and profits to become the same all over. Under the pretext of free markets, transparency and flexibility, the so-called 'electronic herd' moves vast amounts of capital in and out of countries to the political and economic advantage of the western countries wishing to attract foreign capital and gain the benefit of today's and tomorrow's technology.

28.3.2 Political Globalisation

In political terms, globalisation means reordering of the nation-states in a manner that adheres to global integration. The sovereignty of nation-states is expected to be subsequent to that of the global order. A global state order is supposed to be the desired   goal. Marginalisation of the nation-state is the biggest challenge in the process of globalisation of the world.

The globalisation of the world is upheld in a complex system of laws and regulations. The regulatory regimes of the IMF, the World Bank and the other international finance institutions (IFIs), the GATT and the WTO are fast emerging as a new world government for enforcing uniform policies, obligations, and conditionalities around the world. These institutions are critical in perfecting this system, which the individual nation-states are to abide by. Another important political dimension of the process is that national governments are being constantly pressed to alter their own laws so as to make them more compatible with the emerging system of global governance. The objections of the weak nation-states to the regulatory regimes of institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank or the WTO, seldom matter.

28.3.3   Globalisation and Culture

Another major area in understanding the process of globalisation is culture. Globalisation, in its fundamental sense, also means universalisation of values. Universalisation of values must be understood at variance with universal values. Universalisation of values presupposes that there is a certain kind of global order towards which all the values, practices and traditions of varied nations, regions and localities must be moulded. Globalisation seeks to build upon absolute homogenisation of values and cultures. Cultural globalisation constantly seeks to integrate local and national cultures with global culture mainly dominated by the West. When we look at cultural globalisation in connection with economic globalisation, it becomes clear that the expansion of the capitalist market hinges on the integration of local markets facilitated by the global transformation of local cultures.

Anthony Giddens, a renowned sociologist observes that the organisational clusters in terms of world capitalism, industrialisation and modern nation-states universalise global networks and also produce time-space distanciation, that makes the local-global interface a complex problem. "Globalisation can, then, be defined as intensification of world wide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events, many miles away and vice-versa".

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Globalisation, as a cultural expression, refers to compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. The rise of information age must be seen as concomitant to the culturalisation process across the globe. All the dimensions of globalisation are aptly characterized – *"material exchanges localise; political exchanges internationalise and symbolic exchanges globalise"*.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Write a short note on either economic or political globalisation.

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2) Examine the globalisation-culture interface.

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28.4   NATION-STATE AND SOVEREIGNTY

It is important to understand the basis of political empowerment of the nation-state in the modern age, and to reflect on its relatively brief history. The nation-state is described as citizens and government which operate within geographically distinct borders. To warrant the hyphen, the nation-state requires a self-conscious belief on the part of its citizens that the collective has a power greater than the mere agglomeration of a given country's population. The nation-state represents the citizen, gives him a sense of belonging to a coherent whole. It requires the marriage of civil administration and self-conscious patriotism. The nation-state embodies the hopes and aspirations of its citizens, who owe it allegiance.

28.4.1 Definition and Meaning of the State

There is a great deal of agreement amongst social scientists as to how the state should be defined. A composite definition would include three elements. First, the state is a set of institutions; these are manned by the state's own personnel. The state's most important institution is that of the means of violence and coercion. Second, these institutions are at the centre of a geographically- bounded territory, usually referred to as a society; crucially, the state looks inwards to its national society and outwards to larger societies in which it must make its way; its behaviour in one area can often only be explained by its activities in the other. Third, the state monopolises rule making within its territory; what we call as sovereignty. This tends towards the creation of a common political culture shared by all citizens.

28.4.2 Sovereignty

The state's exclusive claim to make laws/rule-making power is often referred to as sovereignty. The concept of sovereignty has been a key idea in the evolution of the modern world and the all powerful nation-state. Initially, it was purely the state's authority to exercise legal violence in order to maintain order. But gradually, the sovereign nation-states assumed more legitimate claims over the exclusive authority within its territorial boundaries by adding concepts like social justice. Thus, citizens have developed expectations from their nation-states' ability to resolve their problems. Objectivity in the exercise of authority lends legitimacy to the acts of the nation-state. The state is autonomous and sovereign, and carries a universal image in a given national society.

28.4.3 Sovereignty Under Threat

However, the nation-state enters into a crisis in the late twentieth century with the advent of globalisation as the nation-state's ability to act independently has been strained by the external forces at the global level and internal forces at the local level. It questioned the very validity of the meta-narratives of their existence like the nation-state. Nation-states are betwixed by the forces of global integration and local fragmentation.

The most important structuring of relationship in peoples' lives has been their relationship with the nation-state. The nation, the people who have hitherto had a privileged link to the state, has this no longer, because states are neither able to negotiate with global forces on their own, nor capable of forging a sense of unity among their citizens who choose to live through exclusive identities. The third world countries feel this more intensely, because the (dis) ability of the state on both the fronts is more prominent. Citizens are seeking new forms of organisation, which involve asserting their identities in different ways. The effects are manifold. Local communities, seeking a greater share of resources, will sometimes see that their interests lie in underpinning nation-states, at other times in subverting them. International organisations will seek greater legitimacy, and one way is to be sure that the sponsoring countries have legitimacy of their own.

The recent phenomenon of world summits has been a case in point to explain how the local communities are seeking to become trans-border entities. The Vienna Summit of Human Rights Groups, the Beijing Summit of Women Groups, the Rio Summit of Ecological Groups, Durban Summit against Racism or the World Social Forum (WSF) are all mobilising local communities across nations on the lines of ethnic, caste, gender, ecological issues. They raise questions of social justice beyond the preview of nation-states and connect them with global processes. For instance, the track record of human rights within a country should be good enough to deserve a loan, aid or grant from any global lending agency or donor agency, as human rights records

figure as a crucial issue in international lending transactions. This explains how the nation-state is coming under pressure from both the domestic and the global forces.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Define the state in your own words.

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2)   Discuss the threats to state sovereignty in the wake of globalisation.

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28.5   GLOBALISATION, STATE AND THE MNCS

The global integration is most visible in the spheres of production, finance and commerce. Multi-National Corporations (MNCs), operating beyond national boundaries, increasingly influence global economy. Unlike the factory-centered production of Fordism which was harboured on protectionist policies of nation states, the present global financial operations, what are characterised as 'post-fordism', are controlled by the MNCs. With the breakdown of the earlier international system and the subsequent global acceptance of neo-liberal thinking based on deregulation, privatization, and liberalisation, there has been a virtual proliferation of MNCs in the last three decades.

Globalisation of contemporary vintage is most visible and pronounced in the media and on the economic front. A significant and growing segment of an increasing number of national economies is getting integrated into the global market. Financial markets and capital flows are able to soar above international boundaries and bypass sovereign state controls at will. International trade accounts for 20 percent of the global output and is estimated to be worth $5 trillions per annum. Cross border transactions, FDIs and MNCs are growing in importance in determining the economic destiny of nations and are for the most part, not amenable to state control.

The top five hundred international companies are responsible for a huge and increasing share of global production. The sectoral distribution of the top 500 corporations in the

year 2000 reveals an interesting trend. The maximum number of corporations (56) belong to the banking and financial sectors. This clearly shows the growing clout of international banks and financial institutions as well as the phenomenal rise of finance capital in recent years. The rationale of the MNCs entering the finance sector is obvious, as quick profits could be reaped from speculative investments in global financial markets rather than making long-term investments in the economy. In terms of the number of MNCs, petroleum refining, automobiles, telecommunications, food and drug stores, and electronic industries follow banks.

The increasing economic domination by the MNCs has established corporate rule on a global scale. Though the MNCs may not totally erode the sovereignty of nation-states as is thought in some quarters, it is certainly shaping the policy options before these states, particularly in the developing and the underdeveloped countries. The MNCs still require the state to make decisions for their entry into these nations. The state has to provide facilities and ensure political, social and economic stability for smooth transactions of these MNCs in these nations. On their own, they neither have the power nor the competence to mould the global economy in their favour. Rather, the MNCs seek the support of nation-states and international governmental organisations to shape the contemporary global economy.

28.6 GLOBALISATION, STATE AND REGIONALISM

The political corollary of this apparent shift towards economic liberalism is proving far more complicated. If the hallmark of the late 1980s was the turn to the market, in politics it was the revival of nationalist tensions on a grand scale and the weakness of institutions charged with handling the world economy. Some efforts have been made to create new political structures that transcend national borders. The European Union (EU) instituted a single market within its twelve member countries at the end of 1992. In addition, it is struggling to create a political and monetary union with the underpinning of economic cooperation. Far Eastern governments are discussing plans that would increase political cooperation within the region, in line with growing economic ties. The US, its Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico already in place, is now ready to extend the FTA concept to South America as well.

Nearer home, as we know from the experience of the SAARC countries in recent times, South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) has been a compelling exercise on the part of these countries, inspite of differences between them and more particularly, the animosity between Pakistan and India. SAFTA is a step towards a monetory union of South Asia. The fact that the possibility of a monetary union of the countries has been considered seriously in the SAARC summit of January, 2004 at Islamabad, indicates what direction SAARC seeks to move.

Such trading links will be followed by attempts to fashion a political element. Efforts to introduce such liberal tenets throughout much of the developed and the developing world have made it easier for regional economic bodies to emerge elsewhere. These regional bodies can be seen as the embryo of a multinational political correlative to the increasingly global economy.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Examine the role of MNCs in the context of globalisation.

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28.7   GLOBALISATION AND ITS DUALISM

Why is globalisation encountering so much resistance from various interest groups? Foremost among them are the environmentalists, labour leaders, cultural traditionalists, religious leaders of different persuasions, and non-governmental organisations. In spite of this growing resistance, under the leadership of the West and its economic power, globalisation is proceeding at a relentless pace.

Globalisation involves the most fundamental centralised restructuring of socio-economic and political relations since the industrial revolution. Yet the profound implications of these changes have rarely been exposed to serious public scrutiny or debate. Despite the large scale global reordering of the world, neither the world leaders, nor the educational institutions, nor the mass media have made any credible effort to describe what is being formulated, or even to explore the multidimensionality of its effects, particularly on the developing countries.

Over the last decade, we have witnessed a series of unforeseen events: end of the Cold War; ambitious market reforms in what were formerly planned economies; and acceleration of the process of economic integration in Western Europe, North America and East Asia and the increased use of protectionist measures by most major traders (particularly by advanced post-industrial countries against the developing countries).

Its basic principle revolves around the absolute primacy of exponential economic growth and an unregulated free market, with the need for free trade to stimulate growth. Free trade breaks down the barriers to import substitution that tend to promote economic self-sufficiency. It favours export-import-oriented economies with their accelerated privatisation of public enterprises, and an aggressive promotion of consumerism, which when combined with global development, correctly reflects a Western vision. Furthermore, this guiding principle of the new international economic structure also assumes that all countries – even those whose cultures are as diverse as Egypt, India, China, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Sweden and Brazil to name a few, must now row their rising boats in unison. The net result of this process is the unleashing of powerful forces that foster the growth of a Western cultural uniformity in products and services. Economic globalisation will place continuous pressure on developing nations to abandon local traditions and dismantle programmes geared to developing more self-sufficient economies.

A good example of this kind of pressure from the West has been happening in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, banking has been privatised and the country is now permitting direct foreign investment in the insurance sector. Banks which were earlier nationalised for the explicit purpose of helping the needy and the rural sector, have been on the wane.

It has become perilous for developing countries to uncritically embrace globalisation. Its negative consequences are seldom mentioned. Instead, lack of economic development is typically blamed on bad government, corruption and cronyism. A blind acceptance of the ideology of globalisation is unacceptable, naïve and downright dangerous from the point of view of the developing countries.

28.7.1 Division of the World into Two Camps

The process of globalisation tends to divide the world into two camps. The West argues that the benefits of globalisation are inclusive and benefit both the developed and the underdeveloped nations. The developing countries tend to view globalisation with much more skepticism, if not with abject cynicism. Let us take a look at their respective positions on globalisation.

The Western claims for the benefits of globalisation are that it: (1) Provides considerable capital investment for both institutional and individual development. (2) Provides increased employment opportunities to citizens of developing countries. (3) Increases the possibilities of improving the well-being of the masses through education. (4) Stimulates infrastructure development, such as roads, power plants and modern electronic communications and (5) Involves technology sharing by advanced nations to developing ones at no cost to the developing countries. This process will eventually lead to equalising working conditions, standards, attitudes and values globally.

In contrast, developing nations argue that globalisation is delivering considerably less than has been promised. According to them:

(1) Globalisation has decapitalised the developing countries by taking out more money in profits than what has been invested in these countries; (2) Rather than bringing in more investment capital, many MNCs resort to borrowing from local creditors, thus depleting scarce capital resources that might have been used by indigenous business; (3) The promise of benefits from new technologies is more likely to disappoint in the long run because the dependence it creates stifles innovation in the developing countries; (4) With globalisation and multinational corporations comes a slick, polished brand of advertising, that encourages consumerism, and the importation of luxury goods. Success in marketing the products and services of MNCs tends to reduce domestic investments that are vital to domestic economic growth. (5) Under globalisation, MNCs can counter mercantilist restrictions on trade by establishing subsidiaries abroad. In effect, it allows them to bypass trade barriers, and continue production and collecting profits at the expense of the developing countries.

As of now, there appears to be little scope for any radical alternatives to the emerging world capitalism. With the emergence of multilateral institutions like the World Trade Organisation, every country has virtually been dragged into the world economy and is gradually opening its economy. Countries such as Mexico, which a decade ago relied on state control and ownership, are privatising heavily; Thailand is balancing its budget; Peru is lowering tariffs. So also the countries in the South Asia region, which though started off a little late in the early nineties, have been increasingly going the liberalisation way and opening up their economies. Twentieth-century economic liberalism champions private ownership, a reduced role for the state in business, fewer trade barriers, lower taxes, and a general reliance on the market as the most efficient distributor of resources in a given economy.

The problem in understanding globalisation lies in its dualism that governs the present world order. If globalisation refers to a unified world, it is also equally true that the world is increasingly divided into two unequal parts- the rich and the poor nations, in which the more advanced western nations are taking advantage of the so called free trade and the openness advocated by the new global order. The porous ness of national boundaries is working in favour of the advanced nations. This iniquitous world order has different implications for different nations. Several serious studies point that the issues of inequality and justice are going to be the most important concerns of the emerging global order.

As it was discussed above, globalisation affects nation-states adversely, particularly, in the third world, in economic, political and cultural terms. Dominated by the West, the international market gives little scope to the southern countries (synonymous with poor

countries) to negotiate with the terms of trade. Though MNCs have transborder operations, their interests are still tied up with their parent countries, often the advanced western countries. The MNCs are not so multinational in their interests.

With the coming of the information age, the world has further shrunk into what Marshall McLuhan calls the *Global Village*, where national boundaries become more porous in political and cultural terms. Thus, it brings more anxieties and concrete worries about political and cultural onslaughts by the West on the more vulnerable third world nations. The global economic order combined with the New Information Order is likely to strengthen the nation-state in advanced countries and weaken the state in the third world. This dualism and contradiction are going to characterise the nation-state in the emerging global order.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Examine globalisation from the perspective of the developing and the developed nations.

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28.8   AN APPRAISAL

The relative decline of the nation-state's sovereignty in the sphere of global economy is creating a democratic deficit, mainly in the third world countries where the expectations of the state are very high and the state capacities are low. The citizens continue to hold their national governments accountable on issues over which the states have no autonomous control. The strong sense of allegiance to the nation-state borne by its citizens, and developed through the anti-colonial struggles, has not yet weakened in line with the decline of the autonomy of national governments. Despite the advent of the 'global village', individuals so far feel little allegiance to emerging supranational bodies such as the European Union. It is all the more far fetching to expect the belongingness of the citizens in the South to such supranational bodies. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine the emerging identities within a nation to command the citizen's loyalty as wholesomely as the state. Yet one can see that the democratic deficit in the third world is going to create tensions on a much higher scale. Globalisation puts more severe strains on the third world state on economic, political and cultural fronts than the West, given its iniquitous order.

Neither the nation nor the state is about to disappear as a result of global processes. For a start, there are no substitute structures that can perform all the functions traditionally associated with the nation-state. At the same time, people are not prepared to give up a state-centred nationalism altogether, because nationalism is historically embedded and culturally experienced. Even if they are prepared to give up, it is only to divide their loyalties increasingly on the lines of multiple identities. Yet, it can not

be understood as the disintegration of the state for identities can not be a substitute for the nation-state. Patterns of allegiance are shifting, and multiple loyalties will be the inevitable result. Certainly, though the nation-state does not disappear, it may not remain the way it has been. The forms and modes of the citizens' allegiance to it change.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Comment on the present and future tendencies of globalisation.

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28.9   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read about the state in the context of globalisation. The definition/meaning of both the terms have been explained. Various dimensions of globalisation,-economic, political and cultural-have been touched upon. The unit elaborates at length on the threats to state sovereignty in the wake of globalisation. The role of multinationals has also been discussed. The unit also discusses the implications of the world being split into two camps consequent to globalisation.

It is hoped that now you are better placed to comprehend the term globalisation in its various nuances, especially its interface with the modern state.

28.10   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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28.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1)   See Section 28.2

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1)   See sub-sections 28.3.1 and 28.3.2

2)   See sub-section 28.3.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1)   See sub-section 28.4.1

2)   See sub-sections 28.4.2 and 28.4.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1)   See Section 28.5

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

1)   See Section 28.7 and sub-section 28.7.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 6

1)   See Section 28.8

UNIT 29   SECULARISM

Structure

29.0   OBJECTIVES

In this lesson, we will discuss the following issues:

- How best to approach secularism?

- What is the Indian context of secularism?

- Why is tradition becoming unable to handle tensions?

- How is secularism becoming rooted in India?

- Is the western version of secularism applicable to India?

- What are the difficulties of transition in India?

- What is the appropriate version of secularism for India?

- Why is it appropriate?

It is hoped that after going through this unit, you will be in a position to provide suitable answers to each of the above issues.

29.1   INTRODUCTION

If we were to look for a definition of secularism in the context of the wider world, then the most acceptable one would be: it is a principle which advocates the separation of religion from politics (what in India we call *dharma-nirapekshataa*). The key term here is *separation*. On the face of it, this seems a simple, uncomplicated principle. But on a closer examination, it will be seen that it is not. Separation can mean many different things and can pose difficulties, if we work with a single meaning. It can mean different things in different societies. The Indian case poses unique difficulties. We will try to show that an Indian version of secularism depends, importantly, on how we understand separation.

29.2 UNDERSTANDING THE INDIAN NEED FOR AND DEBATES ABOUT SECULARISM

To understand these, let us start by asking: how best to understand the Indian need for, and debates about secularism. It is obvious that secularism as a concept, principal and a set of practices emerged first in a different historical context viz, in the West. It is only in the last 100 years, more so in the 50 years i.e. since the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, that secularism has become a topic of debate in Indian society. And in the last 10-15 years it has also become a matter of serious disputes and contentions. In the case of India, because she joined late in the history of development of modern ideas and their actualisation, we have to ask two types of questions. These are: why do we need secularism? What can be the relevant form of secularism for India? And, this first question has become important because there is a section of people in India, both among intellectuals and political activists, who believe and argue that we can do without secularism.

Their argument goes like this: our traditions are pluralistic and flexible and can therefore, be a better source of toleration; it is a resource with us in our own history. We do not therefore, require imposing secularism, an alien concept, on our society. While we all agree that our traditions are plural and flexible, we require to understand that the view that secularism is unnecessary in India is deeply mistaken, because these plural traditions cannot sustain democracy under the present circumstances.

29.3 WESTERN CONTEXT OF SECULARISM

To answer the two questions above, it is important to go into the origins of secularism or the western context. This way we can have a picture of historical differences, which can then suggest a possible range of answers to these questions. There are things or circumstances in the history of Europe, out of which two principles of understanding emerge in relation to the idea of the secular. Europe saw, throughout the middle ages and right up to the middle of the 17th century, a major struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and the states of the time (state as an institution) for supremacy. This conflict for supremacy between these two major institutions, both, highly organised and powerful, has come to be known as the 'Church vs. the State' controversy. Then, from the middle of the 16th century with the rise of Protestantism (with Luther and Calvin preaching against the Pope of the Roman Catholics), there came about an intolerant debate between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant sects. This developed into a major war between the two in the early 17th century and was fought out for 30 long years, killing and maiming millions of people all over Europe. This was known as the '30 Years War' or the 'Sectarian War', which ended with the Treaty of Westphalia where a Modus Vivandi (an agreement by which parties of conflicting interest can get along) was arrived at between the two warring groups. This Modus Vivandi slowly, over time, grew into a principle of political order (see writing of Hobbes, Descartes, Locke et al) and got disseminated among the political class. Secularism came to be the principle which enunciated separation between the State and the Church.

The other thing of importance was the transformation of religion into a personal matter, which then, went on to reinforce the separation principle. Within the Protestant movement, many churches were emerging, each with its own distinct doctrine and emphases. It came to be accepted that nobody ought to interfere about which church one chose to belong to. Belief was to be a matter of one's conscience, something personal and private to the individual. (As an aside, non-interference in matters of conscience thus became one of the foundations of the theory of rights, the other being the sanctity of property). The principle of putting church/religion on one side

and state/politics on the other, together with the principle of conscience as a matter private to the individual person, became the basis of the rise of secularism as a doctrine. In other words, religion was to be kept out of public affairs and policy making, which were to be the exclusive domain of politics and the state.

It is obvious that one cannot draw any direct lesson from the western experience because India never had a church or a powerful organised state. The Maurya or the Mughal empires were episodic, that is, such a state was not a continuous presence. The idea of clash between the church and the state is therefore, alien to Indian Civilization. Our context and historical heritage are very different. So the *need* for and the route of secularism have to be also necessarily different. But the importance of the principle of conscience, in a different way though, could not be denied.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) With regard to secularism, what is peculiar to the historical context of the West?

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2) What does this context suggest for India?

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29.4 HISTORICAL SOCIOLOGY OF THE NEED FOR SECULARISM IN INDIA

Our secularism is primarily directed against two evils; first, the religious strife between different religious communities and its extreme forms like communal violence and riots; and, secondly, the danger of religious communities overwhelming the state, each with its own view of "good life" as valid for others, too. Both arose as a problem in the second half of the 19th century. Sometimes, these become disproportionately important and at other times recede into insignificance. But in the last 20 years, there has been a worrying growth in both these trends, threatening the very fabric of Indian society. Why did this happen? The answer will give us the historical sociology of how the need arose for secularism in India. It is a story worth pursuing in some details.

After India came under colonial rule, two changes closely connected to each other, took place in the Indian society. One pertained to the kind of structural changes that came about and the other to the way our social life was organised. Both had far reaching consequences.

29.4.1 Structural Changes: Modernisation and its Consequences

The first had to do with modernisation – bourgeois property, extensive trade, industry, urban life, capital accumulation, modern (non-religious) education, etc. Colonial modernisation was deeply exploitative, creating uneven divisions between regions and communities, but nevertheless, leading to the economic integration of the country, uniform administrative control and a growing cultural harmonisation through codification of customs and their applications across different parts. This had a few important consequences. It was creating greater and greater similarity between India and the global structural conditions. It also led to the process of *individuation,* that is, persons bound within communities slowly becoming *individuals* (as we have in the western societies). These two developments together, then, became the basis of new mental capacities. To take one instance, receptivity to ideas from anywhere in the world emerged. We all are aware of how ideas of equality, rights, dignity of person and so on, became a cherished possession of the people in India as much as they were to others anywhere else in the world. It is shown in the development of printing, the growing importance and popularity of newspapers, periodicals and books in the life our society. Issues were raised and hotly debated. There was a proliferation of discussion not only at the level of the elite, but at different popular levels. Nobody then divided the ideas into those, which were of foreign origin and those which were of Indian origin. They debated these ideas as new and of interest and relevance to the Indian society. It looked as if everybody is talking to everybody else in excitement.

As a result of this, secondly, very large number of persons, bound earlier within communities of ritual status or religious beliefs, were let loose from these prior bonds. This is how, what we call today "masses," were created; people of a new kind. Many implications flowed out of this. Masses were just not an undifferentiated pool of people. It took various structural forms like the formation of new classes, viz., the capitalist and the workers, modern landlords and the farmers and propertyless agricultural labour; professional groups like lawyers and accountants and doctors and so on. This has had a lasting impact on the social fabric of life in India. It is not that the old style, pre-modern communities like *jatis* or small religious groups did not survive but their internal form was deeply altered. These got differentiated in terms of income and skills, unlike earlier. New interests emerged within these communities which jostled with one another. Earlier, the communities lived side by side without competition and enjoyed a great deal of local autonomy in how they lived. That local autonomy began to lose ground and today it is lost.

29.4.2 Changes in the Organisation of Social Life

There also took place, on a large scale, efforts at redrawing the community boundaries and efforts at unifying them to confront the perceived onslaught of the modern world and in the same process, to gain benefits for the communities. Resistance to modernity and bargaining for its advantages were and are, paradoxically, two sides of the same coin. The outcome of both these changes: society was no more the loosely held diversity, living, part unreflectively, by itself. It now faced its alternative, the singular other, modernity. To handle this threat and to defend itself, many of the numerous communities, each related to the larger traditions in different ways also posed diverse notions of the social good. Not only did each of these notions of good competed with one another, but also the conception of good entailed in modernity and which was clouded by the colonial depredations.

The happy coexistence of the numerous communities, each living with minimal interactions, though with cordial understandings, could no more be taken for granted (as was in the earlier times). This was the source of enormous strain on the inherited capacities of people to handle interpersonal, intra-community and inter-community relations. This happened over and above the new competition generated by the establishment of colonial economy and administration along with the struggle for share in power in the new social arrangement, taking shape then. The situation required interlocutors for exchange of opinions and ideas and the adjudication of diverging interests and diverse notions of good between these very differently positioned worlds. Successful mediation required either people placed outside the numerous communities or those who could think beyond the limits of these communities, each of which was getting more and more unified as well as assertive. Old style dialogue, as used to take place between adjacent communities enjoying local autonomy, would no more do between people, now more and more distant from one another and demanding things from the world, which was unfamiliar to old type of transactions. All this was to sap the traditionally built-in resources including those of tolerance and mutual perseverance. Agreements or understanding reached by those, claiming to represent these differently positioned worlds, always proved to be fragile and unlasting. In other words, dialogical deals through the efforts of interlocutors have the character, especially in situations of social transition, of being provisional.

This is a situation in which old style dialogue between the adjacent communities does not work and the interlocutors become unequal to the task required. Therefore, something other than all these communally based competing notions of good was required; a value and a mechanism at the same time, to intercede in the face of the competing notions of good as well as interests were also needed. Compulsions from within this situation triggered the need for what is now called the 'Secular Doctrine of Governance'. It was required over and above everything, to seek a mode of doing things in the public life in a way so that the competing, and often irreconcilable, conceptions of good do not vitiate every situation of public interactions among the people. Some way of being secular, a principle of being outside of and at a distance from these competing notions of good, was a need generated from within the alterations taking shape at the very many intersections of society. One can therefore, argue that the principle of secularism is an internally propelled *emergence* and thus becomes a *presence,* irrespective of our choice.

It is now clear that the need for secularism arose within and out of the changes in the internal social relations and constitutive features, which make up Indian society. If a need for a new principle or a value or a concept, whether it be secularism or rights or equality or whatever, arises within a society, then it should be obvious that the concept or the principle is neither alien nor can it be looked at as an imposition (as Nandy and Madan and Chatterjee think). In a world, becoming more and more similar due to the processes noted above, certain principles or values and the concepts through which these are expressed do tend to develop roots in societies like ours. This is because of their internal needs even if originating in the West.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   Discuss the historical sociology of the need for secularism in India.

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29.5 APPROPRIATE VERSION OF SECULARISM FOR INDIA

Such being the case, we should also be clear that ours is not a settled society like France or Germany etc., we are in a transitional stage and therefore, the meaning of or what kind of secularism we shall get will also be dictated by the specific features of this stage. Here, the social structures and belief and norms of the old society, though still present, are rapidly changing or giving way to new features. Let us take two examples. In our marriage system, the circle of endogamy is fast expanding and slowly, in many instances, the element of choice is entering. People may no longer want to be governed entirely by old, religious customs or rituals. They may want protection for what they desire. To give another example, we do not want, any more, to be ruled by the decisions of our caste panchayats. We, instead, prefer to be ruled by the elected panchayat. People may not want to be overwhelmed by caste and ritual status, as can happen in the working of the old caste panchayats.

If we keep both these and such others in mind (we can think of many more), it becomes clear that these are situations where numerous new types of conflicts and social demands emerge. What one wants to stress here is that all the situations of transitions are also the ones where new conflicts abound and these conflicts are between the old and the new or the confusions and uncertainties generated by these. Old ways of doing things, of resolving conflicts based on customary notions, will not do as these became inadequate or irrelevant because these were meant to handle small, recurring conflicts between local communities living adjacent to one another. There is no easy application of these on scales as large as in modern politics. Such is the situation prevailing under conditions of transition. Now, given the ever-changing character of conflicts, it is never enough to have merely principles and mechanisms. What is needed is a creative working out of policies and initiatives to meet the ever-changing newness of the conflict situations between religions and ethnic communities and between dissenters from within these communities. The last may take up positions against their own communities.

Secularism, under such conditions of shifting conflictual communal equations, requires careful and flexible application. It is no panacea in the sense that it cannot do without sensibly thought out social and economic policies or administrative measures. But there is no other substitute, as we have seen in the case of traditions and customs, principle to act in these situations. We can, therefore, say that this is a *difficult situation,* but not that it is an *impossible principle* or that we cannot realise a secular society in India (unlike what some of the writers mentioned above claim). If we keep this distinction in mind viz. between "the difficult" and "the impossible", then we can better understand that secularism takes a zigzag route through the setbacks to its applications in India.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

  ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Is secularism an imposition on the Indian society?

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2) What is the main cause of difficulties for secularism in India?

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Having come this far, let us ask: what should secularism mean for India? In other words, what is an appropriate version for us? This is important because we have seen, in the beginning of this lesson, that in the West secularism came to mean an unambiguous separation of the church from the state, implying thus, that religion should have nothing to do with politics. Within their recognised domains, they function independent of directions from the other. In America, this came to be known as the "wall of separation". This now is generally seen in the West as the universal model of secularism (e.g., Donald Smith's work on India, the first most important work on this subject). Can this version of secularism be the appropriate model for India?

29.5.1 Civilisation Differences

In trying to understand this, let us keep the following things in mind. One, no two cultural belts or civilisations (more often informed in pre-modern times by different religions) are alike. Civilisation in modern India is very different from what it is in the West or what it was when secularism as a principle arose. We have already seen that there never was an organised church in India or anything akin to it. But there is more in India, which goes to make it unique, very different, *sui generis*. Let us look at this briefly, because this will have a bearing on how we conceive secularism. The boundaries of religion in Hinduism, or what made it socially recognisable as a distinct religion, have never been dogma or enjoined belief, even though some powerful beliefs are uniformly held, like Karma or Moksha or Varna. What made Hinduism recognisably distinct were a set of ritually prescribed practices, *enjoined* on members differentially in terms of *Varna* or caste and *Jati* rank. These practices were deeply embedded in social structures and marked out that particular social structure by their sheer presence. We will not go into the details but mention only a few which are directly relevant for the issue under discussion. Notions of purity and pollution, untouchability, regulation of social distance between human beings in terms of caste, right to temple entry or drawal of water from wells and many others like these are based on religious scriptures or so it is believed. These were extensively practised in India and have far from disappeared in the present times. We still read news of torture being inflicted on people of lower castes for breaking these ritual rules or on women, who go out of bounds from the limits prescribed by the tradition.

29.5.2 Western Separation Unworkable in India

Given these features, "separation" as practised in the West, will simply not be feasible in India; may well be an impossibility. In making democracy actual, every mode of institutional separation has to be informed by certain normative concerns, values that underlie that separation. India *seeks to ensure equality* between individuals and create conditions that *guarantee the dignity of person.* These are foremost among many others that our Constitution talks about. Now look at this. The exclusion of Dalits from temples or village wells is qualitatively not of the same kind as that of Blacks in America from similar things. In our case, it enjoyed a scriptural i.e. religious

sanction. Such is not the case with the Blacks in America. If the American state legislates to outlaw such practices, it does not become a matter of interference in religion, whereas in India, when the state legislates to outlaw such practices of untouchability or enhance the status of women, many people believe, and strongly so, that the state is interfering in religious matters. Many reforms of the Hindu laws have been viewed in this manner.

Many of these practices are in conflict with the normative requirement of the Indian Constitution that every Indian irrespective of caste or creed or gender be treated as equal and ensure dignity to all persons. This aim, cannot be ensured and/or realised without legislating many a practice, viewed as part of religion, as illegal. The "wall of separation" between the state and the church or politics and religion, as in the American Constitution, is out of contention. It simply will not work in the case of India. And that is why, we called it an impossible ideal. Many people find secularism impossible for India because they, along with Donald Smith – the first important commentator on Indian secularism – work implicitly with such a conception of secularism.

29.5.3 Separation Principle: Reworking Required in the Indian Context

If it is now possible to concede that *some intervention, strictly regulated according to neutral principles* is necessary, then we can say that separation as a basis of secular state in India has to be a re-worked version of the western principle. Implanting western notions uncritically will not do. Different conditions, with their specific difficulties, demand creative application. Blind adherence to the western principles or the simple rejection of the tested models and practices is not the answer.

We have a hard situation at hand. We have to guarantee that the many values of the Constitution, which we all cherish, have to be actualised in our social life. Secondly, democracy requires that we all become *citizens*, because, without citizenship, democracy is not realisable. We therefore, require *interventions* in matters which, in our context, are taken to be religious. But, from the other side, we require some form or degree of *separation,* because citizenship is not realisable without some form of a secular ideal. Citizenship calls for, at its minimum, two conditions; viz. people with guaranteed or entrenched rights and that persons be defined independently of religious values of any particular community. The ideas of treating the *worth of the individual* independently of religion is a secular ideal and of utmost importance in the Indian context. Any other consideration in treating the worth of the individual other than being human is offensive to democracy. We have dignity and worth simply because we are human, and not because we are human plus Hindu, or Muslim, or Christian, or Sikh. It may be true that many of us derive a lot of meaning from our religions since that makes for a "good" life. Secularism is a dry principle; it is not meant for higher meanings. As a dry principle, it is meant to over see that conflicts between these higher meanings and beliefs do not become matters of public contention and that they are kept out of political life and policy making at any level of state action.

In the Indian situation, politics and religion should be like strangers come face to face and not like in America, where they are barred from seeing each other by a "wall" that stands between them. Strangers by the logic of their encounter come to deal with each other like equals, or nearly so. But as they remain strangers, they do not become intimate. What secularism in India demands is the absence of intimacy between the two, since that happens in communal politics whether of Hindutva, represented by the Sangh Parivar, or of the Muslim League or the Akali Dal and so on. The larger and more widespread the religious group, the greater the danger it poses to the country's integrity. We must look at the danger of communal forces in

India in this perspective, given to us by our own history of religious strifes. The need for secularism is crucial, if we want to live our every day life in a civil manner. And every day life is important.

29.5.4 Reworked Solution: Principled Distance

We can now sum up the discussion by saying, in agreement with Rajeev Bhargava, that in the Indian version of secularism, the principle of separation has to be understood as one of *principled distance* between religion and politics. Here, distance in principle has to be seen as *independence* of politics from religion, but not necessarily vice-versa. This means that state activity, political decision making and policy choices are free of the interference of religion. But this does not mean that politics and state action will have nothing to do with the need of religious reforms. One way separation has to be guaranteed. This allows for both intervention and abstention. Intervention has to be prudently decided on the basis of issues involved. To reiterate, at the end, all practices (or beliefs), even if sanctified by religion viz. untouchability, caste discriminations, polygamy, exclusion of women from public life, etc., have to be outlawed immediately. These are blatantly offensive to the normative order of the Constitution, which is based on the consensus of values evolved through intense popular participation during the freedom struggle. Many, which are mildly offensive like the Dwijas only wearing the sacred thread, women not being allowed to plough the fields, etc., may be tolerated for some time to come and people can be persuaded to give these up. The state here should be interventionist but in a neutral sense, neutral in the sense, that it takes the standpoint of the entire Indian humanity and not the viewpoint of any one religion or community. It should not be helping or giving any advantage to any religion. It should be simply carrying out the injunctions of the Constitution, which created it for precisely this purpose. Its neutrality should be ensured by a regime of Equality, Rights and Dignity in the same measure for all. Indian Constitution has created a truly secular state for our coexistence as citizens (as noted earlier).

Secularism is no doubt a *principle* of separation of religion from state and politics; it is not just a pragmatic need. But separation has no single, simple meaning. It has to be given *meaning* and *actualised* in relation to the context and the practices embedded in it. Each context has different requirements and these create their own compulsions, which cannot be ignored. It is clear from our discussion that secularism is not something any more alien to the Indian society, but has by now become its internal need. What, however, is alien is the uncritical tendency to extract the history and meaning of secularism from the West and to pose that as the only model applicable to the rest of the world. This is something, which we must absolutely avoid as some of its critics fail to.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   What necessitates the interference by the state in certain matters considered to be religious?

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2) What should be the Indian vision of secularism?

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3) What should be the doctrine of "separation" in India?

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29.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read about the concept of secularism with special reference to India. The western context of secularism– a strict separation between politics and religion– has been explained and it has been pointed out how the western conception per se is unworkable in the Indian context. The unit has exmined the historical sociology of the need for secularism in India. It discusses a version of secularism that can work in our country. It is hoped that now you will be better placed to comprehend the various nuances of the admittedly complex concept of secularism; especially in the context of India.

29.7 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

1) For a classic statement on secularism in India, see Donald E.Smith, *India as a Secular State* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1963). See also, V.P.Luthera, *The Concept of Secularism and India*, (Oxford University Press, Calcutta, 1964)

2) For those who reject the claims or "pretensions" of secularism, see among others:

   i)   Ashish Nanday, "A Anti-Secularist Manifesto" *Seminar*, 314, October 1985;

   ii) T.N.Madan, "Secularism in its Place" *Journal of Asian Studies*,, 46(4) 1987;

   iii) Partho Chatterjee, "Secularism or Tolerance", EPW, June 1994.

   All the three works are reproduced in: Rajeev Bhargava (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998)

3) For a refutation of these critics of secularism, see

   i) Thomas Pantham, "Indian Secularism and Its Critics: Some Reflections", *The Review of Politics,* Summer 1997; and

   ii) Achin Vanaik, Ch.4-"Communalism, Hindutva, and Anti-Secularists" in his *Communalism Contested,* (Vistar Publications, New Delhi, 1997).

4) For a strong defence of secularism see,

   i) Rajeev Bhargava, "Giving Secularism Its Due" *EPW,* 9 July 1994

   ii) Rajeev Bhargava, "What is Secularism for?"

   iii) Amartaya Sen, "Secularism and Its Discontents"

   The last two are published in Rajeev Bhargava, (ed.) *Secularism and Its Critics* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998).

5) For the complex questions and difficulties posed by what the notion of separation means see, Michael Sandal, "Religious Liberty: Freedom of Choice and Freedom of Conscience". This essay is also useful in understanding the importance of *Conscience* as an independent issue in the making of the secular project. For the two distinct *paths* through which secularism got implanted in Western societies, see Charles Taylor, "Modes of Secularisation"; both in Rajeev Bhargava (ed.) *Secularism and its Critics* (Oxford University press, New Delhi, 1998).

29.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 29.3

2) See Sections 29.1 — 29.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See sub-sections 29.4

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) See Section 29.5

2) See Section 29.5

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) See Section 29.5

2) See Sections 29.5.2 and 29.5.3

3) See Section 29.5.4

UNIT 30   DEVELOPMENT

Structure

30.0   OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this unit is to familiarise you with different aspects of the idea of development. Like all concepts, development has some meanings attached to it. These meanings manifest the manner in which the concept has been understood historically, as well as the dominant or prevalent ways of understanding it in a specific historical context. In this unit, we shall try to understand the idea of development as it evolved over time, and the diverse ways in which it is understood in the contemporary world. Towards the end of the unit, a brief list of readings is provided to enhance your understanding of the theme.

30.1   INTRODUCTION

The idea of development is commonly understood as a process of economic growth and changes or improvements in the lives of people. If one were to ask people what, according to them was development, the most frequently mentioned elements would in all probability pertain to economic institutions and indicators of economic growth, viz., industrialisation, technological advancement, urbanisation, increase in wealth and standards of living, etc. It is quite likely that 'westernisation' would also recur in most responses, if not explicitly, then in all probability as a reference point for comparison. The identification of development with characteristics associated with the 'west' or the 'modern' is, however, not simply a matter of common perception. The association has roots in the history of the idea of development itself. It is this association which has contributed towards shaping the dominant understanding of the term, and has also generated contradictions, conflicts and debates around the idea in the past several

years. We can, therefore, begin our understanding of the concept by recognising that the idea of development took shape in a specific historical context and has evolved over time.

Human society has always experienced change and moved from simple to complex forms of social and political organisation and economic activities. The idea of development pertains to a specific form of economic growth and social and political structures. This idea took shape in the modern period in the context of the breakdown of feudal socio-economic structures and the growth of capitalism. In the sections, which follow, we shall examine the evolution of the idea as it emerged in modern Europe and spread as a guiding principle determining relationships among peoples and nations. The next section shall take up the specific connotations of the idea of development as an aspect of western modernity. We shall also see how this connotation had important socio-economic and political ramifications for the rest of the world. Finally, we shall devote a section to looking at the ways in which the idea of development has been debated upon in recent years in order to make it more compatible with equality and democracy.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) How is development commonly understood?

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30.2 MODERNITY AND DEVELOPMENT

30.2.1 Rise of Capitalism: Genesis of Development

The concept of development is seen as having emerged with the rise of capitalism. Before the rise of capitalism, there existed agricultural societies regulated by feudal relations. Society was hierarchical and one's status of birth determined one's position in the social hierarchy. Feudal property relations lay less emphasis on profit and were guided primarily by self-sufficiency, sustenance and reciprocity. The rise of capitalism with its emphasis on economic growth, production output, profit, freedom of trade etc, provided the material conditions within which the idea of development started taking shape.

30.2.2 Enlightenment Tradition

Simultaneously, the intellectual tradition of the time, the 'Enlightenment Tradition' as it is generally referred to, redefined the notion of the individual. The individual, within

the new intellectual tradition, came to be thought of as having the faculty of reason, and possessing the capacity to take rational decisions. The fate of this thinking individual was no longer ordained by divine forces, nor was the individual bound therefore, to remain confined to the relationships which were prescribed by feudal society. This rational individual, skeptical of the slow and relatively stagnant socio-economic relationships, as well as the hierarchical basis of social and political organisation, struggled to break free.

Capitalism based on the principle of free enterprise and profit, fed ideas of progress and development. With the emphasis on spectacular material progress and profit making, it was only logical that feudal relationships were undermined, and simultaneously, the corresponding structures of rule, dismantled. This dismantling achieved only after a prolonged political struggle for individual freedom, and autonomy from existing feudal institutions, also gave rise to political ideals of liberty, freedom and a liberal notion of democracy. In its birth alongside capitalism, however, the idea of development was primarily identified with progress, and the first formulations of development as progress were found in the works of classical political economists like David Ricardo and Adam Smith.

30.2.3 Views of Jorge Larrain on Development

Jorge Larrain points out that the concept of development is not only closely bound up with the evolution of capitalism, each phase of capitalism can be seen as having a specific set of notions about development (Jorge Larrain, 'Introduction', *Theories of Development*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989). Larrain sees capitalism as having developed in three main stages from 1700 and identifies the corresponding theories of development for each phase. These three stages are: (i) *Age of Competitive Capitalism* (1700-1860), (ii) *Age of Imperialism* (1860-1945) and (iii) *Late Capitalism* (1945-1980).

30.2.4 The Age of Competitive Capitalism

The age of competitive capitalism was marked by the struggles of the new industrial bourgeoisie to free themselves from the last vestiges of feudalism and to gain political power. This was also the time when capitalism, from its emergence in Britain, started expanding all over the world in search of markets. Karl Marx points out that in its first stages of development, industrial capital sought to secure a market by force i.e., through the colonial system. Classical political economy, represented by Adam Smith and David Ricardo, believed that capitalism was the absolute or the perfect form of production, i.e., it could provide the most conducive conditions for growth. They believed that international trade was important for increasing productivity. The absoluteness and conflict-free conceptualisation of capitalism was, however, subjected to review when working class struggles emerged. It was in the context of these struggles that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels presented their critique of capitalism. Marx and Engels, while admitting that capitalism was a historical necessity as the most advanced mode of production in history, refused to consider it *the* natural and absolute mode of production. They saw in the working class struggles a manifestation of the inner contradictions in capitalism and the possibility of its demise and replacement by a more advanced mode of production.

30.2.5 The Age of Imperialism

The second stage or the age of imperialism (1860-1945) was marked by monopolistic control of the market by huge corporations, the export of capital from industrial centers to the periphery, the latter's control of both raw material production and capital accumulation and, the firm entrenchment of capitalism as the predominant mode of production. The neo-classical theory of development gained primacy during this stage. It worked with the assurance that the capitalist mode of production had

strong roots and an inherent energy to sustain itself. Neo-classical theorists considered the market as perfect, and remained concerned with the processes which sustained it i.e., the microeconomics of ascertaining what was to be produced, how much, and at what price. The Marxists in the meantime sought to enlarge their traditional critique of capitalism. Rosa Luxemburg, Bukharin, Hilferding and Lenin, while believing that the inherent characteristics of capitalism contributed to development, also accommodated the colonised countries in their framework. They emphasised that as long as the colonial bond was not broken, the development of colonised countries would remain arrested. In the context of the series of depressions which culminated in the economic crisis in 1930, the neo-classical theory, was shaken by the thought of John Meynard Keynes who advocated that state intervention was required to ameliorate the effects of depression.

30.2.6 The Stage of Late Capitalism

The stage of late capitalism began in 1945 and can be seen as divided into two phases, the earlier ending in 1966 and the later phase continuing till 1980. This stage was marked by the production of modern consumer goods and till 1966, the period was characterised by economic expansion and rising profits. The period was also significant for the process of decolonisation, and the emergence of newly independent countries all over the world, and the subsequent introduction of issues of social progress and economic development on the agenda of the latter. In this context *modernization theories* (Rostow, Hoselitz) sought to explain the process of development as the transition from the traditional (feudal) society to the modern or industrial society. Historically, the transition occurred first in developed societies and the others were expected to follow the same patterns of changes.

The Marxist theories in this phase attempted to understand and explain the reasons for underdevelopment in newly independent countries even after the rupture of colonial bonds. Thus, the theory of imperialism explored the internal effects of the introduction of capitalism in third world societies. Paul Baran argues that in these countries, imperialist powers enter into alliance with the local oligarchies and as a result vital economic resources are partly siphoned off to the metropolis and partly squandered in luxury consumption, preventing accumulation and development. Imperialist countries, the theories propose, are basically opposed to the industrialisation of underdeveloped countries and try to maintain the old ruling class in power. By 1966 the stage of late capitalism enters a new phase, marked by the slowing down of economic growth and a falling rate of profit. In this phase, the *neo-liberals* (e.g., Milton Friedman) launched an attack on the Keynesian policies, accusing the state of excessive intervention and slowing down growth through heavy taxation to support welfare policies.

In Latin American countries, the *theories of dependency* were skeptical about the liberating role of national bourgeoisies and proposed that the processes of industrialisation in the third world are the vehicles of imperialist penetration and generate a dependence on transnational companies. Ander Gunder Frank in particular, questioned the Marxist and liberal theories, both of which claimed that capitalism was a mode of production able to promote development everywhere. Frank rejected this idea and maintained that capitalism is to be blamed for the continuous underdevelopment of Latin American countries since the sixteenth century. Frank conceives of capitalism as a world system within which the metropolitan centers manage to expropriate the economic surpluses from satellite countries through the mechanism of the international market, thus producing development in the former and underdevelopment in the latter. Third world countries are underdeveloped because they are dependent within the world capitalist system. Hence, development can only occur when a country breaks out of the system by means of a socialist revolution.

The development theories, which arose in the 1970s, show the influence of Frank, especially Samir Amin and A.Emmanuel's *Theory of Unequal Exchange* and

I.Wallerstein's *World System theory*. For Wallerstein, all the states within the world system could not develop simultaneously by definition because the system functions by virtue of having an unequal core and peripheral regions. An interesting feature, which Wallerstein adds, is that the role of being a peripheral or a semi-peripheral nation is not fixed. Core countries and peripheral countries could become semi-peripheral and so on. What remains definite, however, is the unequal nature of the world system. (for details about the stages of capitalist development and development theories, see Jorge Larrain, 'Introduction' in Larrain's, *Theories of Development*)

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Trace the linkages between the rise of capitalism and the concept of development.

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2)   Discuss Jorge Larrin's views on development.

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3)   How have A.G.Frank, Samir Amin and I.Wallerstein conceptualised capitalist development?

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30.3 REDEFINING DEVELOPMENT

At the time when scholars in the West were trying to affirm the potential for development (progress) in capitalism, or in the case of Marxist theorists, looking at both the dynamism and contradictions within capitalism, some strands of thought started to redefine the concept of development. We saw in the previous section the theorists of the dependency and world systems schools point out that 'development' in the modern world has meant the development of unequal relationships among nations and peoples.

30.3.1 Radical Critique of Development

A more radical critique of development started emerging in the 1970s. This critique started from the basic assumption that development in its current usage is inextricably associated with capitalist development and expansion. Capitalist expansion has historically resulted in the concentration of wealth in a few nations and poverty for others. This critique took cognizance of the notion of development, which identified it solely with capitalist development, and the principle that there is a single path to development to be followed by all.

Scholars like Arturo Escobar, Wolfgang Sachs and Gustavo Esteva point out that the association of 'development' in the dominant orthodoxy with (capitalist) growth and modernisation, remained an influential ideology of nation building in the newly independent countries after the Second World War. Throughout the post-war period the meanings and purposes of development as understood in these countries could not break free from the notion of development as it had emerged in Europe in the 16th century. Wolfgang Sachs illustrates this lucidly when, writing in the early 1990s, he says that the last forty years can be called the 'age of development'. Like a towering lighthouse guiding sailors towards the coast, development was *the* idea which oriented the emerging nations in their journey as sovereign nations after they had been freed from colonial subordination (Wolfgang Sachs, *The Development Dictionary*, 1992, p.1). This quest for development by the new nations, however, did nothing to liberate them from the hierarchy of the world order, brought about and sustained by the logic of capital. After independence the idea of development thus continued to mean development so as to fit into a world capitalist economy.

30.3.2 Rise of the USA and the Issue of Development

It is significant therefore, that soon after independence, most of these nations, which embarked on the course of development, came to be labeled as 'underdeveloped'. By the end of World War II, the United States assumed a formidable centrality in the world. To make its position explicit and binding, the United States laid down in precise terms its relationship of domination and benevolence, with the new nations. Thus, on January 20, 1949, President Truman assumed the office of the President of United States and professed 'a bold new programme for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement of the underdeveloped areas'. Gustavo Esteva points out that with this pronouncement of Truman's policy, a large mass of humanity, the formerly colonised countries were put under a blanket label of 'underdeveloped' (Gustavo Esteva, 'Development' in Wolfgang Sachs ed., *Development Dictionary*, pp.8-9). The label not only condemned the newly independent countries to a new subjection, it affirmed the continuation of a hierarchised world system resting on the edifice of capitalist development.

30.3.3 Emergence of the Third World and the Concept of Development

With the 1970s, the Third World emerged as a significant political block, which preferred to steer clear of allegiance to any ideological block and subscribing to neither the capitalist, nor the socialist path of development. The new social movements, which emerged all over, the world, began questioning the existing policies of development, seeking a more plural path of development, where the needs and aspirations of local regions could be taken into account. The new social movements, e.g., the environment, workers, women's movements etc., sought to draw attention to the manner in which existing development patterns resulted in the marginalisation of large sections of population, or included the various sections of the population in an unequal way. The existing frameworks of development were contested. Democratisation of development patterns were sought at two levels (i) within countries and (ii) among countries in order to promote a more egalitarian economic and political order, where past historical predominance of nations could be checked and the development of each nation and each person could be achieved.

In the following paragraphs, we shall look at some of the strands within development theory, which have sought to redefine the notion of development. Some of these strands have emerged from the changing notion of development in the United Nations culminating in the passage in 1989 by the United Nations General Assembly of a 'right to development'.

30.3.4 United Nations and Development

According to Adrian Leftwitch, a change in the United Nations thinking on development became perceptible from the 1960s itself, with a shift in the political balance in the organisation with the advent of new nations. These nations succeeded in shifting the focus of development within the United Nations policies from income and growth, to 'social development'.

Social development refers essentially to improvement in fields like education, health care, income distribution, socio-economic and gender equality and rural welfare. Social development also came to signify a much more radical and sweeping conception of development involving the nationalisation of major assets, the redistribution of wealth (as in land reforms) and popular participation in political decision making, both as the means and ends of development (Adrian Leftwitch, *States of Development*, 2000, p.41).

By the late 1960s, an influential strand of thinking attempted to combine the necessity of growth with greater concern for both social development and social justice. It was increasingly being realised that growth in developing countries was not reducing inequalities. It rather seemed to sustain and even deepen existing inequalities. Thus combining social development with a just distribution of benefits of growth occupied the energies of concerned academic theorists at this time. British development economist Dudley Seers, for example, in a series of articles from the late 1960s, began questioning the association of development with growth alone. He focussed attention on the 'results' of development, looking for its impact on poverty, unemployment, and inequality. Seers was thus seeking to redefine the meaning and measurement of development to include the reduction of both poverty and inequality and the expansion of employment. Out of such concerns grew the notion that development constituted providing for what has been termed 'basic needs', that development was a process of meeting basic human needs and that it should be measured by the extent to which it met these 'primary needs of communities and individuals'.

30.3.5 Basic Needs Approach

The 'basic needs' approach to development is therefore, to provide opportunities for the full physical, mental and social development of the individual. Basic needs, therefore, included 'the need for self-determination, self-reliance, political freedom and security, participation in decision-making, national and cultural identity, and a sense of purpose in life and work'. The definition of basic human needs covered five main areas: basic goods for family consumption (including food, clothing, housing); basic services (including primary and adult education, water, heath care and transport); participation in decision making; the fulfillment of basic human rights; and productive employment (to generate sufficient income for a family to meet its consumption needs) (Adrian Leftwitch, pp.44-47).

30.3.6 Development within the Neo-liberal Framework

In the 1980s, development, both as a process and as a goal, came to be framed in terms of the prevailing neo-liberal ideas. These ideas proposed that economic freedom, free markets, private-sector initiatives and the cutting away of regulations would provide the conditions and incentives for unleashing entrepreneurial energies, rejecting thereby the ideas of the 1960s and 1970s which saw a key role for the state in planning, distribution and the provision of basic human needs. This thinking about development reasserted the 'primacy of economic growth', rather than social development or the elimination of poverty, arguing that in the long run growth would take care of poverty. By the end of the 1980s, however, it became apparent that the withdrawal of the state from social development and distributive role, had imposed heavy costs on the poor with respect to increases in basic food prices as well as medical and educational services.

30.3.7 Right to Development

In the meantime, the *right to development*, was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 4th December, 1986. This right, according to Upendra Baxi, not only incorporated the very essence of human rights, it provided a rich starting ground for a new quest of human rights, which would form the basis for an egalitarian world order. The right to development encapsulates the right to self determination and sovereignty, and asserts that all rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural, are equally important and should be promoted and protected equally. It also brings in the important supposition that international peace and security are essential elements for the establishment of conditions conducive to the right to development. While asserting the need for equality of opportunity, the most significant contribution of the declaration is its emphasis on the human person as the source and subject of rights. The individual was the central subject of the development process, and development policy should make him the main participant and the main beneficiary.

The following core ideas which constitute the right to development, signify some radical shifts in the idea of development: (a) The declaration makes the right to development in effect the right of all human persons, everywhere, and of humanity as a whole, to realise their potential. (b) It asserts the certainty of the human person as the source and subject of rights. (c) It aims at the constitution of a just human society by remapping the trajectories of development. (d) Underlying the Declaration is also the notion of duty of all human beings, to struggle to create and maintain conditions where authentic human, social and civilisational development is possible. (e) It is simultaneously then, the duty of the state to provide the conditions in which the human person is able to exercise his/her rights and duties (See Upendra Baxi, 'The Development of the Right to Development' in Janusz Symonides ed., *Human Rights: New Dimensions and Challenges*, Ashgate, Dartmouth, 1998.)

30.3.8   World Development Report 1991

Traces of this comprehensive view of development can be seen in the *World Development Report 1991.* The *Report* defined development as both 'economic development' constituting a sustainable increase in living standards that encompass material consumption, education, health and environment protection, and in a broader sense as including other important and related attributes as well, like equality of opportunity, political freedom and civil liberties. The overall goal of development was therefore seen as increasing the economic, political, and civil rights of the people across gender, ethnic groups, religions, races, regions, and countries. (*World Bank*, 1991, 31).

In the discussion so far, we have seen that the definition of development has no longer remained narrowly focussed on economic growth. It has been enlarged to include social and human development. It has also included in its scope a notion of development, which is a product of, and also seeks to establish democracy through popular participation. This notion of development has found its most comprehensive theoretical articulation in Amartya Sen's formulation of 'development as freedom' (Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, Oxford, 1999).

30.3.9 Amartya Sen on Development

For Sen, expansion of freedom is viewed as both the *primary end* and the *principal goal* of development. Development requires, therefore, the removal of major sources of unfreedom i.e., poverty, tyranny, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, intolerance or overactivity of repressive states. Amartya Sen also opposes the idea that political freedoms need to be postponed until socio-economic development has been achieved. He argues that political freedoms and such other freedoms, such as the freedom from disease and ignorance are essential components of development. Sen identifies five categories of 'instrumental freedoms' which together promote development. These 'instrumental freedoms' are: (a) *Political freedoms*: which enable people to participate in forming government and influencing its policies, (b) *Economic facilities*: which constitute the opportunities for people to use resources, (c) *Social opportunities*: which refer to the arrangements within society for health care and education, which facilitate participation in political and economic life, (d) *transparency guarantees*: these guarantees refer to conditions of public trust achieved through transparency in public affairs, (e) *protective security*: this instrumental freedom provides social safety and security which prevents people from becoming poor and destitute.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss some of the critical strands within development theory, which have sought to redefine development.

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2)   What do you understand by the notion of development as freedom?

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30.4   LET US SUM UP

The idea of development took shape in the context of the breakdown of feudalism and the rise of modern capitalist societies. The rise of capitalism with its emphasis on science, progress, economic growth, production, profit, freedom of trade etc, provided the material conditions within which the idea of development took shape. The intellectual tradition of the time, the Enlightenment tradition, redefined the notion of the individual as having the faculty of reason, and possessing the capacity to take rational decisions. The emphasis on material progress and profit making dismantled feudal relationships. At the same time, the idea of the rational individual, capable of self-determination, became instrumental in the emergence of a conscious political struggle for individual freedom and autonomy.

Jorge Larrain points out that the concept of development is not only closely bound up with the evolution of capitalism, each phase of capitalism can be seen as having a specific set of notions about development. He sees capitalism as having developed in three main stages from 1700 and identifies the corresponding theories of development for each phase. The age of competitive capitalism, marked by the struggles of the new industrial bourgeoisie was also the time when capitalism, from its emergence in Britain, starts expanding all over the world in search of markets or colonies. Classical political economists like Adam Smith and David Ricardo, expressed faith in capitalism as the absolute form of production. Marx and Engels, however, refused to see capitalism as the natural and absolute mode of production and saw in the development of inner contradictions in capitalism, the possibility of its demise and replacement by a more advanced mode of production.

The second stage of capitalism, the age of imperialism (1860-1945) saw the firm entrenchment of capitalism as the predominant mode of production. The neo-classical theory of development, working with the assurance that the capitalist mode of production had strong roots and an inherent capacity to maintain equilibrium, took development for granted. Marxists like Rosa Luxemburg, Bukharin, Hilferding and Lenin, pointed out, however, that as long as the colonial bond was not broken, the development of colonised countries would remain arrested.

The stage of late capitalism was marked by the production of modern consumer goods and till 1966, the period was characterised by economic expansion and rising profits, and a process of decolonisation which gave rise to a number of 'new nations'. These 'new nations' embarked on a path of development to build themselves into strong nations.

Modernisation theorists like Rostow and Hoselitz sought to explain the process of development as a transition, which occurs first in developed societies, and the others follow the same patterns of change. The Marxist theories in this phase, geared up

to understand and explain the reasons for underdevelopment in newly independent countries even after the rupture of colonial bonds.

In Latin American countries dependency theories expressed skepticism about the liberating role of national bourgeoisie. They proposed that modernisation and industrialisation in the developing countries promoted a new kind of dependence. Samir Amin and A.Emmanuel's theory of unequal exchange and I.Wallerstein's world system theory outlined the specific frameworks of this dependence and hierarchy, which characterised the modern world system.

Since the 1960s, however, significant strands of development theorists started questioning the association of development with economic progress as well as the idea that there was only one path to this progress, which had already been traversed by the western countries. By the 1960s, the skepticism with a narrow definition of development as economic progress made itself manifest in the form of the 'social development' approach, which combined growth with improvement in health care, education, redistribution of wealth and popular participation in political decision making. The 'basic human needs' similarly emphasised the need to redefine the meaning of development to include reduction of poverty, inequality and unemployment.

The *right to development* adopted by the General Assembly on 4th December 1986, provided the basis for claims to an egalitarian world order. The right to development encapsulates the right to self-determination and the right to sovereignty, and asserts that all rights, civil, political, economic, social and cultural are equally important and should be promoted and protected equally. It also brings in the important supposition that international peace and security are essential elements for the establishment of conditions conducive to development. Amartya Sen's enunciation of development as freedom emphasised both the 'constitutive' and 'instrumental' role of freedom in development. Political freedoms, economic opportunities, social security, trust and transparency in public affairs and social opportunities are considered by Sen as certain freedoms which are instrumental in providing conditions which promote development. It may also be emphasised that these freedoms also constitute substantive characteristics of development.

30.5   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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Leftwitch, Adrian, *States of Development*, Polity, Cambridge, 2000.

Sachs, Wolfgang, 'Introduction' in Wolfgang Sachs ed., *The Development Dictionary*, Zed Books, London, 1992.

30.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 30.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See sub-sections 30.2.1 and 30.2.2

2) See Section 30.2

3) See sub-section 30.2.6

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) See Section 30.3

2) See sub-section 30.3.9

UNIT 31 DISADVANTAGED AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Structure

31.0 OBJECTIVES

Disadvantaged groups are a part and parcel of our socio-economic and political formations in the form of race, colour, caste, gender and biological disability. Efforts have been on to assimilate these marginalised groups into the mainstream of socio-economic and political life, especially since the last half of the twentieth century.

Arguments are presented both for and against affirmative action as well as providing the legal and moral rationale for the continued application of affirmative action type programmes. The word 'merit' is often used to discard the relevance of affirmative action as an instrument of social change.

After having read this unit, the students would learn the following:

- Who are the disadvantaged groups?

- How has the concept of affirmative action been defined?

- What is the justification for affirmative action in modern times?

- What are the theoretical assumptions behind the concept?

- How has the concept of affirmative action emerged in different parts of the globe?

- What are the critical aspects of affirmative action?

In principle, affirmative action is generally approved of as it implies that measures should be taken to ensure that all individuals are equal and to prevent or to counteract traditional and ingrained prejudicial practices by instituting positive discriminations.

31.1 INTRODUCTION

The current debate over affirmative action, like over all other hotly contested issues such as multiculturalism, bilingual education, immigration and the like, has become the hallmark of modern political theory. The sharp polarisation, which these theoretically debated issues tend to create, often results in a failure to see that the truth may lie somewhere in between. There is, thus, much need for an open and impartial mind on the subject.

The concept of the 'disadvantaged and the need for affirmative action' emerged in the 1960s as a result of efforts by the Civil Rights Movement in the USA to get America to honour its original contract, that 'all [people] are created equal.' In addition, the **Pledge of Allegiance** promised 'liberty and justice for all.' This idealism was a promise of equal opportunity for all individuals regardless of colour, national origin, race, religion and sex, which up to that point in history had not been honoured. For this inalienable right, the founders and the followers of the civil rights movement marched and died, finally obtaining the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The Johnson Administration embraced affirmative action in 1965 by issuing the United States Executive Order 11246, later amended by the Executive Order 11375. The order, as amended, aimed 'to correct the effects of past and present discrimination'. It prohibited federal contractors and sub-contractors from discriminating against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, skin colour, religion, gender, or national origin.

In order to correct such inequities, especially in the areas of housing, education and employment, steps were taken to ensure that those groups that, historically, had been excluded or given limited access to societal rewards, were now given an opportunity to catch up. Thus, it referred to social policies encouraging favourable treatment of socially disadvantaged groups, especially in employment, education, and housing, without regard to race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin. To reverse the historical trends of discrimination and to create equality of opportunity for qualified persons was the motive behind the concept.

Women are discriminated against because of the negative meaning given to their gender. Therefore, the solution is not one of more 'race or gender', but a restructuring of society through the elimination of culturally sanctioned strategies that defend racial/gender superiority and pride of position.

This type of "colour caste system" mentality could be traced back to an 1858 U.S. treatise stating in part:

"... [the Negro] exhibits such a weakness of intellect… so debased is their [moral] condition generally, that their humanity has been even doubted, …Lust is his strongest passion; and hence, rape is an offence of too frequent occurrence…"

The point is that this language, though part of an 1858 treatise, influenced the upbringing and heritage of the city attorney. This type of racial and social discrimination was designed to place the Blacks in positions inferior to the Whites; it continues to dominate black-white relations today in a preconscious or unconscious fashion.

Micro-aggressive attitudes of 'presumed superiority' continue to govern racial interactions and reflect in hiring decisions, admissions decisions, sentencing hearings, and every other aspect of human life in the USA and in other parts of the globe with different manifestations and modes.

Anamaría Loya, attorney for MALDEF, defines the concept as, "Affirmative action is any measure, policy or law used to increase diversity or rectify discrimination so that

qualified individuals have equal access to employment, education, business, and contracting opportunities" Whereas, Abdín Noboa says, "Affirmative action is not about counting heads, it is about making heads count."

31.2 JUSTIFICATIONS FOR AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

As Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "There is no greater inequality than the equal treatment of unequals." Here, arises the need for such positive discrimination which would make humanity more humane and progressive.

Aristotle in his *Nichomchean Ethics* wrote, justice is equality, as all men believe it to be quite apart from any argument. Indeed, in Greek, the word equality means justice. To be just is to be equal and to be unjust is to be unequal.

According to Aristotle, equality means that things that are alike should be treated alike and things that are unalike should be treated unalike. Injustice arises when equals are treated unequally and also when unequals are treated equally.

Affirmative action becomes essential in righting societal inequities. It is based on the "principle of redress"; that undeserved inequalities call for rectification. Since inequalities of birth are undeserved, these inequalities are to be somehow compensated for. According to Rawls, thus, in order to treat all persons equally and to provide genuine equality of opportunity, society must give more attention to those born into or placed in less favorable social positions. Affirmative action was established as a part of society's efforts to address continuing problems of discrimination; the empirical evidence presented in the preceding pages indicates that it has had a somewhat positive impact on remedying the effects of discrimination. Whether such discrimination still exists today, is a central element of any analysis of affirmative action.

31.2.1 Evidence of Continuing Discrimination

There has been an undeniable human progress in many areas. Nevertheless, the evidence is overwhelming that the problems affirmative action seeks to address are widespread. To take the example of the U.S. society, where the concept of affirmative action emerged, the marked differences in the economic status of the blacks and the whites, and between men and women, clearly have social and economic causes in addition to general discrimination.

One respected method to isolate the prevalence of discrimination is to use random testing, in which individuals compete for the same job, apartment, or some other goal. For example, the Fair Employment Council of Greater Washington, Inc. conducted a series of tests between 1990 and 1992. The tests revealed that the Blacks were treated significantly worse than the equally qualified Whites of the time.

Similarly, researchers with the National Bureau of Economic Research sent comparably matched resumes of men and women to the restaurants in Philadelphia. In high priced eateries, men were more than twice as likely to receive an interview call and five times as likely to receive a job offer as compared to the women testers.

The Justice Department had conducted a similar testing to uncover housing discrimination. These tests also revealed that the Whites are more likely than the Blacks to be shown apartment units, while the Blacks with equal credentials are told that nothing is available. Since the testing began, the Justice Department brought over 20 federal suits resulting in settlements totalling more than $1.5 million. A recent study by the Glass Ceiling Commission, a body established under President Bush and legislatively sponsored by Senator Dole, reported that:

- White males continue to hold 97 percent of senior management positions in Fortune 1000 industrial and Fortune 500 service industries. Only 0.6 percent of senior managers are African-Americans, 0.3 percent are Asians and 0.4 percent are Hispanic.

- African-Americans hold only 2.5 percent of top jobs in the private sector and African-American men with professional degrees earn only 79 percent of the amount earned by their white counterparts. Comparably situated African-American women earn only 60 percent of the amount earned by the white males.

- Women hold only 3 to 5 percent of senior level management positions—there are only two women CEOs in Fortune 1000 companies.

- The fears and prejudices of lower-rung white male executives were listed as a principal barrier to the advancement of women and minorities. The report also found that, across the board, men advance more rapidly than women.

- The unemployment rate for African-Americans was more than twice that of the Whites in 1994. The median income for black males working full-time, full year in 1992 was 30 percent less than that of the white males. Hispanics fared only modestly better in each category. In 1993, Black and Hispanic men were half as likely as white men to be managers or professionals.

- In 1992, over 50 percent of African-American children under 6 and 44 percent of Hispanic children lived under the poverty level, while only 14.4 percent of white children did so. The overall poverty rates were 33.3 percent for African-Americans, 29.3 percent for Hispanics and 11.6 percent for Whites.

- Black employment remains fragile—in an economic downturn, black unemployment leads the downward spiral. For example, in the 1981-82 recessions, black employment dropped by 9.1 percent while white employment fell by 1.6 percent. Hispanic unemployment is also much more cyclical than unemployment for the white Americans.

- Unequal access to education plays an important role in creating and perpetuating economic disparities. In 1993, less than 3 percent of college graduates were unemployed; but whereas 22.6 percent of the Whites had college degrees, only 12.2 percent of African-Americans and 9.0 percent of Hispanics had such a degree.

- The 1990 census reflected that 2.4 percent of the nation's businesses were owned by the Blacks. Almost 85 percent of these black owned businesses had no employees. Even within educational categories, the economic status of minorities and women fall short. The average woman with a master's degree earns the same amount as the average man with an associate degree.

- These gaps in, arguably, the most developed society in the world today amply justify the need for a constructive programme, so that rampant inequality and injustice in society could be fought with vigour and commitment.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Trace the genesis and early history of affirmative action with special reference to the United States of America.

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2) Discuss the racial discrimination scenario in the United States of America.

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31.3   THEORETICAL ISSUES

Given the seriousness of the problem, almost all thinkers from Liberals to Libertarians and Marxists to Social Democrats have tried to address the issue in their own way. There is a general agreement among them that equality of individual circumstances is an impossibility.

John Rawls makes a substantial case for reducing inequalities as he concedes that, if inequalities benefit everybody by drawing out socially useful talents and energies, then they would be acceptable to all.

Libertarians, on the other hand, are clear in their minds that equality in individual circumstances is not even desirable, for it would thwart incentives and growth. They do talk about equality of opportunity and equality before the law, but equality in the sense commonly understood is clearly undesirable for them. The argument is that an equal world is inimical to growth and incentives. The rapid economic advance that we have come to expect seems in a large measure to be a result of unequal circumstances. Karl Marx's view on equality turns out to be rather indifferent towards the idea of equality of individual circumstances, in the sense of equal distribution of commodities and income. He would rather prefer to eliminate class distinctions, so that oppression and exploitation may be eliminated and all social and political inequality arising from them would disappear by itself. In the first phase of communism, he envisages inequality emerging from the equal right to labour, but in the final stage of communism, he envisaged a world where equality in the sense of distribution of goods or income would cease to have a meaning.

Social Democrats and Fabians are in favour of a substantial measure of equality, but they do not want to do away with the basic framework of free market capitalism, believing that some form of inequality is not only desirable for the purpose of long term growth, but is also a part of the natural order of things.

In addition to their concept of equality and its relevance for human growth, their views about ensuring justice are also enlightening, though as has been noted, everybody will have a different conception of justice like the concept of equality.

In the Rawlsian scheme of things, the conception of justice ensures that the societal dispensation is designed in such a way that it improves the condition of the least advantaged members of society. In fact, Rawlsian justice is geared exclusively towards improving the lot of the worst off members of society. Rawls talks of ensuring equality of opportunity, because it ensures that the fate of the people is determined by their choices and not by their circumstances. "My aim is to regulate inequalities that affect people's life chances and not the inequalities that arise from people's life choices", which are an individual's own responsibility. Rawls seeks to ensure a scheme of things that Prof Dworkin calls 'endowment insensitive and ambition sensitive' dispensation. A

system is just if it takes care of the redressal of undeserved inequalities and since the inequalities of birth are undeserved, these inequalities are somehow to be compensated for.

Libertarian thinkers like Hayek and Friedman have recognised the difficulty of ensuring equality of individual circumstances, but at the same time, they have argued for the elimination of moral and political inequality. They have centred their discussion on ensuring 'equality of opportunity and equality before the law'. The presupposition is that this ensures justice and enhances individual freedom. The principle of 'equality of opportunity' is that every person has an equal chance to do what he wishes and has the capacity to do. For Marx, a just system is one, wherein all class distinctions have been abolished.

It is not necessarily a system where equality prevails, for equality which is fundamentally a bourgeois idea, has no place in the statement of working class demands and objectives. Since the state is an instrument, used by the dominant class to suppress and exploit the dependant class, the state in the hands of the Proletariat shall be the medium to be used against bourgeois and other reactionary and counter-revolutionary forces for affecting a radical redistribution of resources.

Social democrats are in favour of ensuring a system (a just one), wherein a substantial measure of equality is guaranteed without doing away with the basic framework of market capitalism.

Those who specifically addressed the question also feel the need for a positive action for alleviating the sufferings of the disadvantaged group as a necessary step for social development.

R.H Tawney is strongly in favour of substantial redistribution and in particular, public provision for education, for all children to make them capable of freedom and more capable of fulfilling their personal differences and enlargement of personal liberties.

Joining the stream of such thinkers, Amartya Sen emphasises this aspect in his advocacy of 'Basic Capability Equality'. He says that "Individual claims are not to be assessed in terms of the resources or primary goods persons respectively hold, but in terms of the freedom they enjoy to choose between different ways of living so that they can have reason to value public action to improve nutritional intake, life expectancy and reduce morbidity and infant mortality so as to enhance individuals capabilities."

Adopting predictive postures, Mr. Edley explores the potential forms that affirmative action could take in the future. This theorist presents three models of affirmative action:

First, there is the 'colour blind vision' of affirmative action. This version would entail race-based measures as a remedy only for people who could prove they are direct 'victims of discrete acts of discrimination.'

The second version of affirmative action would be called the 'opportunity and anti-discrimination' version. It would seek to provide equal opportunity for minorities, but would not require equal results. This version acknowledges that the harms of racism create 'economic and social disparities among races.' This version of affirmative action would seek to correct these harms.

Finally, a third version would be called 'remediation plus inclusion.' This version is the 'preferred' approach of the thinker and essentially suggests that diversity alone constitutes 'a compelling state interest.'

These models give an incite for a neo-world order which is likely to accommodate plurality as an instrument of progression instead of exploitation. The need for a neo-theoretical framework could be understood from the fact that the discriminatory attitude

has become more subtle, subconscious and sophisticated; so it has to be addressed at that level. This could not be understood in terms of sheer inequalities, which present too simplistic a perception of the disadvantaged.

There are three key elements where affirmative action programmes have an edge over the traditional notion of positive equality.

First, affirmative action programmes are pro-active, including policies and procedures for ensuring a diverse applicant pool. Affirmative action does not mean quotas for hiring and promotion, which are in fact illegal. Nor does it necessarily mean preferential hiring. The goal is to assemble, in a self-conscious and active way that can counteract the effects of subtle bias (in the form of in-group favouritism or preferential support in the form of mentoring), a diverse pool of fully qualified candidates for hiring or promotion.

Second, the most common feature of affirmative action programmes is the emphasis on recordkeeping and identification of accurate availability statistics so that organisations can accurately gauge their progress toward their diversity goals. The subtle process of underlying discrimination can be identified and isolated under the structured conditions of the laboratory. However, in organisational decision-making, in which the controlled conditions of an experiment are rarely possible, contemporary bias presents a substantial challenge to the equitable treatment of members of disadvantaged groups. Not only are the perpetrators of bias often unaware of their motives, research has demonstrated that the victims of discrimination may also not recognise that they have been personally discriminated against. Systematic monitoring of disparities along consensually accepted dimensions can reveal the cumulative effects of contemporary forms of bias that are more evident than the impact that can be determined in any particular case.

Third, affirmative action policies are outcome-based; issues of intentionality are not central. Demonstrating intentionality, which is typically a major issue of concern for equal employment opportunity programmes, is problematic because of contemporary forms of bias. These biases commonly occur unintentionally.

To put it in a more simplified manner, over the past 25 years social psychologists have identified and documented the subtle nature of contemporary forms of bias. In contrast to the direct and easily discernible traditional forms, contemporary biases are expressed, often unintentionally, in indirect and rationalisable ways. Because of the subtle nature of contemporary bias, passive equal opportunity employment policies may not ensure a fair and unbiased treatment of traditionally disadvantaged groups. Policies designed to protect disadvantaged individuals and groups from one type of discrimination based on overt anti-out-group actions may be ineffective for addressing biased treatment based on in-group favouritism that may characterise aversive racism. In contrast, affirmative action, with its focus on documenting and responding to disparities at the aggregate level and its emphasis on outcomes rather than intention, addresses some of the particularly problematic aspects of subtle biases that permit disparities to persist despite people's good intentions.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss the theoretical basis of the concepts of equality and justice.

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31.4 AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

Though the concept originated in the United States, yet it had a significant appeal beyond its borders. While affirmative action laws in the USA are a result of confusing mixtures of case law, statutory law and executive orders, places such as India, Malaysia, Namibia and South Africa have written affirmative action into their constitutions.

In Malaysia and India, affirmative action receives strong support from the government as a means to normalise opportunities for minorities that have endured years of racial oppression.

31.4.1 Affirmative Action in India

India has been practicing affirmative action in its essence, longer and more aggressively than any other place in the world. Though conservative opponents of the USA based affirmative action routinely misstate its nature by referring to it as set asides and quotas, in India quotas are the rule. They have been applied widely in the educational and the employment arena since the 1950s for deprived members of the caste system, such as the untouchables. For example, in India's parliament, the 'outcaste' and other indigenous tribes are guaranteed a number of seats numerically proportional to their demographic representation.

It is with the lofty aim of alleviating the sufferings of the underprivileged and exploited sections of Indian society and for reconstruction and transformation of a hierarchical society emphasizing inequality into a modern egalitarian society based on individual achievement and equal opportunity for all that the protective discrimination programme was devised under the Indian Constitution. However, this ideal of egalitarianism did not come about in a day or two; rather it was the culmination of a long process of change in the traditional pattern of a medieval caste ridden society. These changes were, in fact, the culmination of a long drawn process of transformation in the traditional patterns of a caste-ridden society. Two factors worked as catalysts in the process; the indigenous reforms and western influences.

The founding fathers of the Indian Constitution were aware of the prevailing miserable and appalling conditions of backward groups who had remained far behind and segregated from the national and social mainstream and had continued to be socially oppressed and economically exploited for centuries due to various types of disabilities. These handicaps, resulting from societal arrangements such as caste structures and group suppressions, constitutionally authorised preferences and protective discrimination, created a lot of confusion and conflicts leading to heated debates, court cases, street violence and social unrest.

India, the biggest democratic system of the world, with a thousand million plus population and a mind-boggling variety, a system which boasts of more than 5000 years of history and continued civilization and a hoary past, has been experimenting with protective discrimination programmes on an unprecedented variety. Reservations in jobs, educational institutions, legislatures and in local self-governing institutions, better known as *Panchayati Raj* institutions for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes and now women has been a grand experiment by any standard. It may also be noted that scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes are a whole cluster of thousands of castes spread over the length and breadth of the country. However, it has succeeded to some extent in achieving the target it had set before itself 57 years ago.

31.4.2 Affirmative Action in Malaysia

Though India has the oldest affirmative action programme, Malaysia's implementation is considered the most successful. Malaysia has achieved success without the need for quotas, where 'Malay majority has now become accepted as the norm in education and government employment.'

The Malaysian system has created a virtual re-distribution of wealth where many Malays, previously having only a 1% stake in the Malaysian economy in 1969 now have more than a 20% stake. In comparable USA terms, this would be like distributing all the shares of stock traded on the New York Stock Exchange to black people in proportion to their representation in the USA population.

31.4.3 Affirmative Action in Namibia and South Africa

Namibia and South Africa have recently rewritten their constitutions and have similar systems, though they have borrowed affirmative action language from the USA laws. For example, South Africa's Constitution simply contains the following language: 'Affirmative Action is allowed.' It is also pointed out, however, that affirmative action programmes abroad are not totally devoid of trouble. In India, many of the upper caste members are beginning to make similar argument to those of the USA conservatives and Malaysia's system is vulnerable to corruption.

It is important to know here that the applicability of the affirmative action concept is much broader than in the USA.

31.4.4 Affirmative Action in the United States of America

Despite the existence of equal protection clause under the 14th amendment, racial discrimination had continued in the USA up to the mid 20th century. However, this discrepancy between its ideals and its treatment of the Black people began to be corrected around the 1950s and most notably, in 1954. The United States Supreme Court came out strongly against the segregation of the blacks in schools. The first step as reflected in the decisions of the courts and civil rights laws of the Congress merely removed the legal and quasi-legal forms of racial discrimination. These actions while not producing true equality or even opportunity socially dictated the next step; a positive use of governmental power to create the possibility of real equality. The decision in Brown overturning Plessey (equal but separate doctrine) foretold that all publicly enforced, sponsored or supported racial discrimination was beyond the pale, that equal protection was not a bounty, but a birthright.

A decade after Brown, the Congress joined the movement to eliminate segregation by enacting the Civil Rights Act in 1964, which prohibited in general terms discrimination against any person on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin concerning any programme or activity receiving federal funds. These attempts have been viewed as mandating affirmative action programmes using racial classification. The decision of the United States Supreme Court in the **Allan Bakke** case and the debates that took place in its wake have further re-enforced the constitutionality of the affirmative action programme in the USA.

However, the heated debates, judicial pronouncements and academic and philosophical discussions in the United States are referred to and indeed, they are helpful in understanding many a complex and complicated issue of India's protective action programme, which is far more difficult to handle in view of India's varied and many hued culture. Reference may be made to Justice Krishna Iyer's pronouncements in the **Thomas Decision** that repairing the handicaps of the Blacks in America was comparable to the problems of repairing the handicaps of the Harijans in India. Similarly, Justice Iyer

referred to **Schlesinger v. Ballard Case** as illustrative of the high judicial punch in understanding the classificatory clue to the promotion of employment of equality. In fact, the USA. Supreme Court upheld a classification in favour of a female naval officer by applying the rational basis test in this case, which was much like the reasonable basis classification being employed by the Indian Supreme Court right since the Gopalan and Champakam Dorairajan cases.

A rider may be added here lest the context be forgotten that though, the affirmative action programme for historical injustices in India is roughly comparable with the remedial measures being adopted in the USA for the Blacks and Negroes, but the context of 'historical injustices' is absolutely different in India from that in the United States of America and the plight of Blacks is different in many respects from the plight of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India. The dynamics of civilisational context are absolutely different in India.

31.4.5 Affirmative Action in France

A word about the French constitutional scheme of protective discrimination would not be out of place here. The French equivalent of the affirmative action programme in the United States or in India is the concept of *Fraternity*, which is directed towards helping the poor and the disadvantaged members of society. The declaration of 1793 in Article 21 states that public assistance is a sacred debt. Society owes its existence to those who are unable to work. The Girondin proposal for rights contained the statement that equality consists in everyone being able to enjoy the same rights. Though the system of equality that has been followed in the Fifth Republic has served the French mentality as well, peculiar and contradictory as it is, however the kind of place equality enjoys in the American and the Indian system is unlikely to be achieved in the French system, either in socio-political debates or constitutional litigation in Conseil Constitutionnel.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Examine the policy and practice of affirmative action in India.

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2) Write a short note on affirmative action in France.

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31.5 CRITIQUE OF THE CONCEPT

Many people are opposed to affirmative action because they believe it violates a sense of fairness. This is a result of the 'Just World Phenomenon'. Stanley Coren unambiguously denounces the concept with equal vigour and force. According to him, people tend to feel that the world is, with a few bumps here and there, pretty much a fair place, where people generally get what they deserve and deserve what they get. This notion of a just world results from our training as children that good is rewarded and evil is punished. A natural conclusion can be drawn from this kind of reasoning: Those who are rewarded must be good, and those who suffer (even from our own discrimination and prejudice) must deserve their fate. In line with these gestures, the following points are raised against affirmative action and positive discrimination:

31.5.1 Merit Argument

The Meritorian principle dictates that social goods should be allotted on the basis of one's merit or ability, whether natural or acquired. Leaving aside the general intricacies in the application of the principle in such matters as admission to the institutions of higher education or appointment to the state's services, it envisages that the candidates are selected on the basis of their individual merit, i.e., their ability in terms of achievement of certain grades or marks in an objective test, generally a test of intelligence plus knowledge held for that purpose. Supporters of this principle claim that it assures best justice in so far as it allocates the rewards or goods on the basis of an objective criterion having nothing to do with such personal characteristics of an individual such as his birth, race, colour, sex, caste etc.

This principle assures the selection of the most able persons from amongst a large number for the limited goods or opportunities available for distribution. It also assures a strong society and its overall progress, as far as it provides an incentive for hard work and the development of superior mental and physical capacities.

At the outset, it appears to be a weighty argument but a closer examination reveals its weaknesses. The notion of merit itself is subjective. What is merit after all? Merit has no fixed or definite meaning free from variations. It is nothing but a criterion to achieve some pre-determined social objective or value or to satisfy a certain perceived social need. It does not control the objective value or need, but is controlled by them.

Prof. Dworkin does not say that merit is unimportant; the thrust of his argument is that merit itself can be defined in such a way as to make way for particular kinds of persons in view of social demands and necessities. It is indeed determined in terms of perceived social objectives, values or needs and is bound to change with the changes in the latter.

In the words of Justice Krishna Aiyar of the Indian Supreme Court, "The very orientation of our selection process is distorted and those like the candidates from the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who, from their birth, have a traumatic understanding of India have, in one sense, more capability than those who have lived under affluent circumstances and are callous to the human lot of the sorrowing masses. Elitists, whose sympathies with the masses have dried up, are from the standards of the Indian people least suitable to run government and least meritorious to handle state business, if we envision a service state in which the millions are the consumers… Sensitised heart and a vibrant head, tuned to the tears of the people, will speedily quicken the development needs of the country and a sincere dedication and intellectual integrity….not degrees of Oxford or Cambridge, Harvard or Standford or similar Indian institutions are the major components of merit or suitability."

The thrust of the whole argument is that the concept of efficiency should be related to our developmental needs and irrelevance or inadequacy of the existing test system to determine efficiency should be exposed.

31.5.2 Rights Argument

Articulation of the affirmative action is also criticised on the ground that it is a violation of the theory of rights. It is generally argued that affirmative action in favour of one group is discriminatory against others who are denied the same benefits, and this is itself a denial of equality, which is the right of every individual as an individual and not as a member of any group and therefore, cannot be denied to him simply because he is labelled as a member of an advanced group etc. because another individual is labelled as belonging to a backward group. Every citizen has a constitutional right that he is not made to suffer disadvantages, at least in a competition for any public benefit, because the race or religion or sect or region or other natural or artificial group of which he is a member is the object of prejudice or contempt.

Prof Andre Betielle, in an incisive article on "Distributive Justice and Institutional Well Being" articulates a critique of the "group rights" argument. He argues that at a deeper level, the caste system has changed fundamentally. The moral claims of castes over their individual members have weakened at all levels of society, and especially in the urban middle class where the battle over benign discrimination is being fought. It will be safe to say that no caste today has the moral authority to enforce on its middle class members any of its traditional sanctions.

Having freed themselves from the moral authority of their caste, such individuals are now able to use it instrumentally for economic and political advantages.

He further argues that it is difficult to see how the idea that castes and communities have rights to proportionate shares in public employment can be made compatible with the working of a modern society committed to economic development and liberal democracy. It is true that caste continues to operate in many spheres of social life; but it does not do so any longer as a matter of right. The continued existence of caste is one thing; its legitimacy is a different thing altogether. The attempt to invest the caste system with legitimacy by claiming that its constituent units have rights and entitlements is bound to be defeated in the end; but in the meantime it can cause enormous harm to society and its institutions. The persistent use of the language of rights in public debates for and against reservations is bound to lead to an increase in the consciousness of caste, and in that way to defeat the basic objective of affirmative action which is to reduce and not increase caste consciousness. All parties to the debate say that they wish to dismantle the structure of caste. However, caste is not a material edifice that can be physically dismantled and destroyed. It exists above all in the consciousness of people, in their deep sense of divisions and separation on one hand and of rank and inequality on the other.

Prof. M.P. Singh attempts an explanation by saying that certain castes have been consistently excluded for thousands of years from goods and opportunities, which they would have certainly desired simply because they belonged to that caste. It is true that no classification based on birth should ordinarily be supported as today certain castes and backwardness are identical. For example, scheduled castes and tribes are descriptive of backwardness and nothing else. For thousands of years, they have been treated as untouchables and denied the right of association with other members of society. They have suffered all kinds of indignities and disabilities not as individuals, but as members of a group or caste and that entitles them to special treatment as members of a group without violence to the right of equality of the non-members. The individual's right to equality in this situation is given due recognition in so far as the members of the group can compete among themselves for the limited goods available for distribution or allocation.

This leaves us in a peculiar situation; if the caste criterion is used for providing protective discrimination, caste divisions are enhanced and identity based on class or caste lines is underlined. Further, on the other hand, if caste identities are overlooked in public employment and for admission in educational institutions of higher learning, they are deprived off an opportunity to overcome their disabilities caused due to exploitation and deprivations of hundreds of years. The solution appears to be lying somewhere in between—the golden mean. Flexibility is the essence in the design and application of policies to redress disparities that have arisen because of many causes.

31.5.3 Efficiency Argument

It is implicit in the idea of positive discrimination that a less meritorious person is preferred to another who is more meritorious. The supporters of this argument stress on the point that if for redressing grievances of the past, we undermine the efficiency of public institutions, we would be doing unimaginable harm to the generations to come. However, the proponents of this argument should also understand that by segregating a few sections from public space could do more harm than the quest for efficiency, which they seek to achieve at the cost of social fragmentation.

31.5.4 Balkanisation Argument

It has been noted above that positive discrimination underlines class, caste and race differences and enhances social divisions, which are already acute in the Indian socio-political system and in the United States of America. Affirmative programmes tend to consolidate a caste ridden and racially conscious society already divided into racial and ethnic groups, each entitled as a group to some proportionate share of resources, careers or opportunities.

In India, due to the history of partition and the resulting massacre of around one million people, the argument that positive discrimination tends to divide people revives the history of the tragedy of partition. The communal virus, which started with the Ramsay Mc Donald award, culminated in the partition of the subcontinent and the generation of issues which remain unresolved to this day. Even the history of positive discrimination has not been a smooth one. The extension of reservations, first for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and then to the Other Backward Classes (OBC) has already caused a lot of friction and led to tremendous recriminations. Now, the economically weaker sections amongst the forwards too are demanding reservations. Demands by Christians and Muslims for reservations, though subdued now, are being made. That turns the whole concept of positive discrimination into a political tool, seeking to perpetuate the policy of reservations and dividing the people rather than encouraging them to stand on their own and compete in a world of excellence. All this leads to an acute kind of anxiety about the integrity of the country.

The proponents of positive discrimination respond to this type of argument by terming it as a displaced argument trying to discredit the affirmative action programme. Their argument is that failure on the implementation front should not be the reason to discard the policy itself. Prof. Dworkin responding to the argument of balkanisation in the American context, dispels the fear that affirmative action programmes are designed to produce a balkanised America, divided into racial and ethnic sub-nations. They use strong measures to uplift the weaker and the deprived or else they will fail, but their ultimate goal is to lessen and not increase the importance of race in American social and professional life.

Prof. Dworkin writes, "American society is currently a racially conscious society; this is the inevitable and evident consequence of a history of slavery, repression and prejudice. Black men and women, boys and girls, are not free to choose for themselves in what roles or as members of which social group others will characterise them. They are

black, and no other feature of personality or allegiance or ambition will so thoroughly influence how they will be perceived and treated by others, and the range and character of the lives that will be open to them. The tiny number of black doctors and other professionals is both a consequence and a continuing cause of American racial consciousness… The immediate goal is to increase the number of members of certain races in these professions. But their long term goal is to reduce the degree to which American society is overall a racially conscious society."

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   Write short notes on the following:

   a) Merit argument against affirmative action

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   b) Rights argument against affirmative action

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31.6   LET US SUM UP

To conclude the topic on an affirmative note, it is worth pointing out that there is a need for a change of perception that moves the people away from the old paradigm of exclusion to the new paradigm of inclusion; one that enables people to see the other not as a 'potential predator' but as a 'profitable partner'; one that shifts our values from domination to co-operation and one that transforms our ethics from selfish disconnectedness based on greed to socio-spiritual integration based on compassion.

The 21st century will focus on inter-connectedness not just technologically but humanly, environmentally and spiritually. A new paradigm, a social ecological world-view, is thus needed that sees the world and all its life forms as an integrated whole rather than a dissociated collection of parts in competition. The thrust for affirmative action that is discussed here is a leaning in this direction.

The time has come to propound a change in affirmative action, not to get rid of it. There is a need for streamlining the artificial inequalities and safeguard equal opportunity for everyone, irrespective of their socioe-economic, historical, biological or cultural circumstances, whether accidental or deliberate. Affirmative action, then, will be seen as a vehicle for social transformation, where there would be no exploitation or undue

domination and people would safely enter into a societal journey towards the third millennium with respect and dignity which each human is entitled to.

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31.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) See Section 31.2

2) See sub-section 31.2.1

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) See Section 31.3

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) See sub-section 31.4.1

2) See sub-section 31.4.5

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) See sub-sections 31.5.1 and 31.5.2

UNIT 1   UNDERSTANDING THE POLITICAL

Structure

1.0   OBJECTIVES

This introductory unit of the first bock of the new course in political theory at the Bachelor's Degree level tells you about the basic meaning of politics and thus, about the fundamentals of the discipline of political science. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain what is politics;

- Explain the meaning of state;

- Describe and explain the concept of power; and

- Discuss legitimation and delegitimation.

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this unit is to understand the concept of 'political'. The essence of political is the quest for bringing about an order that men consider good. The term politics is derived from the Greek word *polis* meaning both 'city' and 'state'. Politics among the ancient Greeks was a new way of thinking, feeling and above all, being related to one's fellows. As citizens they all were equal, although the citizens varied in positions in terms of their wealth, intelligence, etc. It is the concept of political which makes the citizens rational. Politics is the activity specific to this new thing called a citizen. A science of politics is possible, because politics itself follows regular patterns, even though it is at the mercy of the human nature from which it arises.

Greek political studies dealt with constitutions and made generalisations about the relations between human nature and political associations. Perhaps, its most powerful component was the *theory of recurrent cycles*. Monarchies tend to degenerate into tyranny, tyrannies are overthrown by aristocracies, which degenerate into oligarchies exploiting the population, which are overthrown by democracies, which in turn degenerate into the intolerable instability of mob rule, whereupon some powerful leader establishes himself as a monarch and the cycle begins all over again. It is Aristotle's view that some element of democracy is essential to the best kind of balanced constitution, which he calls a *polity*. He studied many constitutions and was particularly interested in the mechanics of political change. He thought that revolutions always arise out of some demand for equality.

Ancient Rome is the supreme example of politics as an activity conducted by human beings holding offices that clearly limit the exercise of power. When the Romans thought about power, they used two words in order to acknowledge an important distinction.

1.2 POLITICS AS A PRACTICAL ACTIVITY

Politics as a practical activity is the discourse and the struggle over organisation of human possibilities. As such, it is about power; that is to say, it is about the capacity of social agents, agencies and institutions to maintain or transform their environment, social and physical. It is about the resources, which underpin this capacity, and about the forces that shape and influence its exercise. Accordingly, politics is a phenomenon found in all groups, institutions and societies, cutting across private and public life. It is expressed in all the relations, institutions and structures that are implicated in the production and reproduction of the life of societies. Politics creates and conditions all aspects of our lives and it is at the core of the development of collective problems, and the modes of their resolutions.

1.2.1 Politics Difficult to Define Precisely

A crisp definition of politics-one that fits just those things we instinctively call 'political' - is impossible. Politics is a term with varied uses and nuances. Perhaps, the nearest we can come to a capsule statement is this: *politics is the activity by which groups reach binding collective decisions through attempting to reconcile differences among their members. There are significant points in this definition.*

1.2.2 Nature of Politics

Politics is a collective activity, involving people who accept a common membership or at least acknowledge a shared fate. Thus, Robinson Crusoe could not practice politics.

Politics presumes an initial diversity of views, if not about goals, then at least about means. Were we all to agree all the time, politics would be redundant.

Politics involves reconciling such differences through discussion and persuasion. Communication is, therefore, central to politics.

Political decisions become authoritative policy for a group, binding members to decisions that are implemented by force, if necessary. Politics scarcely exists if decisions are reached solely by violence, but force, or its threat, underpins the process of reaching a collective decision.

The necessity of politics arises from the collective character of human life. We live in a group that must reach collective decisions: about sharing resources, about relating to other groups and about planning for the future. A family discussion where to take

its vacation, a country deciding whether to go to war, the world seeking to limit the damage caused by pollution - all are examples of groups seeking to reach decisions which affect all their members. As social creatures, politics it part of our fate: we have no choice but to practice it.

1.2.3 Politics: An Inescapable Feature of the Human Condition

So although the term 'politics' is often used cynically, to criticise the pursuit of private advantage under the guise of public interest, politics is infact, an inescapable feature of the human condition. Indeed, the Greek philosopher Aristotle argued that 'man is by nature a political animal'. By this, he meant not just that politics is unavoidable, but rather that it is the essential human activity; political engagement is the feature which most sharply separates us from other species. For Aristotle, people can only express their true nature as reasoning, virtuous beings through participation in a political community.

Members of a group rarely agree; at least initially, on what course of action to follow. Even if there is agreement over goals, there may still be a skirmish over means. Yet a decision must be reached, one way or the other, and once made it will commit all members of the group. Thus, politics consists in procedures for allowing a range of views to be expressed and then combined into an overall decision. As Shively points out,

'Political action may be interpreted as a way to work out rationally the best common solution to a common problem - or at least a way to work out a reasonable common solution.' That is, politics consists of public choice.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is politics as a practical activity?

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2)   Discuss the essential nature of politics.

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1.3 WHAT IS POLITICS?

Everybody has some idea about the meaning of the term politics; to some people the question may even appear quite superfluous. 'Politics' is what one reads about in the papers or watches on television. It deals with the activities of the politicians, notably the leaders of political parties. What is politics all about? Why, precisely, are these activities 'political' and what defines the nature of politics? If one starts with a definition couched in terms of the activities of politicians, one might say that politics concerns the rivalries of politicians in their struggle for power. This would certainly be the kind of definition with which most people would agree. There would, also, probably be agreement that politics refers to the relationship between states on an international scale.

'Politics is about power and how it is distributed.' But power is not an abstract entity floating in the void. It is embodied in human beings. Power is a relationship existing wherever a person can impose his will on other persons, making the latter obey whether they want to or not. Hence, arises a situation characterised by leadership, a relation of domination and subordination. Max Weber, in his famous lecture of 1918, 'Politics as a Vocation', started by proposing that the concept of politics was 'extremely broad-based and comprises any kind of independent leadership in action.' In whatever context such leadership in action exists, politics is present. In our terms, political would include any situation where power relations existed, i.e. where people were constrained or dominated or subject to authority of one kind or another. It would also include situations where people were constrained by a set of structures or institutions rather than by the subjective will of persons.

Such a broad definition has the advantage of showing that politics is not necessarily a matter of government, nor solely concerned with the activities of politicians. Politics exists in any context where there is a structure of power and struggle for power in an attempt to gain or maintain leadership positions. In this sense, one can speak about the politics of trade unions or about 'university politics'. One can discus 'sexual politics', meaning the domination of men over women or the attempt to alter this relation. At present, there is much controversy about **race politics** with reference to the power, or lack or it, of people of different colour or race in various countries. In a narrower sense, however everything is politics, which affects our lives through the agency of those who exercise and control state power, and the purposes for which they use that control. In the lecture quoted above, Weber after initially giving a very broad definition of politics in terms of general leadership, went on to produce a far more limited definition: 'We wish to understand by politics', he wrote, 'only the leadership, or the influencing of leadership, of a political association, hence today, of a state'. In this perspective, the state is the central political association. A political question is one that relates to the state, to the topic of who controls state power, for what purposes that power is used and with what consequences, and so on.

1.4 WHAT IS STATE?

A new issue comes here: what is state? The question is by no means an easy one to answer, nor is there a general agreement as to what the answer should be. It must first be noted that there are various forms of the state, which differ from one another in important ways. The Greek city-state is clearly different from the modern nation-state, which has dominated world politics since the French Revolution. The contemporary liberal-democratic state, which exists in Britain and Western Europe, is different from the fascist-type state of Hitler or Mussolini. It is also different from the state, which existed in the former USSR and in Eastern Europe. An important part of the study of politics, and certainly an integral element of this book, is the

explanation of what is meant by those terms. The purpose is to show how each form distinguishes itself from the other and what the significance of such distinction is.

1.4.1 State: Differences on Account of Political Institutions/Social Context

States differ in terms of their political institutions as well as in terms of the social context within which they are situated and which they try to maintain. So, while the liberal-democratic state is characterised by representative institutions such as a parliament and an independent judiciary, the leader controls the fascist state. With respect to the social context, the crucial contrast is between Western and Soviet type systems in so far as the former are embedded in a society which is organised according to the principles of a capitalist economy, while in the latter case the productive resources of society are owned and controlled by the state. In each case, therefore, the state is differently structured, operates in a social framework of a very different kind, and this affects and influences to a large extent the nature of the state and the purposes, which it serves.

There are different forms of the state, but whatever form one has in mind, the state as such is not a monolithic block. To start with, the state is not the same as the government. It is rather a complex of various elements of which the government is only one. In a Western-type liberal-democratic state, those who form the government are indeed with the state power. They speak in the name of the state and take office in order to control the levers of state power. Nevertheless, to change the metaphor, the house of the state has many mansions and of those, the government occupies one.

1.4.2 Ralph Miliband's Views on the State

In his book *The State in Capitalist Society*, Ralph Miliband registers those different elements, which together constitute the state. The first, but by no means the only element of the state apparatus, is the government. The second is the administrative element, the civil service or the bureaucracy. This administrative executive is, in liberal-democratic systems, supposed to be neutral, carrying out the orders of politicians who are in power. In fact, however, the bureaucracy may well have its own authority and dispose of its own power. Third, in Miliband's list come the military and the police, the 'order-maintaining' or the repressive arm of the state; fourth,the judiciary. In any constitutional system, the judiciary is supposed to be independent of the holders of government power; it can act as a check on them. Fifth, come the units of sub-central or local government. In some federal systems, these units have considerable independence from the central government, controlling their own sphere of power, where the government is constitutionally debarred from interfering. The relationship between the central and the local government may become an important political issue, as witnessed by the controversy in recent British politics over the abolition of the Greater London Council and the metropolitan counties, the argument about financing local government, 'rate capping', and so on. Sixth and finally, one can add to the list representative assemblies and the parliament in the British system. One may also mention political parties, though they are not normally part of the state apparatus, at least not in a liberal democracy. They play their obvious role in the representative assembly and it is there that, at least partly, the competitive fight between the government and the opposition is enacted.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

 ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by the term politics?

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2)   Describe Ralph Miliband's views on the state.

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1.5 POLITICS AS A VOCATION

The point brings us back to Weber and his already quoted lecture, 'Politics as a Vocation'. After arguing that politics is concerned above all with the central political association, the state, Weber continued by maintaining that a definition of the state could not be given in terms of the tasks which it undertakes or of the ends it pursues. There was no task, which specifically determined the state. Therefore, one had to define the state in terms of the specific means, which it employed, and these means were, ultimately, physical force. The state, Weber wrote, 'is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory'.

There are three distinct elements combined here: a given territory, or geographical area, which the state controls; the use of physical force to maintain its control and thirdly, but most important, the monopoly of the legitimate use of such force or coercion. This legitimacy must be acknowledged by most, if not all, of those who are subject to the state's power. Weber concluded that for him politics meant 'striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power either among states or among groups within a state.'

It was also mentioned that each state exists within a particular social context. The study of politics is vitally concerned with the relationship of state and society. A state centered perspective on politics does not imply that its study should neglect what happens in the wider sphere of society and how that may, as Weber says, 'influence the distribution of power'.

A further fact cannot be ignored: this is the continued growth and centralisation of state power. If one sees the state in terms of a specialised apparatus of domination, then the history of modern times has been marked by the extension of its scale and grip. The modern state requires an increasingly complex bureaucracy dealing with a mounting variety of tasks. It needs larger and more sophisticated armed forces, more regulative welfare agencies, and engages in a wider range of activities than was the case before. This extension of the state's sphere of action, its growth and development, applies both to liberal-democratic systems in their capitalist socio-economic context, and to socialist systems with their collective economic framework. Weber saw such growth manifested above all in the emergence of a trained, skilled and rationally

effective bureaucracy. Someone of quite a different political and theoretical background, Marx, agreed with him on this point. Marx wrote in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* of the growth of state power in France, which he saw as typical of the modern state. He described how through socialism, eventually the state would be abolished and society would govern itself without a specialised apparatus of repression. Weber, on the contrary, believed that socialism would need even more officials to administer a collectivised economy and society.

1.6 THE LEGITIMATE USE OF POWER

The point is that, although the state depends on force, it does not rest on force alone. Here, the notion of the legitimate use of power comes in. Power, in general, and so the power of the state, can be exercised in different ways. Coercion is one form of power and perhaps the easiest to understand, but it is not the only one. Not all power relations are to be understood on the basis of the same crude model. If a lecturer through force of argument and breadth of knowledge helps students to form their ideas, such a person exercises a kind of power, though not against the students' will. More to the point, all holders of power try to get those who are subject to their rule to believe in the rightness and justness of the power they wield. This attempt at justification in order to make people consent constitutes the process of legitimation.

One can refer to such justified or accepted power as 'authority' to distinguish it from such power as is obeyed only because of a fear of sanctions. In such a situation of legitimate power, or authority, people obey because they think it is right to do so. They believe, for whatever reason, that the power-holders are entitled to their dominant role. They have the legitimate authority, a right to command. In the words of one recent analyst of power, 'Legitimate authority is a power relation in which the power holder possesses an acknowledged right to command, and the power subject, an acknowledged obligation to obey.'

1.6.1   Max Weber on Legitimation

According to Weber, there are three types of legitimation, i.e. three methods by which the wielding of power can be justified. The first type pertains to *traditional domination*. There, power is justified because the holders of power can appeal to tradition and habit; authority has always been vested in them personally or in their families. The second type *is charismatic legitimation*. People obey the power-holder because of the exceptional personal qualities displayed by the leader. Finally, the third type is of the *legal-rational* kind. People obey certain persons who are authorised by specific rules to command in strictly defined spheres of action. One might also say that the first two types are of a personal nature, while the legal-rational type shows a procedural character. As such it corresponds to the modern conception of political authority. It is, as Weber says, 'domination as exercised by the modern "servant of the state" and by all those bearers of power who in this respect resemble him.'

It is obvious that the power-holders in any system will wish to have their power accepted as legitimate. Seen from their point of view, such an acceptance will permit a considerable 'economy' in the use of force. People will obey freely and voluntarily. The means of coercion, then, will not need to be constantly displayed; they can rather be concentrated on those who do not accept the legitimacy of the power structure. In any political system, there will be those who comply with the rules only because non-compliance will be punished. Clearly, however, the stability of any political system is enhanced to the degree that people voluntarily obey the rules or laws because they accept the legitimacy of the established order. Hence, they recognise the authority of those empowered by the rules to issue commands. In reality, all political systems are maintained through a combination of consent and coercion.

1.6.2 Legitimation: Central Concern of Political Science

These are the reasons because of which, as C. Wright Mills puts it, 'The idea of legitimation is one of the central conceptions of political science.' The study of politics is centrally concerned with the methods by which holders of power try to get their power justified, and with the extent to which they succeed. It is crucial in studying any political system to investigate the degree to which people accept the existing power structure as legitimate, and thus, how much the structure rests on consent as distinct from coercion. It is also important to ascertain the actual justifications of power, which are offered; that is to say, the methods by which a system of power is legitimised. This, as the elitist theorist Mosca points out, is the 'political formula' of any political system. The question of legitimacy, furthermore, is highly important in dealing with the topics of stability and change of political systems. Consent may be granted or withdrawn. It is true that political systems can survive in situations where large sections of the population cease to accord any legitimacy to the system. The case of South Africa in the recent past may be cited as an example; similarly, that of Poland, where it seemed that the Jaruzelski regime had little legitimacy in the eyes of substantial popular elements. The point is that in such a situation, a regime has to rely mainly on force. It then finds itself in a more precarious position, vulnerable and open to the impact of fortuitous events. The system may survive for quite a time. However, once it rests on force far more than on consent, one condition for a revolutionary change presents itself.

1.6.3 Process of 'Delegitimation'

This explains why a revolution is often preceded by a period when the dominating ideas of the system are subjected to sustained criticism. One may call this a process of 'delegitimation' whereby the ideas, which justify the existing structure of power, come under attack. Long before the fall of the ancient regime in France, the ideas of *Divine Right* and of autocracy were ridiculed and refuted by the philosophers, the critics of the absolute state. Such a movement of delegitimation contributed to undermine the foundations of the old order. It prepared the way for its revolutionary overthrow.

A case in point in modern times would be the fate of the Weimar Republic when large sections of the German population lost confidence in the democratic regime and, fearing a communist alternative, gave their support to Hitler's National-Socialist party. The result was the fall of the republic without much of a struggle. Similar causes had similar effects all over the European Continent. Many western systems of liberal democracy were overthrown and replaced by fascist or semi-fascist authoritarian systems as happened in Italy, Spain, Austria and Hungary. The conclusion, in a general sense, must be that any system loses its stability once it ceases to enjoy legitimacy in the eyes of its subjects.

Finally, it must be noted that even in normal times, processes of legitimation and delegitimation are permanent features of any political system. The process of legitimation is carried on in more or less subtle ways through many channels available for the legitimation of the existing order. Legitimising ideas are absorbed from the earliest stages of education, diffused through a variety of forms of social interaction, and spread especially through the influence of the press, television and other mass media. Views, which are accepted or considered to be within the boundaries of the system, are almost forced on readers, listeners and viewers. Action, which goes beyond those limits, is presented as illegitimate. Being made to look very unattractive blocks off a range of political alternatives.

1.6.4 Manipulated Consent

There are still more effective methods available to prevent subversive ideas from even arising. They may be intercepted at source, the source being the conscious and

even the subconscious mind. An important dimension of power is the capacity to affect and mould people's consciousness so that they will accept the existing state of affairs without ever becoming aware of alternative possibilities. Consent, then, becomes manipulated consent. To a certain extent we are all affected by the prevailing 'climate of opinion'. From there an ascending scale leads to a position where the moulding of minds, manipulation, is made the deliberate purpose of the state in order to create a monolithic popular mentality. Such was the purpose of Goebbels' propaganda machine in Nazi Germany and this is still, the purpose of any totalitarian regime.

Manipulation is 'power wielded unknown to the powerless', as C. Wright Mills defines it. Peter Worsley points out that 'the mechanisms by which consciousness is manipulated are of growing importance in modern society.' In Marxist language, such manipulated consent would eventually produce a 'false consciousness'. Against that, it could be argued that where people are free to choose and to express their choice as in liberal-democratic systems, the manipulation of consciousness is not possible. Manipulation can only occur where free choice does not exist, as in one-party systems. It is also argued that wherever people are free to choose, but do not infact choose an alternative to the existing order-for example, by supporting parties committed to radical changes-it is safe to assume that the existing structure of society is broadly 'what people want'. This would lead to the conclusion that the importance of political choice and the ability to freely express that choice cannot be overrated. However, 'what people want' is to some extent conditioned by various factors. Choice does not take place in a vacuum. In short, the choice itself cannot be considered as completely free from the impact of a process of legitimation.

1.6.5   Personnel of the State Machine: The Elite

From the short survey we have so far made of political problems, a few points of importance emerge which will recur in the following discussion. They chiefly stem from the fact that state power is structured or broken up, so to speak, into distinct sectors. It has already been mentioned that the specific relationship of the various sectors is determined by the political system within which they operate. The internal structure, say, of a communist state. A further question involves the personnel of these sectors. The state, after all, is not a machine; though the phrase 'machinery of the state' may be used. The state is a set of institutions staffed by people whose ideas and basic attitudes are largely influenced by their origin and social environment. The composition of the state elite is an important problem in the study of politics. J.A.C. Grifith in *The Politics of the Judiciary*, exemplifies what is meant by the term 'state elite' with reference to a recent study. It shows that in Britain, 'in broad terms, four out of five full-time professional judges are products of the elite. It is not surprising that while discussing 'judicial opinion about political cases', Griffith finds 'a remarkable consistency of approach in these cases concentrated in a fairly narrow part of the spectrum of political opinion.'

It must be noted here that from different theoretical points of view, different answers will be given to the question as to how decisive the nature and composition of the state elite are. Elitist theories accord the highest importance to this factor. In their perspective, the nature of a political system is best explained by an analysis of its elite, that ruling minority, which controls the state apparatus. In this perspective, almost everything depends on the talents and abilities of the leaders. A low quality of leadership will have disastrous consequences. For that reason, Max Weber was much concerned with the nature of Germany's political leadership. He was in favour of a strong parliament, which, he believed, would provide an adequate training ground to produce leaders willing and capable of responsible action. Alternatively, leadership would fall into the hands of the bureaucracy whose training and life style made them unsuitable material for creative leadership.

Marxist theories would view the matter differently. They would accord less importance to the nature of the state elite. The argument would rather be that the purpose and the aims of state activity are determined less by the elite, but far more by the social context and the economic framework within which the state system is located. This structure is of greater significance, in this view, than the character of the personnel that staff the state machine. Generally, 'structural' theories would emphasize the constraints on the government stemming from the social structures within which the government has to operate. Nevertheless, the two types of interpretation need not be mutually exclusive.

This brings us to a final question, which deals with the relation of state and society. The phrase, which Marx applied to the Bonapartist state, that its power was not 'suspended mid-air', can be generalised to apply to all types of state systems. Then, several problems present themselves. How does the power structure of society affect and constrain the political leaders? To what extent does the state interfere to maintain and legitimise or, alternatively, mitigate the inequalities of the social system? To what extent indeed is 'civil society' independent of the state? For some theorists, the concept of 'totalitarianism' is meant to suggest a situation where society is totally controlled by state power and, therefore, has no independence at all.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is understood by politics as a vocation?

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2)   What is legitimation? What are Max Weber's views on it?

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3)   What is deligitimation?

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4)   How is consent manipulated?

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1.7 LET US SUM UP

It may be conceded that understanding the political means understanding the needs, objectives and goals of human life. It is related with the political activities of human beings. Politics is the game of power. Various players play this game at the same time and compete with each other. The state forms the central point of this whole activity, since in the national affairs it is within the state and in the international affairs, it is among the states. The state is authorised for the legitimate use of power. Authority is the right to rule. Authority is a broader notion than power. The dictates of the situation mean the understanding of the political. It is the product of a situational event.

1.8 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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Carl J. Friedrich, *An Introduction to Political Theory*, Harper and Row, New York, 1967

David Held (ed), *Political Theory Today*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1991

Lynton Robins (ed), *Introducing Political Science: Themes and Concepts in Studying Politics*, Longman, London, 1985

Nevil Johnson, *The Limits of Political Science*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989

1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1)   See Section 1.2

2)   See Section 1.2 and esp. sub-section 1.2.2

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Section 1.3

2)   See sub-section 1.4.2

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 1.5

2)   See Section 1.6 and sub-sections 1.6.1 and 1.6.2

3)   see sub-section 1.6.3

4)   see sub-section 1.6.4

UNIT 2   THEORISING THE POLITICAL

Structure

2.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with the various relevant concerns of political philosophising/theorising. After going through the unit, you should be able to:

●   Discuss the various approaches to studying political phenomena

●   Distinguish between empirical and political theory

●   Examine as to how far political science is an autonomous discipline

●   Comment on the relevance of traditional political thought including classics and finally,

●   Discuss the new science of politics

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Without trying to attempt a precise definition of the nature and scope of political science, one might say that there is a "broad" view and a "narrow" view of politics and political phenomena – the one placing its main emphasis on political functions and treating politics as a process or a type of activity, and the other on political structures and orienting itself towards various types of political institutions. Aristotle was clearly taking a broad view of politics, when he searched for it not only in the state, but also in the family, the corporation, the association or the church, whereas the discussion of politics in the subsequent centuries was limited, by and large, to its narrow view, which interpreted politics as the study of the political and the governmental sub-systems of society. We find the contemporary writers, like Catin, once again breaking away from this narrow view and emphasising the phenomenal struggle for control as their central concern. With the emergence of this view, political scientists are no longer satisfied with merely descriptive categories, though accurate description is a necessary first step to other steps, but would like to take up more refined and sophisticated techniques of analysis. They would like to convert, in other words, what

was regarded as political philosophy or political thought or political theory into political science. Catlin, for example, would think of political science as "indistinguishable – on any intellectually respectable grounds from sociology", and maintain that the sociologists' study of "myriads of individual acts and thousands of relations between groups" afforded the basis "for authentic comparisons and, in the best tradition of Aristotle and Machiavelli, for the observation of constants". One might, however, wonder whether a concept of politics which included the family control system and the ecclesiastical polity was not so broad as to be meaningless and think that it might perhaps be better to strike a balance between the two extreme views.

2.2 THE HISTORICAL APPROACH

The traditional or the historical approach to political science is best represented by George H. Sabine. Sabine proceeds with his definition of political science in a very practical manner. He suggests that we include in political science all those subjects which have been the major themes of discussion in the writings of well-known political philosophers – Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Bentham, Mill, Green, Hegel, Marx, and others. In the writings of these philosophers, we may try to search out those questions which they have raised about the truth or the validity of political theories. Questions concerning goods or ideals to be realised in or through the state, meaning of freedom, why men obey the government, the sphere of government activities, meaning of equality – these are some of the questions which have agitated the minds of political philosophers throughout the ages. In addition, we may also make an inventory of questions regarding the state, the relationship between state and society and between the individual and the state, and discuss them at length if they have not been fully discussed by these political philosophers. These form the bases of political theory, according to the traditionalist thinkers. Sabine and other traditional writers have attached a great deal of importance to the historical approach. A political theory, according to Sabine, is always advanced in "reference to a pretty specific situation" and, therefore, reconstruction of "the time, place and the circumstances in which it was produced" is essential to understand it. The fact, that a political theory is always rooted in a "pretty specific situation" does not mean that it does not have significance for the future. Great political theory excels both in the "analysis of a present situation and in suggestiveness for other situations". As such, a good political theory, even though it is the outcome of a peculiar set of historical circumstances, has a significance for all times to come. It is exactly this universal character of political theory which makes it respectable.

A typical political theory includes, according to Sabine, (a) "factual statements about the postures of affairs that gave rise to it", (b) statements of "what may be roughly called a causal nature", and (c) statements that "something ought to happen or is the right and desirable thing to have happened". Political theories, thus, constitute, according to Sabine, three elements – the factual, the causal and the valuationary. Political theories of great significance have generally been evolved during periods of stress and strain. In the known history of more than twenty-five hundred years, there have been two periods of about fifty years each in two places of quite restricted areas where political philosophy has thrived most – (1) in Athens, in the second and the third quarters of the fourth century B.C., when Plato and Aristotle wrote their great works, and (2) in England, between 1640 and 1690, when Hobbes, Locke and others evolved their political theories. Both these periods have been periods of great changes in the social and intellectual history of Europe. Great political theories are, thus, "secreted", as Sabine would put it, "in the interstices of political and social crises". They are produced, not by the crises as such, but by the reaction they leave on the minds of the thinkers. In order, therefore, to understand political theory, it is necessary to understand clearly, the time, the place and the circumstances in which it has evolved. The political philosopher may not actually take part in the politics of his

times, but he is affected by it and, in his own turn, he tries vigorously to affect it. Political theories, according to Sabine, "play a double role", in the sense that while they belong to the abstract world of thought, they also influence beliefs which become causes and serve as causal events in historical situations. It is also necessary to understand whether a political theory is true or false, sound or silly, valid or unreliable. This involves the question of values. It is, therefore, necessary that in the understanding of political theory we should try to bring in the factual, the causal as well as the valuational factors.

2.3 THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

The historical approach has been generally criticised as one which is much too deferential to tradition. It is also pointed out by many of the modern writers that this approach takes a narrow view of politics and restricts it to the domain of the state. Several contemporary writers have tried to widen the scope of political science so as to include not only the state but the society as well, a point of view which is very clearly brought out by Catlin. Catlin would like to use politics in the Aristotlean sense, in the sense in which it includes all those activities which are carried out within the auspices of society. Catlin regards political science as indistinguishable from sociology, and has pointed out a number of advantages of this approach: (1) It allows the student to deal with the relations and structure of society as a whole and not with a segment of it artificially created between the fifteenth and the seventeenth century in a part of Europe and now described as the "modern state". (2) It links up his studies with a general theory of society which the political scientists can ignore only at their peril, something which most modern political scientists have not done. (3) If the political scientist deals with the state as his unit of analysis, he is likely to neglect the trivial and the common details regarding political events taking place from day to day, which he cannot understand unless he relates them to happenings in society. A large number of states exist today, but they cannot all be treated as individual units for the purposes of political analysis. One has to go to their basic characteristics. (4) If the political scientist decides to go beyond the study of institutions and undertakes the study of functions and processes he would find it easier to pick up a unit of analysis. Catlin, on his part, has opted for the study of the phenomenon of control as the central concern for the study of politics. By the act of control, he means "the act of individuals". Catlin would have no objection to define politics, as V.O. Key has done as "the study of government", provided we accept "government" as a synonym for 'control' and not institutions, like that of President or Cabinet. One could also call politics "the study of power and influence", if we clearly understood that "influence is not government", or in Max Weber's words, "the struggle for power or the influencing of those in power", and embracing "the struggle between states as such and between organised groups within the state".

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are the 'broad' and the 'narrow' view of politics/political phenomenon?

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2) Enumerate and describe the salient features of either the historical or the sociological approach to studying politics.

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2.4 THE PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

Besides the traditional and the contemporary view-points regarding political science, there is a third view point advanced by Leo Strauss, which may be described as the philosophical approach. Leo Strauss makes a distinction between political theory and political philosophy and believes that they are both parts of political thought. Political theory, according to Strauss, is "the attempt truly to know the nature of political things". Philosophy being the "quest for widsom" "or quest for universal knowledge, for knowledge of the whole", political philosophy is "the attempt truly to know both the nature of political things and the right, or the good, political order". Political thought extends to both political theory and political philosophy. Political theory and political philosophy are complementary to each other, since "generally speaking, it is impossible to understand thought or action or work without evaluating it". Strauss is critical of both "historicism" as advocated by Sabine and "social science positivism" for which Catlin has been pleading, the former being in his view "the serious antagonist of political philosophy".

Values, Strauss believes, are an indispensable part of political philosophy, and cannot be excluded from the study of politics. All political action aims at either preservation or change, and is guided by some thought or evaluation of what is better and what is worse. A political scientist is expected to possess more than opinion. He must posses knowledge, knowledge of the good – of the good life or the good society. "If this directedness becomes explicit, if men make it their explicit goal to acquire knowledge of the good life and of the good society, political philosophy emerges". "The assumptions concerning the nature of political things, which are implied in all knowledge of political things", writes Strauss, "have the character of opinions. It is only when these assumptions are made the theme of critical and coherent analysis that a philosophic or scientific approach to politics emerges." Political philosophy, according to him, is the "attempt to replace opinion about the nature of political things by knowledge of the nature of political things", "the attempt truly to know both the nature of political things and the right, or the good, political order." Political philosophy in the comprehensive form has been cultivated since its beginnings, almost without any interruption, till very recently when the behaviouralists started raising disputes about its subject-matter, methods as well as functions, and challenging its very possibility.

2.5 AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

If it is important not to allow political science to be lost in scientism or moralism, it is also important that both the scientific and the philosophic aspects of political theory should be properly understood and emphasised. But before we try to understand the scientific aspect of political theory, we should first understand what we mean by science, just as before we try to understand the philosophical aspect of political theory, we must understand what we mean by philosophy. Science has been variously

described as "a branch of knowledge or study dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws", "knowledge, as of facts of principles, gained by systematic study", "a branch or body of organised knowledge". A scientific approach to the study of a problem, therefore, involves two things: (a) the agreement on methods, and (b) the training of the human beings in scientific work. Taking these two aspects into consideration, Friedrich would define science as "a body of ordered knowledge, known to and progressively enlarged by the specialists in that field of knowledge through the use of methods which they as a group accept as workable ways for arriving at that particular kind of knowledge". Science is, thus, "organised" knowledge and because there is a consistency of methods employed in the gathering of the particular knowledge of that science by various scholars, which gives it a logical coherence, scientific statements are capable of validation by other scholars. This definition of science, which it would be hardly possible to challenge, does not say that the same methods would be applicable to all the science. In fact, the method of one may not be applicable to another. Taking the simple matter of generalisation, no two sciences agree in the degree of generalisation which would make them true sciences. Methods which are highly successful in the study of physics and chemistry may not be equally applicable to astronomy, but that does not take away from the "scientific-ness" of astronomy. One might argue that they are similar at least in the sense that they both operate with precise quantitative data. Science, however, demands not only accuracy but also relevancy and adequacy of results. History has been made highly scientific during the last few decades. But the evolution of its "scientific" character has nothing to do with quantification – it is on the basis of a more scientific study of sources and a more critical use of the other types of evidence which has led to greater progress in the use of scientific methods in history. Friedrich makes it very clear that, "neither the degree of generalisation, nor the degree of quantification, are in themselves 'absolute' criteria of scientific progress, but must be evaluated in relation to the material in hand and to be assessed." He quotes Aristotle with approval when he describes it as "the mark of an educated man" "to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits".

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Distinguish between the philosophical and the integrated approaches to studying politics.

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2.6 AUTONOMOUS CHARACTER OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

The close identification of political science with either science or philosophy raises, in the opinion of Norman Jacobson, another kind of danger, the danger of political theory ending up in some kind of 'scientism' or 'moralism'. Jacobson has tried to

make it clear that political science is neither scientism nor moralism – neither completely identified with science nor with morality – but separate from both of them and maintaining an identity of its own. Those who try to mould political science in the perfect image of science and try to apply methods and procedures of science to it do not always understand what science means. One may not deny the advantage of utilising the knowledge of one field for the better understanding of another, but one has to also understand the distinction between the two fields. Jacobson is of the view that contemporary political scientists are trying to make of political science anything but political science. "It would seem", he writes, "that politics is psychology, or it is sociology, that it is moral philosophy or theology" – that it is "almost anything but politics". Politics, in his view, is a special kind of intellectual activity. There is no harm in trying to pursue it more effectively by drawing upon the best that fields of enquiry in other disciplines have to offer, but this should be done only so far as it helps us in better understanding of politics. Politics, infact, has got to be studied in its own right. If "science" is taken out of political theory, it might become a worthless "ethical" residue; if "philosophy" is taken out of it, it might be reduced to mere methodology. Those who emphasis either the scientific or the philosophical character of political science to the extent of identifying political science with one or the other, may be good advocates of "scientism" or "moralism", but they certainly lack in a sense of commitment to political science itself.

2.7 EMPIRICAL VS NORMATIVE THEORY

While several approaches to political science have been advocated from time to time, and many of them have often co-existed simultaneously, they might be broadly divided into two categories – the **empirical-analytical** or the **scientific-behavioural** approach on one side and the **legal-historical** or the **normative-philosophical** approach on the other, and each of these two approaches has been mainly demarcated from the other by the emphasis it lays on facts as against values or on values as against facts. Two opposing positions are taken up in this respect by those who have been described by Robert Dahl as **Empirical Theorists** and **Trans-empirical Theorists**. The empirical theorists believe that an empirical science of politics based on facts alone is possible, whereas the others, the trans-empirical theorists, are of the opinion that the study of politics neither can nor should be purely scientific. The controversy mainly revolves a round two major issues:

i) Can political analysis be neutral?

ii) Should political analysis be neutral?

Regarding the first, the empirical theorists are certain that it is possible to isolate and to test the empirical aspect of our beliefs about politics without the necessity of going into the value-laden question of whether the empirical propositions are true or false. A 'correct' decision on what is empirically true is not the same as a 'correct' decision on what ought to be. Whether values are derived from God's will, or natural laws, or are purely subjective in nature, as the existentialists believe. Facts are there for all to see and can be subjected to empirical tests, whereas values cannot be tested this way. Whether the stability of popular governments in general or in a particular country is in any way dependent on literacy, multi-party systems, proportional representation, a two-party system, whether it can best function under single-member constituencies, are questions which can be tested empirically, irrespective of the fact whether they are concerning the right or the wrong political systems. The trans-empiricists, on the other hand, believe that whatever be the situation in the natural sciences, facts and values are so closely inter-twined with each other that, in the study of politics, one can not separate them except in the most trivial instances. Whatever one might pretend, they would say, one is making value judgements all the time. Any comprehensive theory about politics, they argue, must inevitably contain

evaluations not merely of the empirical validity of the factual statements in the theory, but also of the moral quality of the political events, processes or systems described in the theory. It is, therefore, an illusion to think, according to the trans-empiricists, that there can be a completely objective theory of politics.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Comment on the autonomous character of political science.

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2)   Distinguish between normative and empirical political theory.

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2.8 CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE OF CLASSICS

While the empirical theorists, under the impressive, scientific garb of "behaviouralism", seemed to be dominating the discipline of political science during the fifties and the sixties, the "uses" as well as the "relevance" of classical political philosophy continued to be widely recognised and a number of influential contemporary political thinkers continued to defend and uphold the traditional-classical political theory and severly criticise the empirical-analytical approaches. They may not be very large in numbers, but they belong to different countries and exercise a great deal of influence over a large number of their students and admirers. The names which immediately strike one's mind in this connection are those of Michael Oakeshott, Hannah Arendt, Bertrand Jouvenel, Leo Strauss, Christian Bay and Eric Voegelin.

A classic has been defined as a work in a "class" by itself, a work "of the first rank and of acknowledged excelence". Works like Plato's *Republic* and *Laws*, Aristotle's *Ethics* and *Politics,* Augustine's *City of God*, Aquinas, *Treatise on Law* in the *Summa Theologica*, Machiavelli's *Prince* and *Discourses*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, Locke's *Second Treatise*, Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* and Marx's *Philosophic-and Economic Manuscripts of 1844* and *German Ideology* come under the category of 'classics'. The very use of the word in plural involves a 'conversation of many voices', a dialogue between different perspectives and interpretations of reality as a whole. "A conversation", as Dante Germino has pointed out, "is not a battle of voices, but rather a reflection of certain predominant lines of argument, which can be identified by those who will listen." It is a "conversation of

mankind" which extends beyond the modern into the medieval and the ancient ages and the quality of which is not affected by the context of time or space in which a particular political philosopher was located. All that was necessary was that one taking part in this "conversation of mankind" was directly involved in the issues of the day which, whether in politics or in philosophy, are issues of all time, was capable of deep thinking, or contemplation, on these issues and could express himself in a language which would appeal to men in all ages.

2.9 CONTINUITY OF TRADITIONAL POLITICAL THOUGHT

Michael Oakeshott, who took over the chair of political science in the London School of Economics and Political Science from Harold Laski in 1951, has been identified with the resurgence of conservative thinking in England. But it would be wrong to regard Oakeshott as merely a conservative, though conservative he was in every sense of the term. His major contribution was to recover political theory as a tradition of enquiry and regain for political science, the possibility of a critical, theoretical analysis. As different from the behaviouralists, who were beginning to make a mark in the United States of America when he was enunciating a different kind of doctrine in his lectures and seminars to his students at the London School of Economics and through his publications. Oakeshott based his philosophical analysis on experience which seeks to rediscover the multi-dimensionality that had been denied to experience by the ideological and positivist writers. Oakeshott treats philosophy and science as basically two different kinds of activities and believes that it would be wrong to attempt to transfer the methods and concerns of the one to the other. "The notion that philosophy has anything to learn from the methods of scientific thought," he writes, "is altogether false." Philosophy, according to him, must be pursued for its own sake, and must "maintain its independence from all extraneous interests, and in particular from the practical interest".

Oakeshott believes that political philosophy – or, as he would like to call it, *philosophising about politics* – is a limited activity within the context of the larger role of philosophising – the attempt "to see one particular mode of experience – practical experience – from the standpoint of the totality of experience". Reflection about political life, as he mentions in his introduction to Hobbes' Leviathan, can be at a variety of levels, and was apt to flow from one level to another, but in political philosophy we have in our mind, the world of political activity and also "another world" and our endeavour is to explore "the coherence of the two worlds together". Political philosophy for him is "the consideration of the relation between politics and eternity". "Politics is contributory to the fulfilment of an end which it cannot itself bring about". Political philosophy for Oakeshott is not, what it is to the behaviouralist, a "progressive" science which accumulates solid results and reaches conclusions upon which further research may be based. It is, on the other hand, closely integrated to history – "indeed, in a sense it is nothing but a history, which is a history of the problems philosophers have detected and the manner of solution they have proposed, rather than a history of doctrines. . . ."

Hannnah Arendt is a more prolific writer. A person of enormous erudition, she has published extensively on the major problems of political theory and established her reputation as a thinker of exceptional originality. Believing in the uniqueness and responsibility of the individual human person, she is not only opposed to totalitarianism of all kinds, but also to the behaviouralist approach in social sciences, which, according to her, prepares the ground for totalitarianism. In its search for uniformity in human behaviour, she warns, it will itself contribute to the making of a uniform stereotyped "man".

The name of Bertrand de Jouvenel may perhaps be mentioned along with that of Hannah Arendt. Both believe that politics has a potentiality for creative activity and should not be transformed into the dead uniformity of administration. Both are against totalitarianism, which threatens to become the predominant phenomenon of the twentieth century, and have tried to examine its intellectual and moral roots.

Leo Strauss, Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, whose death in October 1973 was a great loss to political philosophy, is one of the most outstanding contemporary theorists and a staunch critic of the behaviouralist approach. His impact on American philosophy and political science has been very great. In Chicago, there are a large number of political scientists who regard it their privilege to be considered his disciples.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Comment on the contemporary relevance of classics of politics.

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2)   Discuss the views of either Michael Oakeshott or Hannah Arendt.

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2.10   THE NEW SCIENCE OF POLITICS

2.10.1 Views of Eric Voegelin

Among the modern political thinkers who have taken flights into the heights of political philosophising, the name of Eric Voegelin stands out as the most prominent. He is a prolific writer, though his style is somewhat complicated and it is not always easy to follow him. He does not make a distinction between political theory and political science –to him political theory would mean a critical reflection on politics, without which there can be no political science. Voegelin is strongly of the view that we never had the materials available and the intellectual climate suitable for great advances in theoretical analysis, as now. Voegelin is against system building in modern philosophy and believes that the system-constructors are ignorant of the basic experience of existence.

It is the duty of the political theorist, according to Voegelin, to empirically examine, and critically evaluate, man's experiences through history with a view to seeking the

light which they shed upon his own search for truth about order in human society, a task which was superbly done by the Greek philosophers and the Christian theologians. Voegelin sharply disagrees with the modern political theorists who would treat political theory as essentially methodology and its task as merely acting "as the hand-maiden of research into behavioural regularities on the phenomenological level". He would rather regard political theory as "an experimental science of right order, based on the total experience of the existing human person". The task of political theory, according to Voegelin, is to elaborate "empirically and critically, the problems of order which derive from philosophical anthropology as part of a general ontology".

2.10.2 Views of Christian Bay

At a time when the behaviouralists were trying to rationalise and justify the elitist concept of democracy through their "applied" studies and collection of statistical data, Christian Bay, in the best tradition of classical political philosophers, was questioning their "wisdom" and raising some fundamental questions regarding problems and perspectives of enquiry, which seem to have been neglected by them. He agreed with David Easton's definition of politics as consisting of "all the processes by which public values are promoted and distributed by means of power and authority", but objected to a virtual absence in such a definition of any reference to the *relatedness* of politics to human needs and problems. The mass of behavioural research in political science today, he writes, "deals with voting and with opinions and attitudes on social, political and economic issues. But we should not mistake the political horizon we encounter in this research for the whole realm of the political. There is too much that gets lost when attention is focussed on what we can readily measure by the standard kinds of sociological techniques – individual meanings of political commitments, for example". He was critical of the prevailing tendency in current research of not trying to relate behavioural data meaningfully to normative theories of democracy. He quoted in this connection the "painstaking analysis of political behaviour with an astonishingly superficial attempt at bringing their data to bear on democratic theory" that Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee had made when they concluded that the American system of democracy "does meet certain requirements for a going political organisation" and that "it often works with distinction". "With a more adequate conception of politics", he wrote, "It will become clear, I believe, that what these and many other authors of books on political behaviour are looking at is only a limited range of data, which badly needs to be supplemented by a more intensive scientific inquiry, and also by a much larger canvas of political theory that includes a place for concepts such as needs, growth, and the common good, to name a few only." It was even more shocking for Bay to find a "highly respected writer" like S.M. Lipset cheerfully claiming that democracy "is the good society itself in operation", or that "the give-and-take of a free society's internal struggles" was the best man could hope for on this earth. Quoting a few more examples, he wrote, "Determined to utilise the available arsenals of sociological techniques, this line of research has stressed the phenomena that can be weighed and counted to the exclusion of more diffuse and elusive aspects of politics. In their desire to be scientific, these investigators have shied away from normative inquiry to such an extent that they unblushingly relate their fine empirical work to the crudest notions of, and assumptions about, democracy – either as an end in itself or as a means to even vaguer conceptions of human wants".

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss the views of either Eric Voegelin or Christian Bay.

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2.11   LET US SUM UP

Political science was treated as distinct from other social sciences in as much as it dealt with the phenomenon of control of power within society. Max Weber regarded an organisation or association as political "if and in so far as the enforcement of its order is carried out continually within a given territorial area by the application and threat of physical force on the part of the administrative staff". Institutions, however, continued to be regarded as the primary units of analysis, though the focus of interest had shifted from institutions themselves to the accumulation and exercise of power. "The focus of interest", of the political scientist, writes Robson, "is clear and unambiguous, it centres on the struggle to gain and retain power, to exercise power or influence over others, or to resist that exercise". In more recent years, the centre of interest has shifted more particularly to the relations and patterns of interaction among individuals, politics being now regarded as "an aspect of human behaviour in an environment". Within the broad frame-work of the concept of politics as the authoritative allocation of values, emphasis has varied from (1) the making and execution of decisions with decisionmaking as the unit of analysis, to (2) policymaking, involving a discussion of both policy content and political process, and, finally, to (3) the determination, and attainment of society's goals, the principal difference between the second and third aspect being that while the second focuses primarily on the precise nature of political processes as they are carried on within the state, the last one is concerned with goals and teleology.

2.12   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Bellany R., *Theories and Concepts of Politics: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993)

Blondel, J., *The Discipline of Politics* (London: Butter-worths, 1981)

Leftwich, A., (ed), *What is Politics*? (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984)

Mouffe, C., *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993)

Plan, R., *Modern Political Thought* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991)

2.13   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1)   See Section 2.1

2)   See Sections 2.2 and 2.3

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Section 2.4 and 2.5

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 2.6

2)   See Section 2.7

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See Section 2.8

2)   See Section 2.9

Check Your Progress 5

1)   See sub-sections 2.10.1 and 2.10.2

UNIT 3   THE NEED FOR POLITICAL THEORY

Structure

3.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit concerns itself with the need for political theory. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Distinguish political theory from other similar terms;

- Discuss the different usages of political theory, viz, as the history of political thought, as a technique of analysis; etc. and

- Examine whether political theory is dead.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Political theory is one of the core areas in political science. It is only in recent times that it has emerged as an academic discipline. Earlier, those who engaged in this enterprise styled themselves as philosophers or scientists. From ancient Greece to the present, the history of political theory has dealt with fundamental and perennial ideas of political science. The first modern usage of the term 'Political Science' was in the works of Charles-Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755), Adam Smith (1723-90), Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and David Hume (1711-76), where it meant the 'Science of the Legislator'.

Political theory is the most appropriate term to employ in designating that intellectual tradition which affirms the possibility of transcending the sphere of immediate practical concerns and 'viewing' man's societal existence from a critical perspective. Political theory was political science in the full sense, and there could be no science without theory. Just as we may speak of theory as either the activity of theorising, so political theory may legitimately and accurately be used as synonymous with political science.

3.2 POLITICAL THEORY AND OTHER INTER-RELATED TERMS

A distinction can be made between political theory and similar terms. Such as political science, political philosophy and political ideology, though many treat them interchangeably. The differentiation between political theory and political science arises because of the general shift in intellectual perceptions brought about by modern science. Political Science has tried to provide plausible generalisations and laws about politics and political behaviour. Political theory reflects upon political phenomenon, processes and institutions and on actual political behaviour by subjecting it to philosophical or ethical criterion. It considers the question of the best political order, which is a part of a larger and a more fundamental question; namely, the ideal form of life that a human being ought to lead within a larger community. In the process of answering immediate and local questions, it addresses perennial issues, which is why a study of the classical texts form an important component of the discipline. A classic in political theory has the essential ingredients of a great literary work, which inspite of its local setting, deals with the perennial problems of life and society. It contains the quintessence of eternal knowledge and is an inheritance not of any one culture, place, people or time, but of the entire humankind.

Specific political theories cannot be considered as the correct or final understanding of an event. The meaning of an event is always open to future interpretations from new viewpoints, each explaining and analysing from a particular standpoint or concern in political life. Furthermore, political theory is critical in its endeavour, for it gives an account of politics that rises above those of ordinary people. There is no tension between political theory and political science, for they differ in terms of their boundaries and jurisdiction, and not in their aim. Political theory supplies ideas, concepts and theories for the purpose of analysis, description, explanation and criticism, which in turn are incorporated in political science.

Political philosophy provides general answers to questions such as what is justice, concepts of right, the distinction between 'is' and 'ought' and the larger issues of politics. Political philosophy is a part of normative political theory, for it attempts to establish inter-relationships between concepts. It is, perhaps, accurate to say that every political philosopher is a theorist, though every political theorist is not a political philosopher. Political philosophy is a complex activity, which is best, understood by analysing the many ways that the acknowledged masters have practiced it. No single philosopher and no one historical age can be said to have defined it conclusively, any more than any one painter or school of painting has practiced all that we mean by painting.

Political thought is the thought of the whole community that includes the writings and speeches of the articulate sections such as professional politicians, political commentators, society reformers and ordinary persons of a community. Thought can be in the form of political treatises, scholarly articles, speeches, government policies and decisions, and also poems and prose that capture the anguish of the people. Thought is time bound; for instance, the history of the twentieth century. In short, political thought includes theories that attempt to explain political behaviour, and values to evaluate it and methods to control it.

Political theory, unlike thought, refers to the speculation by a single individual, usually articulated in treatises as models of explanation. It consists of theories of institutions, including that of the state, law, representation and of election. The mode of enquiry is comparative and explanatory. Political theory attempts to explain the attitudes and actions arising from ordinary political life and to generalise about them in a particular context : this political theory is concerned about/with the relationships between concepts

and circumstances. Political philosophy attempts to resolve or to understand conflicts between political theories, which might appear equally acceptable in given circumstances.

Political ideology is a systematic and all embracing doctrine, which attempts to give a complete and universally applicable theory of human nature and society alongwith a detailed programme of attaining it. John Locke is often described as the father of modern ideologies. Marxism is also a classic example of an ideology summed up in the statement that the purpose of philosophy is to change and not merely interpret the world. All political ideology is political philosophy, though the reverse is not true. The twentieth century has seen many ideologies like Fascism, Nazism, Communism and Liberalism. A distinctive trait of political ideology is its dogmatism, which unlike political philosophy, precludes and discourages critical appraisal because of its aim to realise the perfect society. According to Gamine and Sabine, political ideology is a negation of political theory because an ideology is of recent origin, and under the influence of positivism is based on subjective, unverifiable value preferences. Gamine, furthermore, distinguishes a political theorist from a publicist. According to him while the former has a profound understanding of issues, the latter is concerned with immediate questions.

Furthermore, Germino, like Plato also distinguishes between opinion and knowledge, the latter being the starting point of a political theorist. Every political theorist has a dual role; that of a scientist and a philosopher and the way he divides his roles will depend on his temperament and interests. Only by combining the two roles can he contribute to knowledge in a worthwhile manner. The scientific component of a theory can appear coherent and significant, if the author has a preconceived notion of the aims of political life. The philosophical basis is revealed in the manner in which reality is depicted.

Political theory is dispassionate and disinterested. As a science, it describes political reality without trying to pass judgement on what is being depicted either implicitly or explicitly. As a philosophy, it prescribes rules of conduct which will secure a good life for all in the society and not simply for certain individuals or classes. The theorist, will not himself have a personal interest in the political arrangements of any one country or class or party. Devoid of such an interest, his vision of reality and his image of the good life will not be clouded, nor will his theory be special. The intention of an ideology is to justify a particular system of power in society. The ideologue is an interested party : his interest may be to defend things as they are or to criticise the status –quo in the hope that a new distribution of power will come into being. Rather than disinterested prescription, we love rationalisation. Rather than dispassionate description, we have a distorted picture of reality.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Distinguish political theory from other inter-related terms.

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3.3 USAGES OF POLITICAL THEORY

Political theorists since Aristotle try to define the political to understand political practices and their application. Aristotle's remarks that 'man is a political animal' takes account of the inherent human desire for society and the fact that human beings need and can find fulfillment only through a political community. For Aristotle, the political is important for it stands for a common political space in which all citizens participate. However, the ambit of politics has to be limited.

The political dimension of political theory concerns itself with the form, nature, organisation of the state or government and its relationship with the individual citizen. Though inter-linked, the political is treated as a specific area distinct and different from the other spheres like the economy and culture. This is the primary focus of the liberal tradition. On the contrary, Marxism categorically rejects the liberal distinction between the political and the non-political by arguing that political power is a hand-maiden of economic power. It identifies affinity between the economic power and the state.

3.3.1 As The History of Political Thought

Usually, courses in political theory offer a detailed and elaborate study of books or particular political philosophies, from Plato to contemporary times, from a historical perspective. These books are studied for their normative statements about the desirability of certain types of institutions, governments and laws, which are usually accompanied by rational arguments. The classics are portrayed as timeless in quality, permanent in relevance and universal in their significance. In the course of analysing texts from a historical perspective, it is important to see how a particular idea or concept has evolved in the course of time; and the different meanings and interpretations it has been subjected to. While it is important to know who said something for the first time, it is equally important to know the new ramifications of an idea or a concept. It is for this reason that Wolin rightly describes the history of political theory as marked by both continuity and innovation.

3.3.2 As a Technique of Analysis

Aristotle's remarks that the individual is a political animal indicates the primacy of politics and the fact that political thinking takes place at various levels and in a variety of ways. The political in such a view not only becomes all pervasive, but the highest kind of activity. Politics symbolises a collective public life wherein people create institutions that regulate their common life. Even deceptively simple common sense questions and political opinion merit an answer; for instance, are individuals equal? Is the state more important than the individual? How to justify violence employed by the state? Is this an inherent tension between freedom and equality? Is the minority justified in dictating terms to the majority and vice-versa? One's response to these statements often reflect what ought to be the case rather than what is the case. At stake here is a choice between values and ideals. By exercising one's preferences, one also inadvertently subscribes to a political ideology which means that answers to questions will vary not only according to individual opinion, but would also diverge depending on one's value preferences. It is because of this basic reason that political theory is to be a part of an open society, for there would always be liberals and conservatives training in political theory who would help one to answer the aforesaid questions logically, speculatively and critically.

3.3.3 As a Conceptual Clarification

Political theory helps to understand the concepts and terms used in a political argument and analysis: like the meaning of freedom, equality, democracy, justice and rights. These terms are not only frequently used in daily conversation, but also in political

theory discourse. An understanding of these terms is important for it helps one to know the way these terms have been employed, the shifts in their definition and their usage in a structure of argument. Many, like Weldon stress on the need to scrutinise concepts in ordinary pre-theoretical language. Analyses of concepts also reveal the ideological commitment of a speaker or/and writer. Liberals define freedom as implying choice, absence of restraints while socialists like freedom with equality. Liberals define a state as an instrument of human welfare, while for a socialist a state is an instrument of oppression, domination and class privileges. Conceptual classification is definitely possible, but cannot be neutral. Those engaged in it overtly or covertly subscribe to value preferences, and in this sense their task is not different from the authors of classics in political theory who help one to understand the underlying basis of human, political and moral actions.

3.3.4 As Formal Model Building

This perception is particularly popular in the United States, for it considers political theory as an exercise in devising formal models of political processes; similar to the ones in theoretical economics. These models serve two purposes : first they are explanatory, offering systematically the factors on which political processes are based. Second, they are normative, for they try to show the consequences that accrue from following a certain rule. A good example of such an exercise is Antony Down's 'theory of electoral competition' which perceives voters as trying to gain maximum utility from an election result and parties as teams trying to maximise their probability of winning. Downs then shows how parties, in order to win, devise ideological stances. Another important model is Kenneth Arrow's 'impossibility theorem', which states that among other things being equal, where a democratic choice has to be made between more than two alternatives, the outcome would very likely be an arbitrary one and influenced by the procedure employed to exercise the choice. Joseph Schumpeter's elitist theory of democracy is based on the assumption that a human being takes his economic life more seriously than his political one.

3.3.5 As Theoretical Political Science

The emergence of political science in the twentieth century has led some political scientists to look upon political theory as a mere theoretical branch of the discipline. An attempt is made to integrate empirical observations with a systematic explanation of one's everyday experiences in the world. This view dispenses with the normative content of traditional political theory. Though mere explanation of political phenomena is possible but grounding it in empiricism is not adequate. Any attempt to formulate a political theory free of normative elements would inherently fail. This is because any explanation of political events would mean an interpretation of the intentions and motives of the participants and such an interpretation would bring forth, normative issues.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss any two usages of political theory.

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3.4 IMPORTANCE OF KEY THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

A reader getting introduced to political theory for the first time may think it sufficient to study the institutions rather than abstract concepts in order to understand the character and nature of society. While a study of institutions is possible, one has to realise that institutional arrangements vary from society to society because they are based on divergent sets of ideas. This realisation takes us to the heart of the matter as to what is more important, reality or ideas, facts or concepts. Do ideas reflect reality or is reality based on ideas?

3.5 IS POLITICAL THEORY DEAD?

In the middle of the twentieth century, many observers readily wrote an obituary of political theory. Some spoke of its decline. Others proclaimed its death. One referred to political theory as being in the doghouse. This dismal view is because the classical tradition in political theory is, by and large, loaded with value judgements beyond the control of empirical testing. The criticism of normative theory came from logical positivists in the 1930s and from behaviouralism, subsequently. Easton contends that since political theory is concerned with some kind of historical form, it had lost its constructive role. He blames William Dunning, Charles H. Mcllwain, and George M. Sabine for historicism in political theory. This kind of political theory has dissuaded students from a serious study of value theory.

In the past, theory was a vehicle whereby articulate and intelligent individuals conveyed their thoughts on actual direction of affairs and offered for serious consideration, some ideas about the desirable course of events. In this way, they revealed to us the full meaning of their moral frame of reference. Today, however, the kind of historical interpretation with which we are familiar in the study of political theory has driven from the latter its only unique function; that of constructively approaching a valuational frame of reference. In the past, theory was approached as an intellectual activity whereby the student could learn how he was to go about exploring the knowable consequences and, through them, the ultimate premises of his own moral outlook. Scrutiny of the works by American political theorists reveals that their authors have been motivated less by an interest in communicating such knowledge than in retailing information about the meaning, internal consistency and historical development of past political values.

Dunning in his three volumes entitled *A History of Political Theories*(1902) set the tone for research in political theory. This training as a historian enables him to approach political theory primarily as offering problems of historical change and to unfold the role of political ideas in this process. As a result political theory, for Dunning, becomes a historical account of the conditions and consequences of political ideas. He seeks to uncover the cultural and political conceptions of an age and to isolate the influences of these ideas, in turn, on the social conditions.

Easton describes Dunning as a historicist, for he deflects political theory from moral considerations and consciously avoids dealing with moral issues in a purely historical context. Dunning perceives political theory as essentially historical research into issues that arise from observation of political facts and practices. He confines his study to the legal rather than the ethical dimensions of political life, though subsequently his students broadened it to encompass theories of political activity. He considers moral views as a product of caprice, dogmas without justification and hence, not worthy of analysis or interpretation. He neglects the meaning and logical consistency of ideas.

Mcllwain's *The Growth of Political Thought in the West* (1932) uses historical research, for he regards political ideas as an 'effect rather than an influential interacting part of social activity'. Being virtual ciphers in the changing patterns of actual life, ideas can have meaning only as a part of a history of theories in which ideas may condition, subsequent ideas, but in which they leave no impact upon action. Political theory is construed here as a branch of the sociology of knowledge, which deals primarily with the circumstances shaping knowledge as it has varied over time. The task of the political theorist is to show the way in which a social milieu moulds and shapes political thought. It is concerned with the exclusively empirical task of uncovering the determinants of ideology.

Sabine's *A History of Political Theory* (1939) has singularly influenced studies in political theory more than any other book written during the thirties. Like Dunning and Mcllwain, Sabine considers the historical study of theory as an appropriate approach to the subject matter. The impression that one gets from the book and from a description of his method is 'that a historical study of theory provides its own self-evident justification'. Sabine combines the approach of both Dunning and Mcllwain. Like Dunning, he believes that political thought is a part of the political process which interacts and influences social action. He shares Mcllwain's belief that it is necessary to describe and analyse moral judgement in each theory as these are the determining factors in history and not mere rationalisations of an activity. Moral judgements are not inferior to factual propositions as Dunning contends. Though Sabine reiterates Dunning's interpretation of the relation between ideas and action, he differs in his conception of the nature of history of political theory by his emphasis on the role of ethical judgement.

For Sabine, every political theory can be scrutinised from two points of view: as a social philosophy and as an ideology. As an ideology, theories are psychological phenomena precluding truth or falsity. Theories are beliefs, 'events in people's minds and factors in their conduct irrespective of their validity or verifiability'. Theories play an influential role in history and therefore, the task of a historian is to ascertain the extent to which these theories help in shaping the course of history. A theory has to be examined for its meaning rather than for its impact on human actions. Viewed in this perspective, a theory comprises of two kinds of propositions : factual and moral. Sabine focuses on factual rather than moral statements for the latter precludes descriptions of truth or falsity. He regards values as reflecting human preferences to 'some social and physical fact'. They are not deducible from facts, nor can they be reduced to facts or nationally discovered as being expressions of emotions. Since political theory advances some statements of preference, value judgements form the case of theory and explain the reason for its existence. The moral element characterises political theory, which is why it is primarily a moral enterprise. In spite of factual propositions within a theory, a political theory on the whole can hardly be true in depicting a particular episode or period.

Easton examined the reasons for the decline of political theory in general and its decline into historicism in particular. First, and foremost, is the tendency among political scientists to conform to the moral propositions of their age leading to a loss of the constructive approach. The emphasis is to uncover and reveal one's values which imply that there is no longer the need to enquire into the merit of these moral values, but merely understand their 'origins, development and social impact'. History is used to endorse existing values. Secondly, moral relativism is responsible for the attention a theory received with history.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss any two usages of political theory.

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3.6 REVIVAL OF POLITICAL THEORY

In the 1930s, political theory began studying the history of ideas with the purpose of defending liberal democratic theory in opposition to the totalitarian tenets of communism, fascism and nazism. Lasswell tried to establish a scientific political theory with the eventual purpose of controlling human behaviour, furthering the aims and direction given by Merriam. Unlike the classical tradition, scientific political theory describes rather than prescribes. Political theory in the traditional sense was alive in the works of Arendt, Theodore Adorno, Marcuse, and Leo Strauss. Their views diametrically differed from the broad ideas within American political science for they believed in liberal democracy, science and historical progress. All of them reject political messianism and utopianism in politics. Arendt focussed mainly on the uniqueness and responsibility of the human being, with which she initiates her criticism in behaviouralism. She contended that the behavioural search for uniformities in human nature has only contributed towards stereotyping the human being.

Strauss reaffirms the importance of classical political theory to remedy the crisis of the modern times. He does not agree with the proposition that all political theory is ideological in nature mirroring a given socio-economic interest, for most political thinkers are motivated by the possibility of discerning the principles of the right order in social existence. A political philosopher has to be primarily interested in truth. Past philosophies are studied with an eye on coherence and consistency. The authors of the classics in political theory are superior because they were geniuses and measured in their writings. Strauss scrutinises the methods and purposes of the 'new' political science and concludes that it was defective when compared with classical political theory, particularly that of Aristotle. For Aristotle, a political philosopher or a political scientist has to be impartial, for he possesses a more comprehensive and clearer understanding of human ends. Political science and political philosophy are identical, because science consisting of theoretical and practical aspects is identical with philosophy. Aristotle's political science also evaluates political things, defends autonomy of prudence in practical matters and views political action as essentially ethical. These premises Behaviouralism denies, for it separates political philosophy from political science and substitutes the distinction between theoretical and practical sciences. It perceives applied sciences to be derived from theoretical sciences, but not in the same manner as the classical tradition visualises. Behaviouralism like positivism is disastrous, for it denies knowledge regarding ultimate principles. Their bankruptcy is evident, for they seem helpless, unable to distinguish the right from the wrong, the just from the unjust in view of the rise of totalitarianism. Strauss counters Easton's charge of historicism by alleging that the new science is responsible for the

decline in political theory, for it pointed to and abetted the general political crisis of the West because of its overall neglect of normative issues.

Vogelin regards political science and political theory as inseparable and that one is not possible without the other. Political theory is not ideology, utopia or scientific methodology, but an experiential science of the right order in both the individual and society. It has to dissect critically and empirically the problem of order.

Theory is not just any opining about human existence in society, it rather is an attempt at formulating the meaning of existence by explicating the content of a definitive class of experiences. Its argument is not arbitrary, but derives its validity from the aggregate of experiences to which it must permanently refer for empirical control.

3.7 RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Since the Seventies, political theory has revived largely due to the efforts of Habermas, Nozick and Rawls. The themes that figure prominently since its revival are broadly social justice and welfare rights theory within a deontological perspective, utilitarianism, democratic theory and pluralism, feminism, post-modernism, new social movements and civil society, and the liberalism-communitarian debate. Infact, communitarianism has tried to fill the void left by the declining popularity of Marxism. However, this unprecedented lease of life that political theory has received is restricted to the academia and as a result, it is 'a kind of alienated politics, an enterprise carried on at some distance from the activities to which it refers'. This resurgence suggests that earlier pronouncements about its decline and/or demise are premature and academically shortsighted. However, one has to be careful in distinguishing contemporary political theory from the classical tradition, as the former derives its inspiration from the latter and in this sense, they are attempts to refine rather than being original, adjusting the broad frameworks of the classical tradition to the contemporary complexities.

This new found enthusiasm has been confined to liberal political discourse, mainly due to the seminal work of Rawls fulfilling Germino's wish of a need to strengthen the open society. Recent liberal theory, in its revived sense, focuses on the idea of impartiality and fairness in the belief that 'discrimination must be grounded on relevant differences'. It is no coincidence that a well formulated and detailed analysis of the concept of justice, long over due since the time of Plato, emerges in Rawls for whom justice means fairness. Rawls in the classical tradition deals with what ought to be, for he confronted the vexed problem of distribution of liberties, opportunities, income, wealth and the bases of self-respect. Among the competing ideologies which ushers in the twentieth century, only liberalism, unlike fascism and communism, permits free exchange of ideas. It synchronizes, and adapts if necessary, theory in light of practice and identifies the elements that constitute a just political and social order without being doctrinaire and dogmatic. However, much of this new liberal political theory has been in the nature of refining and clarifying the earlier theoretical postures. Moreover, the loss of challenge by both fascism and communism, the first, because of its defeat in the second world war, and the second, which collapsed due to its own internal contradictions, also prove that utopian and radical schemes are no longer theoretically and practically desirable and feasible alternatives. Nonetheless, liberalism faces challenges in recent times from communitarianism, post-modernism and feminism.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss the revival of political theory.

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3.8 LET US SUM UP

Political theory, since the time of Plato, has been influenced by its time and place. Our own time is no different. The better part of the last one hundred years has seen a keen contest between liberal democracy, fascism and communism. The fascist challenge was short lived, ending with its defeat in the second world war, but the communist challenge continued even after the war for another four decades. During this period, there were fresh insights into the nature of totalitarianism by Arendt and Friedrich, defense of liberal democracy by Berlin, Hayek and Popper and Plamentaz's contrast between German Marxism and Soviet Communism. There were penetrating criticisms of Marxist theory and practice by Avineri, Berlin, Dahl, Popper and Tucker, Miliband and the East European dissidents who highlighted the libertarian aspect of the socialist discourse. The post-second world war period saw the emergence of convergence theory and the end of ideology debate emphasizing the commonalties between advanced capitalism and developed socialism. Thus, contemporary political theory became global with important contributions from practically every corner of the world. Colonialism and imperialism led to an impressive flowering of non-western input to political theory reflected by the denunciation of western materialistic civilization in Gandhi's *Hind Swaraj*, refinement, rejection of euro-centricism in the writings of Mao Zedong, Amiclar Lopes Cabral, Edward Said and in the concept of negritude and African identity of Leopald Senghor.

The most impressive contributions were by twentieth century liberals inaugurated by Hobhouse's liberalism and culminating in Rawl grand theory. They classified and refined earlier positions rather than initiate new paths of enquiry. This is virtually inevitable because 'by Hegel's time all fundamental positions have been taken up; after Hegel, they reappear in new guises and new variations but the reappearance is a testimony to the impossibility of fundamental innovation'. The political theory of our times has stood over the rich tradition of theorising of the last two thousand years and the recent scholarly works in applied politics more than normative theory have dealt with the important aspects of our political life. Our age also differs from the ones that precede it in a fundamental manner. It is an age of technology, manifest in microchip revolution and satellite networks. With nation–states becoming more porous and receptive to outside influences, political theory has to respond to the increasing sweep of globalisation and the role of technology. However, as Keynes pointed out, the influence of ideas will always be widespread and contemporary political theory dealing with complexities of our time within the framework of the rich heritage of political theory will have its rightful place in the history of political theory.

3.9 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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Sir I. Berlin, 'Does political theory still exist?' in P. Laslett and W.G. Runciman, *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, 2nd series (eds.) Blackwell, Oxford, 1964

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3.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress1

1)   See Section 3.2

Check Your Progress 2

2)   See Section 3.3

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 3.5

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See Sections 3.6 and 3.7

UNIT 4   CONCEPTIONS OF POLITICAL THEORY

Structure

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit deals with the various conceptions of political theory. After going through
the unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss efforts to define political theory;

- Discuss various conceptions of political theory; and

- Give an overview of the recent effort at political theorisation.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this unit is to explicate different conceptions which are found
in political theory. At the very outset, it should be mentioned that political theory is
that enterprise which seeks to analyse political phenomena of various shades and
descriptions which occur in real-world political life. In other words, political theory
does effect the world in which we live and influences the choices we make therein.
It helps us in improving and refining our understanding about social and political life.
It is a different matter that there is a misconception about political theory in general,
and the political theorist in particular, which imagines a political theorist as secluded
and isolated entity who is least bothered about the problems of real life and lives in
an imaginary world of his own from where he or she churns out theories about
society and politics.

But the fact is otherwise. Political theory is always situated in the actual world about
which it speaks, to which it addresses itself and the problem it seeks to resolve.
Society is the runway from where the flight of its imagination takes off. Therefore,
activists, indulging in public – political life make significant contributions to political
theory as trained political scientists. Political theory, as a vocation is as important as
political theory as a profession and the testimony that such a vocation has not only
existed, but has also enriched the corpus of knowledge can be had from the long line
of writers from Plato to Marx. Political theory as a vocation "sharpens our sense
about complex interplay between political experience and thought" and "provides
thoughtful political action and widens political vision" as Sheldon Wolin has pointed
out in his book *Politics and Vision*.

4.2 DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL THEORY

Developments in political theory always reflect the changes which occur in society. Political theories are produced in response to the challenges which emerge at different times. Hegel's symbolic characterisation of political theory as 'the owl of Minerva takes flight when shadow of darkness falls' is very apt.

However, we will do well to remember that political thought, which also emerges due to societal challenges, is bound by time as well as space, and is therefore, different from theory which breaks such barriers and proves its worth in understanding and explaining political phenomena of different nature and origin. This happens, because theories are purged and purified from ideologies and biases and arrive at certain principles, which are not only timeless, but may even be called knowledge. Political theorists, while indulging in theorisation, pursue ideas not for the sake of fulfillment of their fads and fantasies, but in order to search those principles whose understanding can make life better. And in this enterprise, theorists, by and large, are motivated by the concrete political situation. The history of political theory bears out how ills and maladies afflicting societies have lubricated the tools of theorisation, through which various accepted principles and practices and the assumptions behind them were questioned and the blueprint for the future was drawn.

It is, however, true that the stimulus for theory always comes from some sort of failure and a related conviction that things can be bettered through an improved understanding and may, ultimately be resolved. Hence, political theory's task is not limited to providing a fleeting response and getting contented with a compromise. Rather, it has to reach at the root of the problem and has to discover remedies in the form of an alternative set of principles. Hence, any project on theory requires a 'vision' through which a theorist could think not only about the problems at hand, but also beyond them.

It is here that political theory might be differentiated from art or poetry. In terms of vision, reflections and ruminations, there is not much difference between political theory and other creative activities like art and poetry. But what sets apart the political theorist from the poet is that his urge and search are a conscious act with a definite design, whereas a poetic act is one of spontaneity. Therefore, it is not creativity, but consciousness that denies poetry the status of a theory.

4.3 TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF POLITICAL THEORY

Political theory is defined in different ways by different people. The definitions vary on the basis of emphasis and understanding of its constitutive elements. Sabine's well known definition of political theory is that it is something 'which has characteristically contained factors like the factual, the causal and the valuational'. To Hecker, political theory is 'dispassionate and disinterested activity. It is a body of philosophical and scientific knowledge which regardless of when and where it was originally written, can increase our understanding of the world in which we live today and we live tomorrow'.

Therefore, one may say that what we mean by political theory is a coherent group of propositions, with some explanatory principle, about a class of political phenomena. It implies that a theory *unlike* thought, cannot consider a multitude of phenomena at a time, and will have to get concerned with a class or type of issues only.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Write a few lines on the development of political theory.

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4.4 DOMINANT CONCEPTIONS IN POLITICAL THEORY

It is quite difficult to identify and categorise various conceptions of political theory which are put into use by theorists. The difficulty emanates from a tendency among theorists to go for an excercise in which they start drawing on different conceptions and traditions. This is more true, as we will see later, with contemporary political theory than with the ones which preceded it. In the past, theorists somewhat maintained a purity of conception in theory – building and seldom outstepped the framework they had chosen. But this does not apply to the contemporary times, which are a witness to a crop of theory which appears hybrid in nature.

But broadly speaking, three different conceptions emerge in political theory on the basis of which both the past and the present theories can be conceptualised, judged and evaluated. They are: **Historical, Normative, and Empirical.**

4.4.1 Historical Conception

Many theorists have attempted theory – building on the basis of insights and resources from history. Sabine is one of the main exponents of the historical conception. In his opinion, a question such as what is the nature of political theory can be answered descriptively; that is, how theory has responded to historical events and specific situations. In other words, in this perspective, political theory becomes situation-dependent in which each historical situation sets a problem, which in turn is taken care of through solutions devised by the theory.

This conception of political theory is deferential to tradition. Cobban also believes that the traditional mode, in which a sense of history is instilled to the full, is the right way to consider the problems of political theory.

It is true that the past acts as a valuable guide in our endeavour of theory – building and teaches us not to be too sure of our originality. It also hints that it is possible to think in ways other than those which are fashionable and dominant, besides shedding light on the sources. The historical understanding also sensitises us about the failings of the past generations and ties them with the collective wisdom of the present and promotes imaginativeness in us.

Over and above this, the historical conception also contributes significantly to our normative vision. The history of ideas may tell us that our social and political universe is a product of things whose root lies in the past. And knowing them better would tell us how we have certain values, norms and moral expectations and from where they have come. With this sense in us, it is possible to interrogate these values and critically assess their utility.

But a blind adherence to this conception is not without its folly. The novelty of the project called political theory is that each specific situation is unique, riddled with new challenges. Hence, worth of the past sometimes becomes redundant and could even be a hindrance, if one is oblivious of this aspect. Therefore, the utility of this approach in political theory beyond a certain level is doubtful as it is always wedded to outmoded ideas from outmoded ages. The suggestive values of the ideas remain, but the theoretical function recedes considerably.

4.4.2 Normative Conception

The normative conception in political theory is known by different names. Some people prefer to call it **philosophical theory**, while others refer to it as **ethical theory**. The normative conception is based on the belief that the world and its events can be interpreted in terms of logic, purpose and ends with the help of the theorist's intuition, reasoning, insights and experiences. In other words, it is a project of philosophical speculation about values.

The questions, which are asked by the normativists, would be: what should be the end of political institutions? What should inform the relationship between the individual and other social organisations? What arrangements in society can become model or ideal and what rules and principles should govern it?

One may say that their concerns are moral and the purpose is to build an ideal type. Hence, it is these theorists who have always conceived 'utopia' in the realm of political ideas through their powerful imagination.

Normative political theory leans heavily towards political philosophy, because it derives its knowledge of the good life from it and also uses it as a framework in its endeavour to create absolute norms. Infact, their tools of theorisation are borrowed from political philosophy and therefore, they always seek to established inter-relationships among concepts and look for coherence in the phenomena as well as in their theories, which are typical examples of a philosophical outlook.

Leo Strauss has strongly advocated the case for normative theory and has argued that political things by nature are subject to approval or disapproval and it is difficult to judge them in any other terms, except as good or bad and justice or injustice.

But the problem with the normativists is that while professing values which they cherish, they portray them as universal and absolute. They do not realise that their urge to create absolute standard for goodness is not without pitfalls. And that ethical values are relative to time and space with a heavy subjective content in them, which precludes the possibility of any creation of absolute standard. We will do well to remember that even a political theorist is a subjective instrument in the assessment of the world and these insights are conditioned by many factors, which may be ideological in nature.

The exponents of empirical theory take normativists to task for (a) relativity of values (b) cultural basis of ethics and norms (c) ideological content in the enterprise and (d) abstract and utopian nature of the project

It is true that the proponents of the normative conception get preoccupied with the inquiry in to the internal consistency of theory and that pertains, mostly to the nature

of ideas and rigour in the method, while remaining unmindful and sometimes, even negligent about the empirical understanding of the existing social and political reality. It is more agonising and distressing, when one finds that this proclivity among them is accompanied by another syndrome, under which they prefer to respond to a theorist and undertake only a review of his work by turning away their eyes from the empirical reality which stares at them. Thus, it turns out to be an illusory and deceptive exercise in theory-building in the name of high and noble normative concerns.

But in the distant past those who championed normative theory always tried to connect their principles with the understanding of the reality of their times. Therefore, all normative enterprises in the past had direct or indirect empirical referents and Plato's theory of justice could be a good example to illustrate it.

In recent times, again the old sensibility within the normative theory has reemerged and the passion for good life and good society has been matched by methodological and empirical astuteness. John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* is a case in point which attempts to anchor logical and moral political theory in empirical findings. Rawls, with his imagination, creates 'original position' to connect normative philosophical arguments with real world concerns about distributive justice and the welfare state. Some other theorists are also attending to the tasks of developing moral theories about equality, freedom and democracy by rooting them to every day concerns and marrying them to specific situations.

Some normative theorists of the new generation have also started discarding the well known inclination of theory, more a characteristic of the older days, under which either exuberant justification for the existing arrangements was offered or they hesitated to critique them and thus, carried the level of status – quoism in their thought. Now, a new crop of theory has surfaced known as *critical theory*, which as a part of the normative project, is engaged with political events and tries to combine ideas with practice, and also makes effective interventions to facilitate changes for the better in society and politics.

4.4.3 Empirical Conception

What has dominated political theory in the twentieth century is not normativism, but another conception known as empical political theory which derives theories from empirical observations.

Empirical political theory refuses to accord the status of knowledge to those theories which indulge in value judgements. Naturally, therefore, normative political theory is debunked as a mere statement of opinion and preferences.

The drive for value – free theory started in order to make the field of political theory scientific and objective and hence, a more reliable guide for action. This new orientation came to be known as *positivism*.

Under the spell of positivism, political theorists set out to attain scientific knowledge about political phenomena based on the principle which could be empirically verified and proved. Thus, they attempted to create a natural science of society and in this endeavor, philosophy was made a mere adjunct of science. Such an account of theory also portrayed the role of a theorist as of a disinterested observer, purged of all commitments and drained of all values.

This empirical project in political theory was premised on the empiricist theory of knowledge which claims to have the full blown criteria to test what constitutes truth and falsehood. The essence of this criteria is lodged in the experimentation and the verification principle.

When political theory was reeling under this influence, a so called revolution started and became popular as 'Behavioural Revolution'. This revolution reached a commanding position within political theory in the 1950's and engulfed the entire field of study and research by advocating new features. They included : (a) encouragement to quantitative technique in analysis (b) demolition of the normative framework and promotion of empirical research which can be susceptible to statistical tests (c) non – acceptance and rejection of the history of ideas (d) focus on micro–study as it was more amenable to empirical treatment (e) glorification of specialisation (f) procurement of data from the behavior of the individual and (g) urge for value – free research.

Infact, the behavioural climate got surcharged by an anti – theory mood and those who lambasted theory in a conventional sense had a field day. Theory was caricatured and made synonymous with idelogy, abstraction, metaphysics and utopia. Some adventurists even advocated farewell to theory as an enterprise.

Later on, when *logical positivism* appeared as a revitalised incarnation of positivism and included in its ranks such heavy–weights as Wittgenstein, not much change could occur in outlook. The only difference was that the positivists wanted to make the area of political theory scientific, while the logical positivists declared it metaphysical, non – rational and therefore, outside the purview of scientific knowledge.

But this mood did not last long as the entire understanding was erroneous. So much so that in the zeal of attaining objective knowledge, they even reduced thought to an aspect of reality and blurred the distinction between thought and reality. Thus, they soon attracted the ire and fire of some philosophers of science who offered a vision for a post – positivist approach to science. Karl Popper set the new mood by laying down the principle of 'falsification' as a criterion of scientific knowledge and argued that all knowledge was conjectural, tentative and far from the final truth.

The real turn or breakthrough came in the philosophy of science when Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos and Mary Hesse blasted the so called scientific theory which was playing havoc with political theory and discredited the positivist model by rejecting the notion of unified science and declared it as an improper understanding of natural scientific practice. The crux or the argument was that science as a form of human activity was impregnated with interpretation, which consisted of meaning, communication and translation.

Kuhn's book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* was a pioneer in bringing out the shortcomings and failures of the positivist theory and it demonstrated how all cognitions were dependent on understanding and interpretation as a means of inter-subjective communication. Kuhn cogently argued that it was not only the irrational conventions which lurked behind the construction of the semantic framework, but were also informed by rational discourses framed by interpretation and criticism.

This new Kuhnian perspective, thus, broke new grounds in the philosophy of science and subjected the positivist account of knowledge and theory to rigorous criticism and scrutiny. But the 'philosophy of the social science' was not to lag behind, and soon new churnings started which brought the problem of understanding under scanner and contested the attempt to perceive the problem within the framework of a unified science.

Peter Winch, Alfred Schutz and Charles Taylor heralded this new perspective, which suggested that understanding in the social science was loaded with problems and two of them deserved special attention : (a) all sciences are a form of interpretative undertaking and hence, it has a theory – laden nature of all understanding (b) the object of the social science is distinctively subjective, which implies an agent who is a self – interpreting social being. Therefore, the problem of social science, according to this perspective, snowballs in to a 'double hermeneutics'.

This new approach brought the problem of understanding, interpretation and the issue of how to look at the symbolic world of the subject into the discussion. This also infused new meaning in the interpretative project of the political theorists by sensitising them to the symbolic world. Hence, what got problematised was not only the understanding of meaning, but also the issue of explaining them. This reminds us of Max Weber, who had long wrestled with this problematic through his categories of 'causal adequacy' and 'adequacy of meaning'.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Distinguish between the empirical and normative conceptions of political theory

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4.4.4   Contemporary Conception

It is a veritable challenge to map out the terrain traversed by the political theorists and the theoretical apparatus deployed by them in contemporary times. The challenge emanates from many sources. Contemporary political theory does not neatly follow the commonly accepted category of classification, viz, historical, normative and empirical and does not stay within a particular tradition, as the earlier theorists did. Sometimes, they appear to be making use of different conceptions in their enterprise and employ them in a manner which was not seen earlier. Contemporary theorisation in political theory has grown in reaction to the limitation of the earlier projects, mostly falling under the two great traditions, namely, Liberalism and Marxism and interrogates them and their category of analysis by selectively borrowing from them. But in the course of building the theoretical edifice, they break new grounds and create new sites for political investigation and also innovate new tools for searching and establishing the principles of politics. Nonetheless, the contemporary project on political theory does not move beyond the terms of trade called political theory as discussed earlier; that is, historical, normative and imperial but the mode of employing them has some hybridness in character.

Contemporary political theory made its appearance on the intellectual scene in the 1980s and 90s, mostly as a reaction against the established traditions in theory and put the categories of Enlightenment like reason and science to which all traditions in political theory were tied, to a scathing and searching criticism they brought in many aspects which were conquered as the foundation of truth by political theory under the scanner and set out to lay down the new principles to understand and imagine the new social and political universe which some of them put as 'post – modern condition'.

It is true that the engagement of contemporary writers with political theory has been critical, but not equally transformative, imaginative or visionary. Although the 'New Social Movements' in contemporary times have been given moral and intellectual support by many of these theorists in the name of transforming society and overcoming the maladies of the new situation.

However, it would be arbitrary to yoke the various theoretical trends visible today under one broad frame of analysis. For example, discussing post – structuralism and post- modernism with communitarianism and multiculturalism together would amount to intellectual atrocity against them and their concerns and commitments. Because their history, their normative concern as well as the theoretical apparatuses and empirical referents have a significant dissimilarity and diversion. But still one can lay out the theoretical terrain on which their engagement with political theory takes place.

The broad thrusts which bring many of the contemporary theorists and theories together could be put under the following:

1) **Opposition to Universalism**

Political theorisation in contemporary times has gone for subjecting the universal claims of political theory of yesteryears, irrespective of the tradition to which they belonged, to critical scrutiny. Liberal universalism has appeared to them as devoid of a social and temporal context and in their opinion, the hidden 'particularism' mostly based on the experience of western society has masqueraded as universal values and norms. They argue that the appeal to universal principles are tantamount to standardisation; hence, violative of justice which may be inherent in a particular community or form of life and which may embody its own values and normative principle. The communitarian theory and the multicultural theory in recent times have highlighted it quite forcefully and called this so called universalist theories as 'exclusivist' at the core, which has always presented one vision of 'good' as the only vision of mankind.

Interestingly, political theory of this variety has not discarded the normative world view, but the objection they have raised is that political theory, earlier, couched its value judgement in 'essentialist' terms and discriminated against relative values. Thus, they sacrificed the truth in social and political life. Therefore, these theories seek to deconstruct the normative category of political theory like justice, freedom and democracy and desist from prioritising judgement on them or privileging one over the other. The post-structuralist and the post–modernist indulge in this exercise.

2) **Critique of Grand Naratives**

The grand naratives of both the liberal and the marxist variety have come under fire on the premise that there is an overarching or transcendental 'foundation' of reality and truth. Some of the contemporary theories have been declared 'anti-foundational', because of the continuous contestation of all well accepted foundations in political theory, viz, state, sovereignty and power. In all fairness to them, they do not reject all foundations, but only transcendental ones.

The post–modernists are in the forefront in attacking the grand narratives and argue that there is nothing like objective pre-given reality or an objective social good which can support such grand narratives and their designs. Their opinion is that this is nothing but 'objectivist illusion'. Here, they look at the discursively constituted reality which opens it for subjective interpretation. We will do well to remember that the post- structuralist and the post–modernist break from the 'structural' argument once so popular in political theory and reject their notion of structure which was synchronic (located in space), universal and timeless and hence, was ahistorical. In its place, they deploy a new concept of structure called 'Discourse' which is diachronic (located in time), historical and relative in nature.

3) **Post – positivism**

It is reminiscent of the earlier engagement with value neutrality in social science once championed by the behaviouralists in political theory. The contemporary theories call valuefree enterprises as useless and believe that political theory is an inherently normative and politically engaged project, which is supposed to offer prescription and a vision for the future.

4) **Empirical and Comparative**

The post-positivist thrust among contemporary theorists do not stop them from advocating the need for empirical and comparative approaches before any generalisation attempt is made. Multiculturalism is one such example, which is sensitive to the context. Infact, this kind of empirical – comparative methodology would be a check on the broad generalisation across cultures and continents.

Inspite of the new insights which come from contemporary political theory, they suffer from many weaknesses. Unlike classical political theory, there is not much comparative – empirical inquiry as yet and the tendency among theorists to borrow from the other theorists is galore. The normative enterprise can be useful only when it is tied to reality. Therefore, the real challenge lies in grounding normative theory to empirical reality of society and politics. This is the only way a valid political theory with just generalisations can emerge, which would also overcome the limitation of the post–modernist perspective and its weaknesses of relativity and diffusion which are not always congenial for political projects. This may fructify what Sheldon Wolin calls 'epic theory'.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss some of the broad thrusts which bring contemporary theorists together.

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

Since we have different conceptions of political theory, they acquire different meanings in different traditions. We have seen why political theory emerges and how it shapes and decides the course of history by facilitating human intervention in politics. What are the different conceptions held by the theorists have also been discussed and their pitfalls highlighted. The contemporary enterprise, which claims to open new vistas in our understanding of social and political reality has been discussed along with its limitations. What emerges clearly from the preceding discussion is that philosophy

and science can not replace each other in the project called political theory, if a vision for the emancipation of mankind is the mission and that even in the absence of anything called objective 'good' or objective 'truth', the practical basis for theory should be attempted. It is not only desirable, but also derivable. Any project in political theory which unifies empirical findings with normative thinking by subjecting them to rigorous criticism can open the gate for creativity in political theory on the basis of which we can navigate into the future.

4.6 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 4.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) See sub-section 4.4.2 and 4.4.3

Check Your Progress 3

1) See sub-section 4.4.4

UNIT 5   POLITICAL ARGUMENTS AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Structure

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit concerns itself with the nature of political arguments and the analysis of concepts. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Discuss the nature of political arguments in the classical and the empirical,

- Examine the decline of positivism and the emergence of interpretive theory as an alternative,

- Comment on the nature of arguments in foundationalist and post-foundationalist theories and finally,

- Discuss the various approaches of conceptual analysis.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The prime objective of this unit is to understand the nature of political arguments and the purpose of conceptual analysis in political theory. We require political arguments and conceptual analysis as building blocks of theorising. About what we argue and how we argue are two crucial considerations that determine the nature of argument. Arguments refer to a set of reasoned propositions for justification of truth-claims. Since we have different traditions of political theory each marked by distinctive substantial and methodological concerns, the nature of political arguments differs across the traditions. As political arguments deal with justification or validation of truth claims, the theory of knowledge of different traditions and its methodology frames the nature of political arguments.

Political arguments and conceptual analysis are dialectically related. We form or create concepts on the basis of arguments on the one hand, and on the other, we base our arguments on concepts. Concepts are the terms or the vocabulary with which political discourse is conducted. It frames our inquiry as well as facilitates the discourse about political inquiry. Political arguments arise in and are carried forward through

concepts. Conceptual analysis, therefore, has two purposes; one, to arrive at as clear a meaning embodied in the concept as possible so as to facilitate unambiguous communication among scholars by 'disciplining talk' or obviating 'loose talk', and second, to examine and lay bare the contest over the meaning of a concept with a view to provide the complexities of political arguments in question and thus, enrich our understanding of politics. There can be a third purpose of conceptual analysis, namely to alert us against the subtle ways in which concepts can put blinders on our perceptions about reality and obfuscate critical perspective or impede alternate visions of political practices. At the most general level, the different traditions can be identified as the **normative** and **empirical** traditions. But within the normative tradition, the justification of truth claims, which is the purpose of argument, is based on different criteria, and therefore, we divide internally this tradition in terms of **foundational** and **post-foundational** theories. Thus, the nature of political arguments, we argue would be different even within a particular tradition; for example, political arguments within the normative tradition would differ between the foundationalist and post-foundationalist theories.

5.2 NATURE OF ARGUMENTS IN THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

From Plato to Marx, there are several philosophers, whose writings have been broadly accepted to constitute what is called as the **Western Classical Tradition**. Political arguments, in this tradition, have generally been of a normative nature due to the fact that the subjects of concern and reflection have been matters such as: what is justice? Are there human rights and if so, what are they? What is the role of the state? Do individuals have definable needs and if so, who has an obligation to satisfy them? Should the government seek the greatest happiness of the greatest number and, if it should, what is the place of the minorities within this rubric? What gives government legitimacy and a state sovereignty? What sorts of claims on resources does the recognition of merit or desert embody? How far is the majority justified in imposing its moral outlook on the rest of society? Can we give an adequate account of the social and political institutions? What is the best form of government?

By and large, the classical tradition has been concerned with the nature of good life, with the institutional arrangements that would be necessary for human beings to flourish, for their needs to be met or their rational capacities realised. At the same time, there has been a preoccupation with what is **politically right**-with the nature of law, justice, the best form of government, the rights and duties of the individuals, and with the distributive organisation of society. Political theories were about the right and the good and so were, the political arguments. Seen in this way, the subject matter of political philosophy was very much a part and parcel of moral philosophy. Political arguments assumed the form of moral reasoning with a clear purpose of settling moral issues or claims of moral and political truth on a rational basis.

Political arguments purported to convey some truths about the fundamental nature of politics, to make claims which could be regarded as objective and inter–subjectively valid. This truth and objectivity was based upon different assumptions: sometimes about reason, sometimes about empirical experience, sometimes about intuition, and occasionally, revelation. At the same time, some epistemological authority was also invoked such as reason or experience so that ultimately claims about fundamental human needs, goals, purposes, relationships and the forms of rule appropriate to these which entered in the political philosophy were supposed to be true. For example, Plato, Hobbes, Hegel and Mill, worked out, at least in part, the cognitive basis on which the claims in political philosophy were advanced.

Political arguments in this tradition, thus, proceeded from certain self-evident truth, axioms, or assumptions about the nature of truth or knowledge, towards conclusions about political truths or claim to truths. Since the philosophers themselves set up the standards of cognitive truth, the validity of their political arguments could only be judged internally. Appeal to some theory or independent criterion was out of question. If you accepted the premise of the philosophy or the theory, there was no way to escape from the validity of the conclusion. It would, however, be a different matter if the disputes were over the premises –if its cognitive claims were challengeable.

Indeed, the history of the classical tradition shows that there were major differences in the conclusions reached by political philosophers, on account of the fact that their premises or epistemology were different. Such being the case, a point emerged with regard to the significance of such philosophies. It began to be asked what is the relevance of all such rival theories of politics, each of which claimed to embody the truth about political morality, when there was no criterion to decide the adequacy of the cognitive basis of these political and moral theories. Positivists were in the forefront to pose such a question.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Bring out the nature of political arguments in the western classical tradition

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5.3 POSITIVIST CRITIQUE OF NORMATIVE THEORY

Positivism, especially logical positivism that was influenced by linguistic philosophy, rejected much of the normative political theory as irredeemably subjective, lacking in cognitive basis and even meaningless or outright nonsense.

Wittgenstein, who inspired logical positivist theories, had advanced three theses, which are of interest to us here, in explicating the case against normative theory. The first was that logic and mathematics consist of tautologies; second, that language has truth-functional structure and that its basic elements are names, and third, no ethical or moral statements can convey definite cognitive information.

Elaborating the first, he said that the basic structure of mathematics could be derived from logic and in that sense, the truths of mathematics are conventional rather than revealing 'facts' about numbers and their relationships. That is to say, given certain definitions of the basic terms, and a particular understanding of the rules of inference, the whole structure of mathematical truth could be generated. But these forms of

truth depend upon their definitions of basic terms and the rules of inference. In a sense, they are true by definition. It may appear that we make new discoveries in mathematics, but this is only because the remote consequences of definition are difficult to foresee and have to be teased out with great complication and elaboration.

The second thesis is that language has a structure that can be laid bare by logical analysis. This analysis will reveal language as being truth-functional. That is to say that, complex propositions in language, which we use to convey information, can be shown to be analysable into component propositions. Obviously, this process has to stop and we are left with the basic building blocks of language, that he calls 'Elementary Propositions'. These elementary propositions consist of names. Names are important, because they give meaning to elementary propositions for (a) they give meaning directly rather than being mediated by other propositions, and (b) they relate directly to the world.

Consequently, if meaningful uses of language have to turn upon the fact that names refer directly to objects, then this has clear consequences for moral and political thinking. If the propositions contained in the normative political writings are not susceptible to this analysis, then they are not meaningful. Objects are either material objects or direct sense experiences. Political language, thus, gets in deep trouble, for in what sense terms like good, justice, right could be analysed so as to refer to objects?

The final thesis draws this above conclusion. Moral and evaluative languages generally do not admit of this truth-functional analysis and moral 'objects' cannot be spoken about in a cognitively meaningful manner. Thus, there can be no theory of values. Only those propositions describing basic experiences of material objects could be meaningful. It followed from this that, a proposition to be valid must be verifiable empirically, for which the proposition must refer to direct sense experience or the nature of that experience could, in principle, be specified if directly available sense experience was not involved.

It may be argued that some political theories of the classical tradition were based upon factual premises, such as those of Hobbes, Aristotle and Mill. Their theories were based on facts of human nature .To the extent the factual premises were empirical, they could in principle be verified and then be meaningful. Positivists would accept these premises as meaningful, but would rather concentrate on the nature of the support which these empirical propositions are supposed to give to normative and evaluative conclusions. And in this context, they invoked Hume who had argued that factual premises in an argument cannot yield normative, moral or evaluative conclusions to dismiss such theories. Hume's argument is usually known as the principle that 'ought' cannot be derived from an 'is'.

5.4 NATURE OF ARGUMENTS IN THE EMPIRICAL TRADITION

While positivism dismissed normative political theory, it encouraged a scientific study of political phenomena based upon the methodology of natural sciences. Within this tradition, the nature of political argument underwent a significant change, for now both the subject matter as well as the methodology on which it could justify its arguments were different from those in the normative theory.

As regards the subject matter of the arguments, political arguments could only be about empirical political behaviour and logical analysis of political concepts. With regard to the study of politics, the arguments required that the propositions be defined in terms of some empirical sense content. This, in turn, required that arguments be

based on the behavioral approach to the study of political attitudes as well as an individualistic reductionist approach to social and political phenomena. The latter, implied some kind of methodological individualism so that the concepts relating to social wholes such as the state, the community, the polity could be rendered into some set of statements that refer only to the empirically detectable behaviour of individuals. In effect, political arguments were sanitised of metaphysical suppositions and rendered wholly value-neutral, which could be tested and verified as these arguments were about empirical phenomena.

Political arguments, in this tradition, rejected a priori reasoning about human beings and society, and were based on factual and statistical enquires. It was grounded in the theory of knowledge that took experience as the only valid basis of knowledge. Within such a framework, the purpose of political arguments was to explain the observable phenomena and the validity of the arguments would be judged on the criteria of internal consistency, consistency with respect to the other arguments that seek to explain related phenomena and the capacity to generate empirical predictions that can be tested against observation. The truth claim of the arguments could be vindicated, if it either met the verification principle or Popper's falsification principle. Behaviouralists among the positivists followed the falsification principle. If the argument could not be falsified, then it was merely tautological; that is true by definition only, and hence meaningless. Arguments to be valid must be capable of being falsified, only then can they be said to be based on the scientific method.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   How is the nature of political argument in recent normative theories different from that in the classical tradition?

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5.5 DECLINE OF POSITIVISM AND INTERPRETIVE THEORY AS AN ALTERNATIVE

If all meaningful statements are, on the principle of verifiability, either tautologies or empirically verifiable, what of the formulation of the verification principle itself? Positivism had no satisfactory answer to this and it appeared that the very criterion for judging between sense and non-sense in statements began to appear non-sensical itself. As positivism lost at this basic epistemological level, a great deal of power, a much more permissive approach to meaning and sense emerged.

Interpretive theory, or **Hermeneutics**, emerged in political inquiry as an alternative to positivist political science. Interpretive theorists point out several problems with the positivist method. They criticise the empiricist approach for assuming a disjuncture between political life and language of that political life. In other words, they criticise empiricism for its assumption that there is a political reality that exists and that in principle can be discovered independently of the language of that polity and for, downplaying internal connection between social/political life on the one hand, and the language that is embedded in it, on the other. Interpretive theorists maintain that our political practices are expressed and constituted by the language that is lodged in them (i.e. in political practices), and that the language lodged in them gets its sense from the form of political practices in which it grows. Charles Taylor says that our political practices cannot be identified in abstraction from the language we use to describe them, invoke them or carry them out. The vocabulary of the social dimension of the situation is grounded in the shape of the social practices in this dimension; that is to say that, vocabulary would not make sense if the range of practices did not exist. And yet, this range of practices would not exist without the prevalence of this or some related vocabulary. The language is, thus, constitutive of reality, is essential to its being the kind of reality it is.

When language is constitutive of reality, then the explanation of political life must go beyond empirically observable behaviour and subjective attitudes. Explanation must go deeper to uncover the meanings and practices of language and political life and form the social matrix against which subjective intentions are formed. These more basic inter–subjective and common meanings and practices require a deep hermeneutics that goes beyond the evidence (data) required of empirical inquiry. Hence, empirical social science is insufficient for explaining the most fundamental aspects of political and social life. Explanation in terms of subjective attitudes and empirical indicators of behaviour are too thin to identify and account for the most profound meaning and sense of political life.

To make manifest the meaning of social/political practices informed by language, we require interpretation, because they are often inchoate, tacit and imperfectly articulated. But then any such interpretation in contestable and because, to support a particular interpretation is to endorse one set of political alternatives, while undermining others. Interpretive theory, therefore, cannot be value-neutral. Gadamer in his *Truth and Method,* suggests that one appropriate model to understand the meaning of social/political practices is the model of interpreting a text: a model in which we are not interested in search for causes or framing of laws, but understanding a whole in terms of its parts , and its parts, in terms of the contributions they make to the meaning of the whole. Interpretive theory has cast a very strong influence in recent years on the normative theories of communitarians, feminists, and post-modernists.

5.6 NORMATIVE TURN IN POLITICAL THEORY

The 1970's saw a normative turn in political theory at the hands of Rawls, Nozick, Walzer, Dworkin, Grewith and others. Perhaps, one of the most basic reasons for the change of fortune has been the decline of positivism as a potent force in philosophy. This decline in a large measure was due to the infirmity of the verification principle itself, which we noted above. Along with this, a conducive climate for revival of normative political theory was created by the deep moral crisis that the western civilisation was facing. A view had, therefore, gained ground that a society needs some kind of a moral foundation, a set of beliefs which either do or might hold it together, the idea here being that practical reason is rootless and arbitrary, if it is not based on a set of agreed values which are taken as authoritative for that society.

But if values are subjective, a matter of preference, as positivists will maintain, then how do we agree on values? Normative political theory, on the other hand, maintains

that this agreement is possible, if some general set of principles could be found which could then provide a basis for accommodation between subjective standpoints and / or adjucation between different values. The crucial question then is, how do we get that set of general principles? There are two answers or ways for this.

5.7 NATURE OF ARGUMENTS IN FOUNDATIONALIST AND POST-FOUNDATIONALIST THEORIES

The first answer is that we work out a set of values or standards of morality which is universal, transcultural and inter–subjectively valid. These standards of morality can be called the foundations, which are uncontaminated by specific cultures, circumstances and particular histories. Meta-narratives involving such entities as *Noumenal Self* (Kant), *Absolute Spirit* (Hegel), *Proletariat* (Marx), *Ideas Or Forms* (Plato) can provide one such foundation for judgement and justification on a rational basis. Other such universalistic foundational set of moral principles could be (i) utilitarianism, (ii) Kantian deontology and (iii) some conceptions of human nature and human rights. Apart from utilitarianism, most of these foundational theories are based on a priori , abstract reasoning. In more recent times, the attempt to produce universal rational morality has proceeded either by emphasising procedural devices, such as Rawls' *veil of ignorance*, or by trading on the idea of *minimum ethical commitment* , as in Rawls' idea of primary goods which any person is thought to want , or as in Grewith's idea of *minimum condition of agency*. Political arguments of the foundationalists are, thus, based on logos that give a general, but essentialised account of the nature of human beings, society and self, and whose criteria of rationality and objectivity are derived from such logos, which are construed to be universally applicable and valid.

The second answer is provided by the post–foundationalists, such as communitarians. There are several post-foundationalist theories, but we take here only the communitarians for explication of the nature of political argument involved. They argue that we do not require a universalistic, philosophical moral foundation, and that the set of principles required for adjucation between competing values is implicit in a particular community. The implicit has to be made explicit and clear. Political goods are not determined by abstract reasoning, nor can they be freely chosen by free atomised moral agents. These arise out of, and are implicit in the ways of life of particular communities. Communitarian arguments got support from the interpretive linguistic philosophy, for instance from the later writings of Wittgenstein in *Philosophical Investigation* and *The Blue Book*, which views the search for some external rational foundation for practical reasoning as misconceived, because even if they could be found, they would, infact, be inert in relation to practical dilemma. We do not need a theoretical foundation for a way of life. Practical reason is not about *sophia* (wisdom), justified claims of objective knowledge, but rather about *phronsesis* (judgement); the capacity of practical deliberative judgement in a particular situation. Since the nature of political argument is dependent upon the methodology within which it is made, let us briefly look at Rawls' methodology of *reflective equilibrium* for political theorising as an instance to explicate political argument in post-foundationalist political theory. A clarification is in order. Rawls has generally been labeled as a foundationalist for some of his assumptions as Michael Sandel's critique of Rawls' theory of justice brings this out , but by and large, his (Rawls') methodology of reflective equilibrium is accepted as post-foundationalist in nature.

The method of reflective equilibrium demands that we evaluate a given moral or political view by testing it against our 'considered judgements at all levels of generality'. That is, we consider the general coherence of the abstract principles comprising the theory in terms of its internal relations and general surface plausibility (given the arguments supporting them); we, then, examine the particular judgements that such

principles imply about specific cases in the world; and we consider the entire package for its' overall acceptability, considering its abstract plausibility, internal coherence, and 'intuitive adequacy' in particular cases.

Reflective equilibrium is a coherent account of the validity of normative claims. It is different from *foundationalism* in that it does not demand that we proceed from indubitable first principles and derive conclusions via a deductive argument from them alone. This means that normative claims are always subject to review in the light of new understandings, either of the moral principles themselves or aspects of the world to which these principles are meant to apply. Interpretation, thus, has a role to play in political theorising and that indicates that political judgements are seldom a hard and fast affair, but rather always open to reconsideration in the light of new insights or information.

Political arguments in post-foundational theories, thus, do not abandon general thinking or arguing about social truth. But the argument is always from a socially situated point of view, based on the belief that our social interest and social values shape our ideas and that our social understanding is also a part of the shaping of social life. There is a multi-leveled argumentation involved that moves between analytic reasoning, empirical data, normative clarification and interpretation. Political arguments are generally complex and draw from across disciplinary boundaries, particularly Wittgenstein's language game. The objectivity and rationality that political arguments invoke for justification are contextual, as there is no contextual free standpoint from which social practices can be judged. Thus, the criteria for truth, right and wrong in a political argument are all internal to the language game and the context.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

      ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Examine Hermerneutics as an alternative to the emprical-bahavioural tradition

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2)   What are the differences between the nature of arguments in foundational and post-foundational theories?

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5.8 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

About what we argue and how we argue have a bearing on why and how we do conceptual analysis. Concepts are crucial in two senses for scholarly endeavour: as means and as ends. As means, concepts are necessary for understanding; they are conditions for the possibility of knowledge. In this sense, science is inter–subjectively controlled understanding made possible through concepts. Concepts are also crucial for explanation and, therefore, how concepts are formed also becomes important. Hence, concepts are not only a means for understanding, but also a matter of understanding as an end.

There are three versions of conceptual analysis. The first version has the purpose to find as unambiguous a core meaning as possible; one which allows the best possible scientific statements, hypothesis formation and reproducible empirical analysis. The second version looks at how concepts are embedded in particular social theories; here, concept formation runs parallel to theory formation; more generally–theories understood as a framework for analysis. The first version looks at the conceptual history, which can lead to a better understanding of history , including the present.

The discussion on these versions can be subsumed under two approaches to conceptual analysis, the positivist approach and the interpretive approach.

5.8.1 Positivist Approach

As noted earlier, philosophers who followed the influential movement called logical positivism saw only two meaningful types of inquiry: empirical investigations into matters of fact, and conceptual discussions of the meanings and uses of terms. Since philosophy was not an empirical, fact-finding discipline, it was assigned the role of conceptual analysis.

The purpose of conceptual analysis was similar to what philosophers of science did with regard to the logical analysis of scientific concepts; namely, to clarify their meaning and help them give a wholly empirical, non-metaphysical and operational meaning.

In this sense, political philosophy was an adjunct of political science, clarifying the concepts used and arguments to attempt to evacuate them of anything other than descriptive and empirical meaning, so that the terms of political discourse could be used in ways that were neutral between ideological and moral perspectives. The hope was that in the same way as scientific theories could be advanced and scientific phenomena described and identified irrespective of the moral and other commitment of scientists, so too political science could go forward in a value-free manner, once the basic concepts of that science had been clarified and given a reductive empirical definition, and that political argument could proceed with clear concepts and agreed definitions. The quest was important, for unless it could succeed, it could not hope to have a science of politics and unless there was a science of politics, one could not, hope to bring reason to political and moral debates. The goal was to reconstruct the language of political inquiry to make it a suitable medium for a science of politics.

However, political theorists outside the influence of positivism, find no merit in conceptual analysis whose purpose it is to create morally neutral concepts that will fill the same kind of descriptive operational role in political science as scientific concepts play in natural sciences. Apart from the merit of the case, they also think it to be undesirable.

5.8.2 Interpretive Approach

The purpose of conceptual analysis is not to reveal the necessary and sufficient condition (definition) of the concept or lay bare its internal structure, but to creatively

produce new ways of understanding them. Concepts are not freestanding entities and have to be understood in the larger context in which they are situated, the way a literary text is interpreted. Concepts become meaningful by the way they are used and this makes conceptual analysis a complicated, never-ending and contestable affair.

Connolly has argued that political concepts such as freedom, power, are 'essentially' contestable. They are contestable because the criteria of the concept and the point of its application are matters of contest. Criteria, here, refer to the conditions that should be met before an event or act can be said to fall within the ambit of the given concept. The point of application refers to the purpose of the concept and along with the purpose, are commitments attached to it. That concepts are 'essentially' contestable means that the 'universal' criteria of reason, do not suffice to settle these contests definitively.

The methodological postulates and norms of the positivist mainstream social science such as the distinctions between operational and non-operational vocabulary, analytic and synthetic statements, descriptive and normative concepts, empirical and conceptual argument are of doubtful validity. Connolly points out that recent works in linguistic philosophy have shown that these norms of research are in need of revision. Interpreting these norms in new light, which leads to, for instance, abandoning analytic-synthetic distinctions and fact-value dichotomy, Connolly maintains, helps us to understand more clearly why the central concepts of politics are so often a subject of controversy.

Moreover, he points out that neutral, descriptive and operationally definable concepts limit the understanding of politics. It not only flattens out the embodied meaning, but also obstructs efforts to explore alternative, radical perspectives on politics. The effort to have neutral operational concepts is born of a wish to escape politics. It emerges either as a desire to rationalise public life, placing a set of ambiguities and contestable orientation under the control of a settled system of understandings and priorities, or as a quest to moralise public life thoroughly, bringing all citizens under the control of a consensus which makes politics marginal and unimportant. To adopt without revision the concepts prevailing in the polity is, thus, to accept terms of discourse loaded in favor of established practices.

In the light of the above, the significance of the concept of contestedness is that it renders political discourse more self-reflective by bringing out contestable moral and political perspectives lodged in the language of politics and thus, opens the way for political change.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by conceptual analysis? Bring out the difference(s) between the positivist and the interpretive accounts of conceptual analysis

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5.9 LET US SUM UP

Since we have different traditions of political theory each marked by distinctive substantial and methodological concerns, the nature of political arguments differs across the traditions. As political arguments deal with justification or validation of truth claims, the theory of knowledge of different traditions and the methodology of relevant epistemology frames the nature of political arguments. Political arguments and conceptual analysis are dialectically related. Concepts are the terms or the vocabulary with which political discourse is conducted. Political arguments arise in and are carried forward through concepts. Normative political theories were about the right and the good and so were the political arguments. Political arguments assumed the form of moral reasoning with a clear purpose of settling moral issues or claims of moral and political truth on a rational basis. Political arguments in this tradition proceeded from certain self-evident truths, axioms, or assumptions about the nature of truth or knowledge, toward conclusions about political truths or claim to truths. The positivists critiqued normative theory. If the propositions contained in the normative political writings are not susceptible to empirical verification or falsification, then they are not meaningful. While positivism dismissed normative political theory, it encouraged a scientific study of political phenomena based upon the methodology of natural sciences. As regards the subject matter of the arguments, political arguments could only be about empirical political behaviour and logical analysis of political concepts. This, in turn, required that arguments be based on behavioral approach to the study of political attitudes as well as an individualistic reductionist approach to social and political phenomena. Interpretive theory, or Hermeneutics, emerged in political inquiry as an alternative to positivist political science. It criticised the empiricist approach for assuming a disjuncture between political life and the language of that political life. Explanation must go deeper to uncover the meanings and practices of language and political life that form the social matrix against which subjective intentions are formed. Hence , empirical social science is insufficient for explaining the most fundamental aspects of political and social life. Explanations in terms of subjective attitudes and empirical indicators of behaviour are too thin to identify and account for the most profound meaning and sense of political life.

Due to the influence of hermeneutics and the moral crisis experienced by western civilisation, political theory took a normative turn. However, the nature of political arguments differed within the normative theorisation on account of the differences with regard to the methodology and the epistemology between the foundationalists and the post- foundationalists. Lastly, we looked at conceptual analysis following two approaches. For positivists, conceptual analysis meant to produce neutral operational concepts. Interpretive theorists disapprove of such attempts. They highlight the 'essentially' contestable nature of political concepts and argue further that neutral concepts favor established practices and impede critical thinking on politics. The concept of contested-ness renders political discourse more self- reflective by bringing out contestable moral and political perspectives lodged in the language of politics.

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5.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 5.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Section 5.3 and 5.4

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Section 5.5 and 5.6

2) See Section 5.7

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Section 5.8

UNIT 6   INDIAN POLITICAL TRADITIONS

6.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the evolution of political thought in early India. After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- explain the nature of Indian political thought;

- explain the meaning and significance of the concepts of Dharma and Danda as basic concepts of Indian political tradition;

- understand the contributions of Buddhism to Indian political tradition; and

- appreciate the Islamic contribution to Indian political thought.

6.1   INTRODUCTION

The beginning of the systematic study of ancient Indian political thought can be traced back to the nationalist movement. Most of the important works on Indian

political thought were written during this period in response to the criticism that ancient India made no contribution to political thought and political science was not a separate and distinct science in India. The widely held belief among the scholars was that the Hindu science of political was, infact, a part of Hindu Philosophy or Hindu religion. This opinion, though incorrect, seems to have been created on the account of the different names given to the concepts like 'politics', 'political science', and 'state'. Many scholars face this problem as they make an attempt to study the development of political thought within the framework of analysis provided by the West. Given an entirely different historical setting and socio-cultural contexts of India, it is a futile attempt to discover in it the same concepts and categories, which are the characteristics of European thought. We must understand that social and political thought is intimately related to social and political milieu in which it originates.

A study of ancient Indian political ideas must, therefore, be undertaken keeping in mind ancient Indians' view of life, the system of social organisation that prevailed and the characteristics of Indian monarchy etc.

6.2 NATURE OF EARLY INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

6.2.1 Introduction

Till recently, many scholars were of the opinion that India did not contribute anything to the evolution of political thought. It was believed that political thought in ancient India, if there was any, was at best a part of Hindu philosophy or Hindu religion. In other words, it was thought that the Hindu science of polity did not have a separate identity. But if we look at the notion of political in various available sources, it is clear that ancient Indian thinkers did have a notion of political distinct from either philosophy or religion. This erroneous conclusion that some scholars came to was because of the fact tht they have fixed notions of politics and political science derived mainly from the West. If we can define 'politics' as the "affairs of a territorially organised community held together by allegiance to a common authority", one can hardly agree with those who believed that there was no systematic development of political thought in ancient India.

6.2.2 Problem of Nomenclature

The confusion arises because of the large number of parallel terms used in ancient India for politics. There were several names, they were: *Rajadharma*, which means duties of the ruler, *Kshatravidya,* the knowledge that the ruler should have, *Rajyasastra* meaning staecraft or the science of state, *Dandaniti,* the ethics of awarding punishment, *Nitisastra*, science of ethics regulating the lives of both the ruler and the ruled and *Arthasastra*, the art of acquisition and maintenance of land.

6.2.3 Concept of Matsyanyaya

In ancient India, we have a term equivalent to the western concept of the state of nature. It is called *Matsyanyaya,* the state of big fish devouring the small. In ancient Indian political thought, we come across the term *Matsyanyaya* which explains the state of affairs in the absence of force or danda. Force is held to be the ultimate sanction behind the state. At the same time, it is emphasised that force cannot be used arbitrarily and various checks have been introduced to see that the person who is entrusted with authority to rule cannot use force at his will.

6.2.4 Dharma and Danda

For Bhikhu Parekh, Hindu political thinkers conceptualised political life in terms of two central concepts namely, dharma and danda. Both are dependent on each other.

The term danda means discipline, force, restraint, constraint or punishment. Dharma is that which holds society together. It is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dhr' meaning to hold. Society could be held togather when each individual and groups does his or its specific duties. This was sought to be achieved by following the varnashrama dharma. *Varnadharma* or adhering to one's duties as member of a group to which one belongs, i.e., caste in Indian context. It was, therefore, the duty of the king to maintain varnadharma. Varnasamkara i.e. mixture of different varnas, is to be avoided at any cost. There is a vivid description of what happens if members belonging to different varnas do not adhere to their respective varnas as given in dharmashastras, *Arthashastra* and *Mahabharata*.

The dharmashastra writers concentrated on exploring the dharma of individuals and social groups, including the government. They, however, did not attempt to provide *political dharma* as a distinct and autonomous subject of investigation. What they did was to provide a code of conduct covering the entire human life. Politics was incidental to this main concern.

In contrast to the approach of the dharmasastras, the authors of arthasastras were interested in the organisation and mechanaics of danda. The Arthasastra of Kautilya gives us a detailed account of the nature and organsation of government, the nature and method of exercising coercieve power, how power could be acquired, strategies and mechanics of retaining power, the possible threat to the varnas, prakritis or the elements of state and the best way to deal with them. The works of the authors of arthasastra were specifically political.

The two approaches of dharmasastras and arthasastra differed mainly in their subject matter. One choosing to explore political life from the stand point of dharma, the other from that of danda. The dharmasastras were legalistic and a religious in orientation, whereas the arthasastras concentrated on institutions and politics and were secular in orientation. Neither approach was complete by itself, nor this is fully appreciated by its followers. The two together constitute the Hindu traditions of political thought.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the various nomenclatures used for the term 'politics' in early India?

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2) Describe briefly the concept of Matsyanyaya.

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3) Explain the concepts of Dharma and Danda.

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6.3 INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT: SOURCES

As has already been pointed out, politics in India was not considered an independent and autonomous discipline. One has to dig out the conceptions of politics from the host of sources, which deal about the larger questions of human life, mainly religious and philosophical in nature. There is no one text which deals mainly with politics. The important sources for the studies of politics are:

- Vedic literature

- Dharmasutras and Smritis

- Epics and Puranas

- Arthasastras

- Buddhist and Jain literature

- Coins and Inscriptions

- Greek and Chineese accounts

- Other literature sources and Epigraphy

6.3.1 Drawbacks and Limitations

Most of the above mentioned sources being religious in nature, it is very difficult to isolate facts of politics from it. Dharmasutras give an idealised picture of society and politics which hardly reflect the reality. Most of the scholars who have Indian political thought have taken the authority of these sources for granted although its time, place and authenticity are riddled with uncertainties.

Yet another difficulty is that most of the works on Indian political traditions were written during the nationalist movement with a purpose to counter the imperialist ideology of the Western scholars. The imperialist ideology was developed by some Western scholars who made an attempt to study the ancient Indian history. Their understanding of Indian history was based to assumptions. They are:

a) The main intellectual preoccupation of ancient Indians was philosophy and it lacked in political or material speculations.

b) The Indians never knew the feeling of nationality.

The practical implications of these conclusions were dangerous to the demand of self-rule in India. They implied that the Indians were incapable of maintaining their material world and therefore, the British should manage it for them. The second implication was that since Indians had no sense of nationhood, it was in keeping with their traditions that they should be subjected to autocratic rule.

Indian nationalist historians churned out a host of literature to counter the imperialist ideology. Bhagavan lal Inderjit, Bhandarkar, R.L. Mitra, B.G. Tilak and Later K.P. Jayaswal, R.K. Majumdar, B.K. Sarkar came out with their own interpretation of Indian history to prove the falsification of imperialist ideology. They strongly argued that what was prevalent in ancient India was not autocratic rule, but limited monarchy. K.P. Jayaswal in his *Hindu Polity* argued that the ancient Indian polity was partly like the republics of ancient Greece and party like the constitutional monarchies such as that of Great Britain. He concluded: "The constitutional progress made by the Hindus as probably not been equaled, much less surpassed by any policy of antiquity".

While appreciating the contributions of nationalist scholars to inculcate a feeling of self-confidence among the people during the nationalist movement, one must properly understand the limitations of this approach. R. S. Sharma, an eminent historian, has pointed out four important limitations of this nationalist and revivalist approach to the study of Indian political thought. They are:

First, by a fulsome adoration of ancient Hindu institutions, it tended to alienate the Muslims.

Second, the approach gives a false sense of past values. It glossed over the fact that, whether it was monarchy or republic, the two upper varnas dominated the two lower varnas who were generally excluded from all political offices.

Third, many Indians fought shy of the religious aspects of ancient Indian polity and, as if to cover a sense of guilt, took too much pains to prove the secular character of the ancient Indian state. They little realised that even in the Western world, theocracy existed till the first half of the 18th century.

Fourth, in its zeal to prove itself a superior civilisation, it hardly showed any interest in studying the ancient institutions in the light of the evolution of primitive tribes as known from anthropology

One has to keep in mind the above mentioned limitations in studying the early Indian political thought.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Mention briefly the important sources for the study of Indian political thought.

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2)   What are the drawbacks and limitations of the sources?

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6.4   CHARACTERISTICS OF INDIAN POLITICAL THOUGHT

6.4.1   Political Life conceived within the framework of Dharma

One cannot find in ancient India any classes exclusively dealing with political and social life, which is comparable to the 'Republic' and the 'Politics' of Plato and Aristotle. A supernatural element is present in all the writings. The divine is ominipotent and is visible in the formation of society and government; the divine purpose is to be enforced by the king, divine punishment reinforces earthly punishment and sometimes supplants it. This is what we find in almost all the texts that deal with the life of the people. But one should not be led to believe the reality. There was a wide gap between the 'sastras', traditions and the actual lives of human beings. The brahminical religion, which is commonly taken as the Hindu religion, was not all-pervasive. There were non-Brahminical traditions, which were materialistic in nature and which played an important role in guiding the activities of ordinary people. Buddhist contribution is significant in this respect. We will discuss about this later.

6.4.2   Influence of Ethics

The social thought in ancient India not only assures certain fundamental principle of morality, but it always seeks to direct the material life as well. The king must consciously stimulate virtue and act as a guide to the moral life, morality as stipulated in the dharmasastras. The state figures considerably in the communal life and the theory of life proceeds to resolve itself into a theory of morality. In short, political science becomes the ethics of the whole society, a science of the duty of man found in the complex set of relations in society.

But when it comes to international relations, one can see the ethical meanings coming to terms with the hard reality. Dealing about diplomacy, Kautilya for example, becomes realistic in a manner similar to Machiavelli. One may notice a sudden fall from ethical heights to the rankest realism in the same writer.

6.4.3   The Influence of Caste based Social Structure on Politics

Caste occupied a prominent place in all social speculation during the later Vedic period and had a direct bearing on the theory of government. Varnashramadharama in the society was fixed on the basis of caste. Each varna was assigned specific functions. It was the foremost duty of the king to see that every individual confined himself to performing functions of the varna to which he was born. Caste was an ascribed status. The individual was not to seek his own interest or expression; he was not to determine his own ambition or ends. Varnashramadharma exalted the society at the cost of human values. Much that was personal gave way to collective elements. Not all castes or varnas were equally privileged in their enjoyment of rights and duties assigned to them. The super varnas – Brahmanas and Kshatriyas – were the

ruling class. The duty of an individual was social. Since the varnas were related to each other in such a fashion that together they constituted the social order, if an individual transgressed his duty, he not only violated the order, he, infact, became anti-social. It was in this way that the Hindu theory would overcome the anti-thesis of man vs state or society.

6.4.4 Government as a Partnership of the Upper Varnas

In ancient India, the Kshatriyas, Brahmanas and later the Vaisyas together formed the ruling class. The Shudras were the serving class. 'Kshatra' – the temporal power derived its strength and authority from 'Brahma' - the spiritual power. The Vaisya engaged in such occupations as agriculture and trade provided the economic basis of the state. The priest held the highest status. He was identified with the God 'Brihaspathy' instead of the temporal power 'India'. His function was to interpret dharma and preside over the rituals.

Coronation by the priest was a necessary pre-requisite to the exercise of royal power. Symbolically, it meant that the Kshatriya derived his power from the Brahman.

The priest was the chief adviser to the king. Interestingly, unlike in Europe, priesthood in India did not contend for temporal power, a phenomenon that raged in Europe for a considerably long period. The influence exercised by the priestly class was of a peculiar kind. They had the monopoly of education and were the sole interpreters of dharma. No one, not even the king could go beyond their prescription. With its intellectual leadership of the community and religious control, there was no need for the priestly class to organise itself into a church or any such spiritual organisation.

6.4.5 No Clear Distinction between State and Society

The governmental organisation and politics were looked at as a part of the larger whole called society. In other words, society was at once religious, political, economical and military. It was generally viewed in a comprehensive manner. The habit of looking at society from a political angle was not cultivated. As a result, there was no clear conception of either the state or the government. Both were interchangeable terms.

6.4.6 Monarchy was the normal form of Government

Since the four fold division of society entrusted the ruling power with the Kshatriya caste, monarchy was the natural outcome. There were also non-monarchical forms of government. Kautilya's Arthasastra for example, mentions 'dvairajya' (rule by two kings) 'vyrajya' (state without a king) etc., There were also 'ganasanghas' which according to K. P. Jayaswal are comparable to modern republics. But still monarchy was the normal form of government. Though there were non-monarchical forms, they were more of an exception rather than a rule.

6.4.7 The Government was not Sovereign

From its very nature of existence, the government in ancient India could not be regarded as sovereign in the Austinian sense of the term. It did not impart validity to the orders: rather, it shared in its validity. On the contrary, the government had no independent existence of its own. The sustenance of the social order was merely its function. Sovereignty was, infact, ultimately sourced in the divine will. On the part of the individual, there was no unified allegiance, no single loyalty except to society as a whole. Only the pluralistic theory of sovereignty can grasp the Indian phenomenon.

6.4.8 Other Distinguishing Features

Apart from the above mentioned characteristics, Professor Bhikhu Parekh mentions some other distinguishing features of the Hindu political traditions. They are :

First, the Hindu tradition is basically in-egalitarian. Although it developed the idea of the moral equality of all men, it never developed the social, legal and political groups.

Second, the Hindu tradition of political thought is pluralistic in orientation. The Hindu political writers from the very beginning recognised the autonomy of social groups.

Third, political thought in early India was largely uncritical and apologetic of the established social order. Most Hindu writes justified the caste system as the caste based conception of dharma, the largely fatalist concept of karma, the degradation of the Shudras and the slaves, the extensive moral interference of the state and so on. It ignored the whole are a of social conflict.

Fourth, many Hindu writers wrote mainly for the attention of the rulers. Their works are largely manuals of ethics or administration, hence, it is largely didactic and practical.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   List the important characteristics of Indian political thought.

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2)   What according to Professor Bhikhu Parekh are the distinguishing features of Hindu political thought?

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6.5   BUDDHISTS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO INDIAN POLITICAL TRADITIONS

6.5.1   Origin of Kingship

In contrast to Brahminical literature, we have a different version of the origin of kingship in Buddhist literature. The divine origin theory is not accepted. We have innumerable instances in the *Jatakas* of elections for the royal office. Some Jatakas

contain description of the king – elect being chosen by the purohita or the elders according to his qualities or his *Mahajana-Sammata*, meaning one who is accepted by all. Generally Kshatriyas of good family were chosen, but caste was not a bar to this election to royal office. In atleast two Jatakas, we find Brahmans elected to the royal office. In another Jataka, we find a low caste man being chosen as a king. If he proved tyrannical, the remedy was naturally a popular revolt of which we have innumerable examples. These revolts were justified on the grounds that

1) the king-ship arose out of a contract between the subjects and the one chosen by them.

2) the sovereign rights of the king were limited to the protection of subjects and punishment of wrong-doers and he was bound by the law.

The people, according to Jataka evidence, maintained their rights and privileges for a long time. They derived their importance partly from their numbers and partly from their organisations.

6.5.2   Democratic Nature of the Buddhist Sangha

Prof. Rhys Davids is of the opinion that the Buddhist Sangha was founded upon democratic principles. According to him, the Buddhist Sangha "was a kind of republic in which all proceedings were settled by resolutions agreed upon in regular meetings of its members which were held subject to the observance of certain established regulations and the use of certain form of words. These forms and resolutions passed were called as Kamma Vacas".

The democratic nature of the Buddhist order is further illustrated by the fact that in addition to the rules and resolutions, we further learn from the *Mahavagga* and the *Culavagga*, that

1) The Buddhist Sangha had a body of rules regarding the form of resolutions to be moved in the Assembly

2) There was a rule of quorum

3) In cases of difference of opinion it was decided by the votes of the majority

4) Complicated matters were referred to the decision of committees

5) Definite rules seem to have existed regarding such matters as the votes of the absentees.

However, there is nothing to prove that the procedure in the Buddhist Sangha which was basically a religious order was reflected in the 'Ganasangha', which was a political sangha. But in any case, the political ideas envisaged by the Buddhists were a distinct one and differed greatly from the political thought of either the Dharmasastras or the Arthsastras. It is evident in the Buddhist theory of the origin of the state.

6.5.3   Theory of the Origin of the State

The theory of the origin of the state is found in the *Dighanikaya*. According to it, there prevailed a golden age of harmony and happiness on earth and people being virtuous, led a happy and peaceful life. But after a long period, people became greedy and selfish. Other evils also crept in subsequently. This ideal state passed away. Then, the people approached the best man amongst them and entered into an agreement with him. He was to punish the wrongdoers and in return, they promised to give him a proportion of their harvest. Chosen by the people, he was known as the Maha Sammata or the 'Great Elect'. Thus, the Dighanikaya challenges the vedic dogma of divine creation of the social order.

The necessity of the rulers' authority was felt because people became corrupt; consequently, the state came into existence. But even then the criminals and the law-breakers continued to operate. In the *Angutta Ranikaya*, Lord Buddha stressed the importance of the fear of severe punishment by the ruler as a deterrent to crimes.

The salient features of the Buddhist theory of social evolution are that it is the continuous moral and physical decline which necessiated a social and political order. A direct consequence of this progressive fall of man was the rise of the institutions of property, the state and society in a successive sequence. It was the further fall of man that led to the institution of kingship that came into existence as a result of the contract between the community and the most distinguished individual. The rise of the social class is explained, in contrast to Brahminical theory, by a rational principle of voluntary selection of occupations. In this social order, the Kshatriyas take precedence over the Brahmanas. It is always virtue and knowledge that determined superiority. Since the Buddhists did not believe in the caste system, they denied that one of the duties of the king was to maintain Varnashramadharma. They further denied the restriction of kingship to the kshatriya varna. They did not believe in the sanctity that surrounded the person of the king.

6.5.4 The Principle of Righteousness

In the Buddhist literature, danda does not have a central role. Dharma is to be upheld in more positive ways. The principle of righteousness is different from the Brahminical conception of dharma. It is closer to the Western conception of virtue. According to Brahminical literature, there is a different set of ethical principles for the king. What is adharma to the ordinary people becomes a dharma to the king, when he is engaged in protecting the social order. This is called *Rajadharma*. Both the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Mahabharata* give detailed accounts of the concept of Rajadharma as distinct from dharma to be practiced by the ordinary citizens. Buddhists too consider the primary purpose of the state to safeguard the social order. But this order is understood more in moral terms and dharma must be the standard for all the king's activities. Righteousness is an ethical doctrine as well as a mental discipline. In Buddhism, there is a total application of the principle of righteousness in guiding both internal as well as foreign polices. Righeousness is the king to righeous king. The king is bound by same set of ethical principles as are his subjects. The king, by example causes the happiness or misery of his people. Political righteousness, thus conceived, rises almost to the level of a cosmic principle of creation. It might appear to be an exaggerated version, but one cannot deny that the conduct of the king influences the behaviour of his subjects considerably. The principle of political righteousness is extended to include the concept of world ruler or *chakravartin*. The attributes of this ruler comprise not only the universal supremacy and successful administration at home and abroad, but also and above all righteousness. With regard to internal administration, righteousness connotes reciprocal love and affection between the ruler and his subjects. In the sphere of foreign relations, the chakravarti's conquest of the kingdom is achieved not by force but by righteousness. The principles of righteousness means; right views, right intention, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right effort, right mindedness etc.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)　Use the space below for your answer.

　　　ii)　See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)　Why is the king in Buddhist literature called Mahajanasammata?

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2)   Give a brief account of the nature of the working of Buddhist sanghas.

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3)   Explain the concepts of righteousness.

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6.6   CONTRIBUTION OF MUSLIM RULE TO INDIAN POLITICAL TRADITIONS

Islamic contribution to Indian political thought can be seen during the medieval period. Though the Muslim rulers derived legitimacy for their authority from the Kalipha, they had to come to terms with the local reality in which all the diktat of a theocratic state could not be practiced. Here again, like the Hindu political thought, there is no text exclusively on politics. However, two important works written in the medieval ages throw some light on the political ideas of Muslim rulers. Among them are *Tarik-I-Firoz* of Ziauddin Barni and these works can be discussed under three heads, namely, nature of sate, divinity of kingship and the duties of the king.

6.6.1   Nature of State

It can safely be said that the atleast in theory, the state was theocratic in nature. The ruler adopted dual policy one for his co-religious subjects and another for the non-Muslim. It was the duty of the state to protect the life and property of the Muslims but the non-Muslims had to pay special tax called 'Jizya' to ensure their safety in the sate. Another important characteristics of the state during were that the state was identified with royalty.

According to Abul Fazal "no dignity is higher in the eyes of the God than royalty". A king was considered as the origin of stability and possession. If royalty did not exist, the storm of strife would never subside, nor would selfish ambition disappear. People do not obey the laws of the state if there is no king, and his presence makes the people abstain from violence for fear of being punished.

6.6.2 Divinity of the King

Ain-I-Akbari describes the king as the light emanating from God, and a ray from the sun, the illuminator of the universe. It is the divine light which communicates from God to the kings without the intermediate assistance of anyone. Many excellent qualities flow from the possession of this light. They are:

1) A paternal love towards subjects

2) A large heart

3) Increasing trust in god

4) Prayer and devotion

6.6.3 Duties of the King

The important duties of the king are:

a) To ensure the safety and security of the life and properties of subjects

b) Punishing those who violate norms of the state

c) Impart justice to all without favour

d) Protect the state from external aggression

e) The king has to lead the people by personal example. Upon his conduct depends the efficacy of any course of action.

f) The king should abstain from four things; excessive devotion to hunting, incessant play, inebriety night and day, and constant intercourse with women.

g) The king should avoid falsehood as, it is improper in all men, and most unseemly in monarchs.

h) The king should be ever intent on conquest, otherwise his neighbours rise in arms against him.

i) The king should always keep his army on its toes, lest from want of training they become self-indulgent.

Abul Fazal's *Ain-I-Akbari* distinguishes between two types of king; the true king and the selfish king. It is said that both have in common, treasury, army, servants, obedient subjects, wise men and multitude of skilful workmen. Under the reign of the true king, these things are lasting. He does not attach himself to these things, as his goal is to remove oppression and truth, faithfulness and sincerity everywhere. On the contrary, a selfish king attaches too much importance to external forms of royal power; hence, everywhere there is insecurity, lack of faith, oppression and robbery.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the nature of the state in Indian Islamic literature.

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2) Discuss in brief the nature and duties of the king found in medieval literature.

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6.7 LET US SUM UP

To sum up, the study of the evolution of Indian political thought was neglected for a long time. Many were of the opinion that early India did not contribute anything to the development of political thought. However, Indian political thought has its own distinguishing features. It is closely linked to religion, social structure, ethics so much so that it becomes extremely difficult to distinguish the political from others spheres of thought. Though Indian political thought is often equated with Hindu political thought, there were other non-Brahminical traditions which contributed to the evolution of political thought in India. Buddhists, Jains and later Muslims came out with their own notions of good government, its duties and obligations etc. It is true that early Indian thinkers did not develop political philosophy as an autonomous discipline. To answer the question as to why they did not develop a systematic tradition of philosophy requires a critical examination of the Indian social structure and a comparison with the social structure of classical Athens where the tradition of political philosophy made its first appearance.

6.8 KEY WORDS

Nationalist Historians : Indian Historians who wrote about Indian history with a presumption that India as a nation existed since the ancient period

Varna : Society in ancient India was devided into four categories of Varnas. They were Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras

Ashrama : Four stages in the life of an individual, especially the members of the upper varna. They are: *Brahmacharya* (practice of celibacy) *Grihastha* (married life) *Vanaprastha* (withdrawing from married life) and *Sanyasa* (complete detachment from worldly life)

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Varnasharmadharma	:	Duties prescribed for four varnas and the four ashramas
Monarchy	:	Rule by a single king
Ganasamgha	:	Assembly of people. Basically, Buddhist socio-religious organisations which have been described by many historians as a form of government equivalent to republics
Vedic literature	:	It means the four Vedas Rig. Sama, Yazur and Atharva
Dharmastras	:	Codes of conduct to be practiced by the people. Men of authority on the basis of Sruti, which means revelation, write them
Arthasastra	:	Branch of knowledge, which deals with the acquisition and maintenance of earth. It is also the title of the work of Kautilya
Matsyanyaya	:	Law of the fish in which big fish swallow the smaller ones
Mahajanasammata	:	Literally means one who is accepted by all. The Buddhist king was called Mahajanasammata
Jatakas	:	Texts on Buddhist philosophy written in the form of stories.

6.9   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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6.10   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1)   See sub-section 6.2.2

2)   See sub-section 6.2.3

3)   See sub-section 6.2.4

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See sub-section 6.3

2)   See sub-section 6.3.1

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See sub-section 6.4.1 to 6.4.7

2)   See sub-section 6.4.8

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See sub-section 6.5

2)   See sub-section 6.5.1

Check Your Progress 5

1)   See sub-section 6.6.1

2)   See sub-section 6.6.2

UNIT 7   THE CONFUCIAN TRADITION

Structure

7.0   OBJECTIVES

Chinese empires, it has been said, used to stand on three legs:

– the monarch, – the scholar-officials, and – the officials' Confucian ideology.

These entities have to be considered separately with each other, and in relation to China's horse-riding, nomadic neighbours in the northern steppe. That will help us understand something of the pattern of China's several dynasties and their fall. When at their peak, several Chinese empires commanded territory greater than anything else known to history; and when they broke up, there could be widespread disorder. This cycle of the rise and fall of empires can be seen, repeatedly, for more than two thousand years in the history of this great civilisation. This unit concerns itself with the following questions.

- What were the principal ideas in the Confucian tradition, and what was its role in the Chinese imperial rule?

- What was the relationship between the Chinese and the horse-riding nomads of the northern steppe?

- How could the Chinese polity return, repeatedly, to a particular set of institutions and ideology?

- Why did complex, spectacularly successful empires disintegrate repeatedly?

7.1   INTRODUCTION

Historical knowledge... is always knowledge of processes, not learning about the sequence of incidents but of the logic of structures (**Sudipta Kaviraj**).

Confucianism is a part of China's history; and in trying to grasp that complex past, we begin with the facts of geography. The vast Himalayan and related ranges separate China from the Indian subcontinent to the west and the south-west; the great central Asian steppe stretches out in the north; the Pacific Ocean lies to the east; and the Indo-Chinese peninsula to the south. Despite the isolation, China's great wealth has attracted horse-riding conquerors from the north as well as merchants from far and wide, over land and sea, down the millennia.

The massive snow-capped mountains feed great rivers which meander through the country, flooding the lands, especially in their deltas. Hwang Ho, or Yellow River, and Yangtze are the biggest and the best known. Hwang Ho brings down masses of silt, depositing it downstream, and is therefore not navigable inland as the Yangtze is; but the rivers were supplemented by a maze of canals, which were built in bursts by hard-driving emperors since the 3rd century B. C. Transport along waterways was economical, and much more important than on roads, until the 20th century.

Between its warm south and cold north and west, China offers a wide array of ecologies. The floodplains of Yangtze delta have been a key region of the world for producing rice; and China's historically important produce has included wheat, tea, silk and salt. A range of minerals has also long been exploited to produce coal, iron, copper, tin, silver, jade, and mineral oil. Technologically, China led the world until the 14th century.

The Chinese people lived under imperial states for over two millennia, from the 3rd century B. C. to the early 20th. Regional powers asserted varying measures of autonomy and independence. Chinese historians used to regard these periods as moments of disorder, resulting from monarchical incompetence. Such periods could end only with the rise of a new dynasty, endowed with the "heaven's mandate" for ruling.

The imperial state re-emerged time and again, for China, and its adjoining Central Asian steppe, have carried between them certain enduring configurations of ideologies, resources, practices, and motivations. For founding a new dynasty, ambitions men could arise within China, but as often they came from the north too. Repeatedly, in China as in India, new dynasties were established by horse-riding nomadic conquerors of the north, or their empire in China too (1276-1367). However, governing China-with its complex society, economy, polity, ecology, and technology - was not a task for the horse-riding conquerors. This needed special skills and these were provided by a class of literati, who were learned in the teachings of Confucius and the other ancient masters, and who carried a tradition of governing – under a emperor.

Box 1

Dynastic Chart		
Note: In writing Chinese words, including names, in the Roman alphabet, this unit follows the system known as Wade-Giles but leaves out diacritical marks.		
	dynasty/ period	**persons and noted in this unit**
11th to 5th Century BC	Chou	Ideas about ruler being the Son of Heaven, with the mandate of heaven to rule. In its later phase, numerous more of less independent kingdoms
403 - 221 BC	Warring States	
221 - 207 BC	Chin	Shin Huang-ti, China's first Emperor Legalist regime
206 BC- 8 AD	Former Han	Tung Chung-shuh, c179 BC-c104 BC formulates imperial Confucianism
25 - 220 AD	Later Han	
221 - 580 AD	Various dynasties	
589 - 617 AD	Sui	Examinations for selecting scholar-officials introduced.
618-906 AD	Tang	

907-959 AD	Five dynasties and ten kingdoms	
960-1126 AD	Northern Sung	A stronger bureaucracy, more dependent on emperor than its predecessors. In 1126, forced to leave northern capital, re-established imperial capital at Hangchow on the Yangtze.
1127-1275 AD	Southern Sung (and Chin in north)	
1276-1367 AD	Mongol/ Yuan	
1368-1644 AD	Ming	16th century: Europeans begin to come.
1645-1911 AD	Manchu/ Ching	19th century: China's weaknesses in face of European pressure become obvious.

The body of ideas which came to be known as Confucian ideology (Box 1), continued to evolve through the centuries as its bearers, the scholar-officials, coped with their circumstances: (1) in running the state, and (2) in managing their lives even when they were not employed by the state. All this would be seen as "Confucian" – on the principle that Confucianism was whatever the followers of Confucius thought and did. That covered a great deal, but a core body of ideas remained to define Confucianism. These included:

a)   ideas supporting the monarch's authority: it committed them to obedient service to the monarch and, through such service, effort to spread Confucian values (see Box 1 and 'c' below) in society;

b)   complex rituals, admitting of virtually infinite elaboration;

c)   an influential of ideas and ideals about the learned man. The ideology laid great stress on a sense of hierarchy, on filial piety, and on virtue. These were general values, applicable to both the state and the family. The emphasis on virtue was reflected in the idea that an exemplary ruler should be able to govern through the power of the example he set, without needing to take recourse to coercion and violence. In practice, such exemplary rulers, whose virtue would secure orderly behaviour all round, were hard to come by, and the use of coercion and violence in various settings was common enough.

Box 2

Emergence of Confucian Ideology

Confucius was a Chinese thinker and scholar in the 6th and 5th centuries BC. His teachings, and those of other ancients (including Mencius, c. 372-289 BC), have moulded the Chinese tradition of governance: as revered guides, for social and political practice, and for creating complex, spectacular rituals of empire. Confucianism advocated the importance of morality in statecraft, and such values as harmony, humanity and sincerity. As an ideology for governing an empire, however, the Chinese tried Legalism first.

Shih Huang-ti, the founder of the first Chinese empire, the Chin, in 221 BC, rejected the Confucian tradition with its moralism, indeed he ordered its books burned. He relied, instead, on legalist thought, which supported the idea of a stern and effective state, with inflexible laws, carrying out the emperor's will, and tolerating no resistance. It ended in revolt fourteen years later, a source of lessons on what a dynasty must avoid in order not to court failure. It was

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remembered as a bad example among Confucians ever after, even though the functioning of a vast empire, beset with complex and often predatory neighbours, could not really rest on Confucian morality alone. Legalist attitudes in managing the empire were common, though no one would call himself a legalist. The Chinese maintained a large army, and the imperial state was never shy about using force – internally or externally.

The Confucian tradition has by no means been an inert, unchanging body of ideas. Quite the contrary. It was about four centuries after Confucius that ideas associated with him began to be incorporated, gradually, into a doctrine of imperial legitimacy. About an earlier kingship, the Chou (11th to 5th centuries BC), it was propagated that its kings were Sons of Heaven, who had the mandate of heaven to govern. Following the Chou disintegration, later centuries (fourth and third), known as the 'Warring States' period, saw several small states, and considerable conflict between them. None of these could sustain the Chou kind of claim to exclusive heavenly favour – and the idea went out of circulation. Confucius worked and taught during this period of disunity, lacking a central authority. Such an authority was established only with the short-lived Chin empire (221-207 B.C.)

The Chou, The Warring States, the Chin: this was the background for the Han dynasty. Its political arrangements were similar to those of the Chin. Both Chin and Han come to power by using force successfully, yet the Han emperors were worried: what were they to do to avoid the Chin fate? Their central problem was this: they had to justify the fact that they had used force in displacing their predecessors and at the same time show that it would be improper for their rivals to use force to displace them, the Han. Their learned advisors, drawing upon the but the kind of heavenly mandate that the Chou kings had earlier claimed for themselves. A scholar called Tung Chung-shuh (c179 BC-c104 BC) wrote a major synthesis of ideas for securing dynastic durability; but this was only one step in an evolution of ideas and practices over two or three centuries – with contributions by various scholars and officials who stressed a variety of elements.

Put simply, some of the ideas in this framework were:

- a cosmic view, in which the whole universe – heaven, earth, and affairs of men, were all seen as part of a single order. The emperor was seen to be crucial in maintaining the harmony of the cosmic order – through his own virtuous, exemplary conduct.

- heaven creates everything, and maintains an active interest in human affairs. When unusual happenings are seen (an unfamiliar object in the sky, a flood, or an unknown kind of plant or animal), these are omens, signals sent by heaven. The signals, such as floods and droughts, could be seen as indicating disapproval of the conduct of the unusual sight in the sky, or reports of extraordinary biological forms, could be interpreted as a token of heaven's blessings on the reigning dynasty, or the imminent rise of a new dynasty, with a fresh mandate of heaven to govern. If such omens are recognized and interpreted by the learned, appropriate responses might be made.

- Heaven crates the tao, the unchanging basic principle for human activity; but people have to apply the tao to their various and changing circumstances in appropriate ways.

In subsequent centuries, the package called Confucianism continued to evolve. It absorbed a complex body of ideas as its followers tried to apply the ideas available in their tradition to their changing circumstances.

It was the Confucian tradition that commanded the officials' loyalty in later times. Tung had highlighted the value of Confucius' teachings in maintaining an empire, and proposed that scholars learned in these teachings be appointed in the government. In the 7th century AD, passing examinations in a set of Confucian texts became an important channel for entering, and advancing in, the prestigious imperial bureaucracy. The highest significance was attached, therefore, to maintaining, learning, and transmitting these and related texts; and the syllabus set for the examinations became a powerful means for Confucian indoctrination too. In the high status that scholars commanded in China, this learning was an important ingredient, quite apart from the power and the wealth which would accompany success in office.

The respect for the learned man was a part of distinguishing between those who labour physically and those who do so mentally: all men of learning, and especially officials among them, were seen as "rulers", as against the ruled who worked physically; but the operative hierarchy was much more complex than this simple distinction would suggest.

In contrast to the Chinese, and especially their literati who furnished the scholar-officials, the northern horsemen traveled light, in their political institutions as well as materially. Their political traditions provided for tribal organisation and, beyond that, for tribal alliances. Forging alliances among these self-willed warrior horseman was not easy; it called for inspired leadership. When that materialised, the horsemen could overrun the slower-moving Chinese, at least in the north, in the region around Hwang Ho.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   List five major ecological elements which have influenced the course of Chinese history.

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2)   How did the Confucian ideology emerge?

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3) What were the major ideas in the Confucian imperial ideology?

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4) What was the significance of imperial examinations in Chinese history?

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7.2 EMPERORSHIP

For the Mughal empire in India, it has been said that the emperor was its "mainspring": how well the imperial government would function depended on his effectiveness. The emperor in China too, had to be something of a mainspring. The Chinese did have a tradition of scholar-officials, and by the 7th century they were beginning to be selected through an elaborate examination system. Thanks to their shared knowledge, skills, motivations, and traditions, they were able to build large structures of officialdom for managing empires of enormous size (Tang, Ming, Ching). Their scale was greater than anything that pre-colonial India ever had. This bureaucracy often had enough of a shared ideology and tradition, and loyalty to the dynasty, that the apparatus could function for a while even with a string of passive and incompetent emperors. In the 12th century, this apparatus held together despite having to flee the northern capital, under pressure from northern invaders – and start afresh, south of the Yangtze. For reasons we shall see below, however, when the emperors failed, the empire was put to serious risk.

During the 7th century (Tang), and certainly again during the 11th (northern Sung), the Chinese worked up an elaborate bureaucratic structure. It included the Censorate: a part of the government whose officials were required to keep a watch on everyone else and to criticise them for their mistakes. The idea of having a Censorate had evolved over more than two millennia. Its tasks were twofold: one, wide-ranging *surveillance* of the civil and military officials, on behalf of the emperor - or the state; and, two, remonstrance with the ruler, criticising his policies and conduct, and pleading with him to correct them. Under the Ming (1368-1644), there were "hundreds of censorial officials", in their own hierarchy, spread through the empire.

Yet the emperor, being "son of heaven", was the fount of all legitimacy. An emperor who was confident of himself would find ways to bypass his apparatus of officials if his interests, or his vision, were at stake. In the earlier centuries, an emperor would have had to recognize the power of a largely hereditary aristocracy many of whose members were leading officials too. By the Sung (960-1275), the aristocracy had

given way to a ruling class of subservient to the emperor, than the aristocracy had been. Henceforth, there was a greater concentration of power in the emperor's hands, and stronger penalties for antagonizing him. By the 15th century, the Censorate had virtually abandoned its earlier function of "remonstrance". It remained as an agency of surveillance alone, making the Censorate an instrument which the emperor and his agents could use to exercise control over the bureaucracy - and over society at large.

How powerful the emperor was in relation to his officials was reflected in how to behave in his presence. With passing dynasties, they were required to behave in a way that became more and more servile. During the Tang (618-906 AD), the high officials could sit with the emperor, with the Sung (960-1275 AD) they had to stand before the emperor who was sitting; and the Ming [1368-1644 AD] and Ching [1645-1911 AD] required them to prostrate themselves and kneel before the emperor.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What was the relationship between the emperor and his officials in China?

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7.3   SCHOLAR-OFFICIALS

7.3.1   Examinations and the Structure of Bureaucracy

Despite the mandate of heaven to rule, the Chinese emperor was dependent on his Confucian scholar-offcials for administering the empire. The officials urged the emperor to rule by the example of his virtue – and leave the business of running the empire to them. A great of ritual was involved this task, for the rituals were designed to present, to the society at large, a sense of harmonious order and of hierarchy. Scholar-officials were the masters of this ritual too.

The relationship between the emperor and the officials was crucial in the evolution of the Chinese imperial bureaucracy. This was a slow process. By mid-first millennium B. C., before the first empire, rulers in China were already employing scholars and seeking their counsel, but this was a relationship of individual scholars.

It was the Han empire (206 B. C. – 220 A. D.) that organised the scholars into a hierarchy. Still later, beginning with the Sui in the late 6th century, recruitment into this body of officials came to be channeled, in part, through public examinations which tested candidates on a specified curriculum – though the curriculum was subject to the winds of change. Examinations were always a small channel for recruitment for office, ranging from an annual average of less than ten men before

655 under the Tang, to one of 200-240 men annually under the Sung (960-1275). The large bulk of men entered the lower ranks of civil service through other channels, yet success at the examinations gave one both the prestige of the learned man and heightened prospects of <u>high</u> office.

Senior officials had the right to nominate their sons, and grandsons, for lower level offices; partly, this was a reward for the senior official's loyal sevice, and partly it was believed that officials' sons would themselves make good officials. There were still other ways of entering the government in lower, local rungs, or in specialist activities like taxation. Later, these men could appear for examinations and earn promotion to higher ranks, with wider responsibilities, in the central government. Men with outstanding performance in the army were also sometimes brought to the civil side.

7.3.2 Divided Loyalties: Family vs. Emperor

China's ability to imperial dimensions time and again pivoted on its ability to generate a formidable bureaucracy repeatedly. The scholar-officials swore by the teachings of Confucius, and his ideas fostered the values of moral behaviour, including filial piety and obedience. These values served to strengthen two poles of existence in the Chinese world: the family and the emperorship.

On one side, these values fostered the large family, and its reverence for ancestors, especially in the stratum of scholar-officials. These large families, and often clans, would provide material support for young aspirants preparing for the examinations – which could lead to official careers. Furthermore, if an official fell out of imperial favour, he might need his kinsmen's support in his hour of adversity. Therefore, given his relatives' past and future importance for him, a bureaucrat would try to use his office, often improperly, to help his relatives as well as himself.

On the other side, the state promoted the idea that the empire was a family, the emperor its head: he was therefore entitled to obedience – just like the head of a family. The acceptance of this value helped secure the loyalty and obedience of scholar-officials. It made a strong imperial state possible.

The related values of filial piety and obedience helped, then, to strengthen the large family group on one side and an overbearing imperial state on the other. This had consequences. Chinese political and administrative arrangements did not allow much space for independent organisations – such as would be needed for organized protest on the part of the disaffected or the oppressed.

In this milieu, if you removed the system of centralized government, which got its commands executed through its officials, reaching out to the ends of the empire, there were no other institutions which could ensure an orderly functioning of society. (In Europe, the Roman Catholic Church did this after the fall of Rome; in India, the caste order has had its own stabilizing influence.) Ambitious strong men remained, with their kinsmen and servitors, each trying to establish his own dominion – and willing to <u>fight</u> things out. This condition recurred in Chinese history several times.

A framework for attending to collective tasks could, apparently, be built only around the emperor. In times of imperial breakdown, then, there was a widespread predisposition for turning to whoever could hold out the promise of renewing an imperial order – a strong army leader (who founded the Sung), a conqueror from the north (Yuan, tradition of governing). They would have been studying the writings of Confucius, in the hope of securing imperial office ultimately. The demise of previous regime would be blamed on the late emperors' personal failings (see Sec. 7.4) Confucius and his teachings were sacred, beyond question, and so was the rightful place in the administration of those who were schooled in these teachings.

If the Chinese State tended, recurrently, to be domineering, there were recurring patterns of resistance and withdrawal too. This had two major foci. One was popular rebellion. Confucianism had become the ideology of governing – and of those who were seen as oppressors. Those who rebelled against their oppression looked for symbols and ideas in China's other major traditions, Taoism and Buddhism.

The other centre of resistance could be among the officials themselves. Many scholar-officials saw their calling in high-minded terms and for them the life of an official could sometimes become very frustrating. The arbitrariness of the emperor and his close advisors would be one source of this frustration. In this milieu of considerable uncertainty, officials tended to form groups whose members would help each other. Hostile moves on the part of rival groups, then, became a second source of frustration. Some frustrated men would withdraw from employment as officials, and devote themselves to studying ancient texts, writing poetry, painting, and so forth. Others, occasionally, would defy the powerful, knowing well that they could face death. Such martyrdom in the course of righteous conduct has also been a source of vitality for the Confucian tradition.

Some scholar-officials could defy the powerful; none ever became emperor himself. That would have needed the mandate of heaven, something that could be achieved only through victory in the battlefield. The Confucians' ideology and training did not prepare them for establishing empires; it prepared them only to serve whoever achieved imperial power – through succession or through force. It was the two distinctive principles of imperial power and of Confucian hierarchy that together defined the Chinese imperial state.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   How did Chinese empires recruit their officials?

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2)   How did the values of filial piety and obedience influence the course of Chinese empires?

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3) What were the sources of potential opposition to the Chinese imperial authorities?

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7.4 THE DYNASTIC CYCLE

The Chinese imperial political history tended to move in dynastic cycles – with recognizable phases. As the literati and the others pursued their interests in each phase, conditions emerged which led to the making of the next phase.

The dynastic founder, and sometimes his immediate successors, could often act with an exhilarating drive, continuing something of the momentum of their initial conguest. With his charisma and authority, the founder could purse ambitious projects, commanding resources on a staggering scale: build navigational canals, hundreds of kilometers long, or vast palaces; mount far-reaching campaigns of conquest; commission the assembly of a great imperial library or major literary or historical studies and compilations. The short-lived Sui dynasty (589-617 A. D.), in the first decade of the 7th century, built nearly two thousand kilometers of canals, forty paces wide, using forced labour including many women.

For managing operations on this scale, and for running the empire, the new emperor would have to constitute his bureaucracy. On the other side, the literati expected that their services would be sought for running the empire; and their ideology persuaded them that they ought to serve the emperor. This obligation applied even for an alien, northern emperor: one who ruled through the virtue of his energies would be sapped by having to read through huge piles of paperwork, and having to give his decisions; and often he had to contend also with never-ending factional bickerings among his officials.

In a yet later phase of the dynasty, bored with such a routine, the then reigning emperor might turn to diversions-his numerous consorts in the palace, poetry or painting, Taoist ritual, in one case carpentry. He would leave the running of the empire to his trusted officials. Sometimes, he would put his trust in certain favoured eunuchs in his palace, in whom he might have greater confidence. These functionaries, in turn, could devote themselves to their own, private agendas. Their sense of familial obligations would persuade them to use their office, high or low, for advancing their families' interests by every means available. The high officials could acquire large landed estates – which would be tax-free because their owners were government officials. Even eunuchs had families: there were the families they had been born into; but also they would sometimes "marry" women servants in the palace, and the "couple" would adopt children, so that something like a full family was in place – with all its interests; and the eunuchs did not even have an ideology that would restrain them in their misdeeds.

The officials commonly built their estates by ousting ordinary peasants – who could not resist powerful officials. As the ranks of the landless destitute grew, a flood or a drought could give the push for a great rebellion to rise. The very size of a great

empire presented problems. Gathering the necessary information, evaluating its significance, and devising appropriate responses were slow processes in a society of such enormous size and complexity.

Meanwhile, the empire could be descending into disorder – making the scene for a new empire-builder. China would be entering another round of the dynastic cycle.

Box 3

Writing History

Happenings at the Chinese imperial court, and activities involving the emperor and its officials, were observed and recorded carefully, day to day, for over two millennia. Based on these records, a dynastic history would be sponsored by the <u>successor</u> dynasty - hopefully to help chart its own course, avoiding earlier pitfalls, but also to justify its own takeover in view of the predecessors' misdeeds. Work sponsored by the new dynasty carried the inherent risk of being biased against the dynasty that had fallen. Yet the literati took the history of their own past seriously, and their ideals set them very high standards for the quality of their work. Writing and interpreting histories was, for them, a major channel through which to influence the emperor himself.

Regardless of their aspiration, however, history writing as an effort to understand the past accurately in a detached manner, was not seen as being its own justification. It was commonly an additional task for scholar-officials - who carried too, the affairs of the empire. Writing history was integral to that larger enterprise, not an autonomous, purely academic activity. The scholars saw history-writing as a means of guiding moral and political action.

<u>On sources:</u> Surviving are voluminous though, especially for the earlier periods, these tend to be centered on events in and around the court. These have been enriched during the 20th century by discovery of large quantities of ancient documents, including texts and other materials, which had been deposited in graves, along with burials, and have survived there through the centuries. Numerous wrote on their own localities, including materials on local history, and thousands of these "local gazetteers" are available for study by historians today.

Responding furthermore to their society's complex, ongoing experiences, Chinese scholars and ideologues kept up an ideological ferment, not only in the generation of Confucius, in 5th century B. C., but repeatedly in later centuries too. Supplementing the indigenous sources are the writings of foreigners, Japanese, Arabs and Persians before the 16th century, and an international community of students of Chinese thereafter. All this makes for a historical record of unparalleled richness and complexity.

In the Chinese tradition of writing history (see box), when the scholar-officials produced an account of the previous dynasty, they invariably blamed the "last bad emperor", and his faults, for the decline of the empire. Being scholar-officials themselves, they were ordinarily inclined to overlook the faults, and the aggrandizing tendency, of their predecessors – and how it shaped the fate of the empire.

It could seldom be the scholar-officials' intention that an empire grows so weak that it would no longer be able to maintain itself, for that would leave them without their offices. Yet their actions had precisely this consequence; but it was an *unintended consequence* of their pursuing their own their families' and clans' interests. In advancing these the empire was subverted, that was a macro-phenomenon; its links with the small-scale individual actions was not easy to see.

What the successive rounds of the cycle shared was a general pattern. So large and complex a society, indeed at times so dynamic a society, could not re-stage earlier

events in any great detail. There were considerable changes; but apart from such processes as a general expansion of Han civilisation, of Han civilisational influence, population growth, and a growing stock of historical record and of literature, it would be difficult to characterise the overall tendencies as embodying a clear direction of "progress".

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Outline the dynastic cycle in China's imperial history.

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2) What was the place of history writing in the Chinese empire?

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7.5 THE END OF CONFUCIAN IMPERIAL IDEOLOGY

For about two thousand years, Confucianism was the ideology of government in China. The political, moral, and intellectual supremacy of Confucianism was not seriously challenged until the mid-9th century. By then, European and other foreign commercial, evangelical, and other interests had made deep inroads into China. In subsequent decades, the rulers and the scholars of China started to become aware, more and more acutely, that the Confucian tradition had no answers to the Western challenge: a challenge of vast scope, which included not only trade but also the use of force, and access to reliable knowledge, including science and technology. Henceforth, they would be torn between attachment to their own tradition, because it was theirs and turning to the Western tradition, because in numerous fields it was manifestly more resourceful. The difficult situation of the Chinese scholars was somewhat similar to that of that of the Pundits, the Ulema, and other kinds of traditional scholars in India. In moves to defend what they could, all of them proposed similar distinctions: that their traditional learning was necessary, and adequate, for spiritual and moral cultivation; even though Western learning may be needed in technical matters.

The final blow came at the beginning of the 20th century. The widespread devotion to Confucian learning had always had a particular reason: the syllabus for the imperial examinations – which were crucial for securing government employment. Then, in 1905, the government snapped the connection: henceforth, the imperial examinations would not test the candidates' knowledge of the Confucian tradition. The principal incentive for mastering its key texts disappeared, and so did public interest in Confucian ideology, as the only possible basis for organising government and society, though it continued to command respect as part of China's history and tradition. Devotion to one's family, and to one's ancestors, remained as ideals. The Chinese search for an alternate ideology led them to Communism and to the great revolution in 1949; and its leaders were dismissive of Confucius and his ideas. Some observers believe, however, that the Chinese imperial tradition is reflected in Communist China's authoritarian style and in its ability to subordinate individual purposes to collective ones.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

  ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What has happened to the Confucian ideology in the modern world?

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7.6   LET US SUM UP

We have considered the pattern of the rise and fall of imperial dynasties in Chinese history along two dimensions:

1)   the key elements in that pattern:

  •   the emperors,

  •   the body of their officials,

  •   the officials' ideology, and

  •   the potential challengers to a dynasty, who could be from the northern steppe, or from within the Chinese society, and

2)   the various phases in that pattern:

  •   the establishment of a new dynasty,

  •   raising a body of officials, alongwith territorial expansion to secure the revenues for paying the officials,

  •   maintaining the empire, run by the officials and other functionaries, often with only a ceremonial role for the emperor, and

  •   a period of troubles for the empire, when disorders would spread, and then the end, clearing the way for an ambitious man to rise to found a new dynasty.

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We saw that, for more than two thousand years, the idea of filial piety, associated with Confucius, contributed to the growth of a new dynasty, defining the roles of, and the relationship between, the emperor and his officials. The same complex of ideas contributed also to the decline of the dynasties, as the officials used their power to amass private wealth for families and clans, thereby causing disaffection and disorder. This cycle ended early in the twentieth century as the Chinese confronted a challenge of unprecedented magnitude – this time from Western countries. China's history then took a decisive turn.

7.7   KEY WORDS

Cosmic Order : a belief in the close inter-relatedness of everything in the universe, whether stars and plants, flora and fauna, or human affairs.

Dynastic Cycle : a pattern of rise and fall of dynasties, occurring again and again.

Filial Piety : a belief that a man owes obedience and service to his living parents and dead ancestors; this covered also the emperor who was said to be the head of the imperial family.

Legalism : a political doctrine in ancient China which supported the idea of a stern and effective state, with inflexible laws, carrying out the emperor's will, to build a strong and prosperous empire.

Mandate of Heaven : a long-lasting doctrine in Chinese history. It justfied rule by a conquering dynasty on the basis that its success at conquering showed that it had a mandate of heaven for governing.

Scholar Officials : Chinese government officials who were selected on the basis of their knowledge of certain writings of Confucius. This knowledge was tested at several, graded public examinations.

Steppe : the level, grassy, unfrosted Siberian plane – present day Mongolia – north of China, home of warrior horsemen.

Unintended Consequences : the idea in the social sciences that human actions often have consequences which were not intended by the actor and could not have been foreseen by her or him.

Value : what is believed to be valuable and important in life.

7.8 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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7.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 7.1

2) See Section 7.1 and Box 2

3) See Section 7.1 and Box 2

4) Box 2, last para and Section 7.3 and 7.5

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Section 7.2 and 7.3

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Section 7.3.1

2) See Section 7.3.2

3) Nomads from the steppe to the North; popular rebellions, whether by an oppressed group or by strong men rebelling against an imperial centre; scholar officials who might find the arbitrainess of the emperor – and of rival factions – frustrating.

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Section 7.4

2) Box 3 and 7.4

Check Your Progress 5

1) See Section 7.5

UNIT 8 ARABIC-ISLAMIC POLITICAL TRADITIONS

Structure

8.0 Objectives

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Development of Islamic Polity

    8.2.1 Historical Background

8.3 Institution of Khilafat

    8.3.1 Qualifications of the Caliph

8.4 Mens' Authority

    8.4.1 Procedure for the Election of the Caliph

    8.4.2 One Caliph at a Time

    8.4.3 Obedience to the Caliph

8.5 Let Us Sum Up

8.6 Some Useful References

8.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

8.0 OBJECTIVES

This Unit introduces you to the concept of Islamic polity. Having gone through this unit, you would be in a position to understand and explain the following:

- Nature of Islamic polity;

- Development of Islamic polity;

- Causes of its failure; and

- Rise of mulukiyat.

8.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall be concerned with the questions as to:

a) How the Islamic polity came into existence?

b) What were the circumstances, which led to its acceptance and popularity?

8.2 DEVELOPMENT OF ISLAMIC POLITY

Planning of polity is essential for the state. After the formation of the Islamic state at Madina in 622 A.D., its evaluation had started. It is based on the Quranic verse – "Obey God, and obey the Prophet and those authority among you".

8.2.1 Historical Background

You may be aware, for instance, that there was a tribal polity in pre - Islamic Arabia. In the pre-Islamic polity, the Shaikh or the Saiyid was its head elected by the heads of the different clans. In 622 A.D., with the formation of the Islamic State at Madina, the Islamic polity came into practice. In the Islamic polity, there is a only a thin demarcation between religion and polity. They are so closely linked that it is very difficult to separate the two. However, religion always dominated. In Islam, both these powers were given to Prophet Mohammad. He was declared the head of the

state as well as the leader of the religion. According to the Quran, its rules and regulations had to be followed by the ruler and the ruled. There were no privileges for the ruler.

8.3 INSTITUTION OF KHILAFAT

After the death of Prophet Mohammad in 632 A.D., *Khilafat* came into existence. Khilafat literally means succession to any predecessor individual or group (qaum) or for that matter, to the previous ruler in the general sense as used in the Quran for several prophets. Technically, Khilafat has assumed the connotation of an Islamic institution of governance based on the Quran and the *Sunnah*, which originated after the death of Prophet Muhammad to serve the objectives of looking after the affairs of the people (ummah) and for establishing the commandments of the Shariat. On the basis of the two injunctions of Shura (council) and the Ijma (consensus), Muslims had elected Abu Bakr as the first Caliph of Prophet Muhammad after his death in 632 A.D.

After Abu Bakr's death in 634 A.D., Umar was chosen as the Caliph. After Umar's death in 645 A.D., Usman was chosen and then after Usman's death in 654 A.D. Ali was elected as the Caliph and he continued till he was killed in 661 A.D. With Ali's death, the institution of Khilafat came to an end.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Mark True (T) or False (F):

i)   Pre-Islamic policy was democratic in nature

ii)   In Islam religion and polity are one and the same

iii)   Abu Bakr was the Khalifa of God

iv)   Khilafat began from 630 A.D.

2)   Write in about five sentences about the nature of Islamic policy.

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8.3.1   Qualifications of the Caliph

Over the issue of the qualifications of the Caliph, almost all the Muslim political thinkers with the exception of Isna Asharis, are unanimous; the difference is found only in the number of conditions laid down by the various Muslim political thinkers. Mawardi, for instance, lays down seven conditions while Ibn Khalladun reduces them to five. Ghazzali enumerates similar qualifications with some modifications. Most of them prescribe knowledge of Islamic sharia, soundness of body and mind, a just character and Quraishite decent. Qualifications of the Khalifa are as follows:

1)   The Khalifa should be a Muslim

2)   He should be suave and adult

3) He should be male, as a male alone can undertake the heavy responsibilities of running the affairs of the state

4) He must be a free man and not a slave as he cannot discharge his duties independently

5) He should be free from physical and mental defects

6) He should be competent and bold enough to execute the prescribed punishments of Islam and defend the frontiers of the Islamic state and maintain peace and order in the state

7) Justice is the great pre-requisite for Khalifah

8) Knowledge of Islam and its practical implications are also a must, for without this knowledge, he cannot run the state in accordance with Islamic precepts and practices. Election of a non - Quraishite to the office of the Caliph rendered it null and void. Similarly, Shahrastani also holds that the Imam must belong to the tribe of Quresh. Ibn Khalladun's discussion and arguments regarding this issue place the whole scenario in its proper perspective. Imam Hanbal is reported to have said, "If the question of the election of an amir (leader) comes and we have to choose between an inexperienced pious man and a less pious, but more experienced man in statecraft, the preference should be given to the less pious and the more experienced one". Imam Hanbal is supported in his opinion by a Prophetic hadis (saying). Those among the companions of Prophet Muhammad who were noted for their piety, but had no experience of administration, were not given any administrative position. It is narrated by Muslim that Abuzar said to Prophet. "Will you not appoint me to a public office?" ... The Prophet said, "Abuzar, thou art weak and authority is a trust..." Abuzar was indeed a very pious and God fearing companion of the Prophet. It may be mentioned that the Kharijites make open the office of the Caliph for all Muslims.

8.4 MENS' AUTHORITY

It will be more appropriate to refer here to another Quranic verse which is very important in connection with men's authority in government. A hadis of the Prophet also declares that the posts of responsiblity in an Islamic state can not be entrusted to a woman.

8.4.1 Procedure for the Election of the Caliph

There is no place in the Quran and the Sunnah where a specific way of how to choose a Caliph is related to the people whose affairs are decided by counsel among themselves. This is consultation and not a definite or conclusive procedure of appointing a leader. Most of the Muslim political thinkers emphasise the Caliph's election through the bayat (Oath of allegiance). Which one of those who is qualified for the Caliphate may be chosen:

1) By designation of the Prophet

2) By designation of the ruling authority or

3) By designation of the holder of actual power

8.4.2 One Caliph at a Time

In the Islamic polity there can be only one Caliph. There are explicit traditions of the Prophet regarding this issue. The meeting held at Saqufa of Bani Saidah in 632 A.D. after the death of Prophet also helps us in this issue. In that meeting, the demand was put forth by Ansars (helpers) that one Amir (leader) from among the Ansars and the other from among the Muhajirs (migrants) might be selected as a Caliph, but this was not approved by the Muslims present there.

8.4.3 Obedience to the Caliph

Islamic sayings and practices make obedience to the Caliph and his government a religious duty of all the citizens of the Islamic state. But this obedience is limited and conditional for it is obligatory only in the good, which may be termed as a perfect accord with the commands of the Shariat. So long as the Caliph or the Imam upholds the values of Islam in general and does not forsake its aims and objectives, he should be obeyed. The Surah al-Nisa, verse No.59 of the Quran enjoins upon the believers to obey the authority in the following words: "O ye who believe! Obey Allah and obey the Prophet, and those authority among you. If you differ in any thing among yourselves, refer it to Allah and His messenger...." The obedience to man in authority is subservient to the obedience to God and His Prophet. So long as the rulers obey God and His Prophet, it is the duty of the Muslims to obey them, but when they disobey God and His Prophet, the Muslims are no longer bound to obey them. The Quranic attitude is reinforced by a number of prophetic sayings in which Muslims are forbidden to obey that command of the ruler, which is against the command of God and His Prophet.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by Khilafat?

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2)   Emumerate some of the qualification for being a Caliph.

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3)   Write a short note on obedience to the Caliph.

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8.5   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, you have read about the basics of the Islamic Political Traditions. The development of the Islamic Polity has been explained to you. As also its history. The

institution of Khilafat, which succeeded Prophet Muhammad, has been dealt with in detail in the unit. You have read about the qualifications for being a Caliph, the mode of his election and obedience to him. It is hoped that you now have some understanding of the fundamentals of the Arabic-Islamic political traditions.

8.6   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Annold, Sir Thomas W., *The Caliphate*, London, 1884

Bakhshi, Khuda S., *Politics in Islam*, Calcutta, 1920

8.7   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1)   (i) F   (ii) T   (iii) T   (iv) F

2)   See Section 8.2

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Section 8.3

2)   See sub-section 8.3.1

3)   See sub-section 8.4.3

UNIT 9   GREEK AND ROMAN TRADITIONS

Structure

9.0   OBJECTIVES

In this unit, you will be introduced to political traditions developed by ancient Greek and Roman civilisations. After studying this unit, you should be able to :

- Understand the essential features of ancient Greek and Roman political traditions;

- Explain the ancient Greek and Roman theories of state, constitution and citizenship;

- Evaluate their achievements and failures; and

- Assess their relevance to contemporary political science.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, we shall deal with the ancient Greek and Roman political traditions. These traditions laid the foundations of Western political thought and expounded many noble ideas about state and citizenship.

The Greek political tradition began after the eclipse of the heroic age and the establishment of the Greek city-states. It produced great political thinkers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle and experimented with different forms of government. The Greek political experience developed in the small city-states or *polis*. These city-states were of a small size, but they had a politically vigilant and conscious body of citizens. The Greek political traditions were terminated due to the Macedonian invasions in 4th century B.C.

As shall become apparent in this unit, the Greek view of state and politics had been conditioned and shaped by the experiences of Greek city-states.

9.2 DEVELOPMENT AND NATURE OF GREEK CITY-STATES

The Greek city-states were the product of peculiar Greek political and territorial conditions as the land was narrow and not fertile enough to house a large population. The Greek city-states were developed with the merger of a large number of tribes and clans. Aristotle called it a 'union of several villages'. It was a narrow and closed region, lying round an urban centre, bounded by mountains, sea and territories of neighbouring city-states. It consisted of three classes of people-citizens, foreigners and slaves. Only citizens were entitled to possess political rights. For the Greeks, city-states did not mean mere territory or an abstract idea, but freemen who sustained it.

The city-state as a rule was a walled city, containing the state hearth, the temples of city cults, offices of high magistrates and the 'agora'. It lived off its land which was often insufficient. Comparatively, it was a small territorial unit as the total territory of Athens was 1000 sq. miles and that of Sparta was 3300 sq. miles. Other city-states had hardly more than 400 sq. miles of territory.

In ancient Greece, Athens and Sparta were the two prominent city-states and they were considered as models of two differing political systems. Athens stood for democracy and freedom and Sparta for sacrifice and discipline.

Check your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Fill in the blanks

a) Ancient Greek society consisted of citizens…............. and slaves.

b) City - state arose out of merger of different…............ and …..........

c) Athens stood for democracy and Sparta stood for…......................

d) The total territory of Athens was…..................................

2) Which of the following statements are true or false?

a) The foreigners did not have any political rights in   (   )
Greek city-states

b) Sparta stod for democracy and freedom   (   )

c) The city-states experimented with different   (   )
forms of state

9.3 THE GREEK CONCEPT OF STATE

The institution of the state played a key role in the political life of the Greeks. The state for them was not a mere geographical unit, but it was a community of persons. The Greeks always held the view that the city-state was a means to achieve higher goals of life.

9.3.1 Two View Points about the Nature of State

There were two viewpoints about the nature of state in ancient Greece. The first viewpoint maintained that the state was a natural institution and Plato and Aristotle subscribed to this viewpoint. The second viewpoint held that it was not a natural institution, but a product of customs and traditions of people. The state was considered a natural institution, because it was the highest association in terms of social and historical evolution, values and purpose. It is a final stage in the growth of associations from family through villages to the state. The state was the whole of which other institutions were a part. The state as a whole represented the moral universe that held the people together.

Thus, it was inseparable from citizens, because it alone met all human needs and it alone was self-sufficient.

9.3.2 Necessity of the State for a Good Life

The Greeks held that the state was a necessary institution, because with in the state alone, we could pursue our goals in life. According to Plato, in the ideal state only, could we live happy and contented lives. Aristotle held that while the family and the village existed to preserve life and to provide companionship, the state existed not just for the sake of life alone, but for the sake of good life. The highest good and the most moral actions of men were represented in the state.

Thus, for the Greeks, the state was not a mere territorial or a political unit, but a moral unit with peculiar aims and goals. It enabled man to live the good life.

9.4 THE GREEK CONCEPT OF CITIZENSHIP

As we have seen, the Greek concept of state was confined to the city-state and in the city-state, citizenship rights were given only to free men. Two other classes - foreigners and slaves - did not possess citizenship rights. Both Plato and Aristotle gave an important place to the citizens, because they identified the state with them. Rights were given to those who were citizens of birth (by both the parents) and were 18 years old.

9.4.1 Aristotle's Views on Citizenship

According to Aristotle, the meaning of the word citizen varied according to the constitution of each state. In each state, there were different strata and substrata of

people. In aristocracy, the powers were unequally divided. But normally, the citizen should be free and equal. He should possess judgement and authority. According to Aristotle, goodness of a citizen implied government of free men. He maintained that since man was a social animal, he had a natural desire for life in society even though he had no need to seek other's help. The citizens possessed political rights and they actively took part in political affairs of the state. He was expected to be vigilant of his rights and to get involved in all the activities of different institutions of the state.

9.5   THE GREEK CONCEPT OF CONSTITUTION

Constitution is the basic law of any country and the Greeks were the first in the world to develop it. The Greeks made experiments with different forms of constitutions. Aristotle held that the purpose of a constitution was to shape the life of man in a desired manner. Any constitution impresses its way of life on the citizens. As a result, individual and collective characteristics of citizens are reflected in the constitution. Hence, a constitution was a sum total of the individuals that constituted it.

9.5.1   Different Types of Constitutions

There existed different types of constitutions in ancient Greece. Aristotle wrote his book 'Politics' after studying 158 constitutions. Before him, Plato had discussed five forms of constitutions on the basis of his concept of 'cycle of change'. According to him, the ideal state, timocracy, oligarchy, democracy and tyranny were the five forms of state in his 'Republic'. Plato first constructed his ideal state and then, in his later works, showed how the existing states deviated from the ideal. On the other hand, Aristotle first examined the actual states and then constructed an ideal state on the basis of a careful analysis. He maintained that monarchy, aristocracy and polity were the three forms of state which aimed at attaining the common good. He held that there were three perverted forms of government such as tyranny, oligarchy and democracy.

This classification was based on the concept of justice. Since constitution was defined as the arrangement of offices, the difference between any two types of constitutions could be explained by the principle according to which offices were awarded. Thus, democracy awarded office on the basis of free birth and oligarchy, on the basis of wealth. Aristotle was of the view that monarchy was the best of normal constitutions and tyranny, was the worst of deviated constitutions.

The Greeks developed the concept of the ideal state and wanted to order all existing states in the light of this ideal state. The aim of the ideal state was common good and it enabled the citizens to live life according to their aptitude and capacities.

9.5.2   Athenian Democracy

Athens is famous in history because of its democratic form of government. Athenian democracy was developed over a period of time and it reached its glory during the age of Pericles. During this period, the city of Athens had a total population of 3,00,000 and a half of it lived in the town and a half in the country side. It was divided into 100 demes which were centres of community power.

In ancient Athens, the general assembly of citizens who had crossed the age of 20 years took all the major decisions. It met regularly ten times in a year and in extra-ordinary sessions at the call of the council. Along with the assembly, the Council of 500 and the Court of Magistrates also played a key role in public life. The members of these bodies were elected not by casting votes, but by lots. They were elected for a term of one year. The Greeks thought that this mode of filling offices by lots was

a distinctly democratic form of rule, since it equalised every one's chances. The Generals were directly chosen by the assembly. They formed the executive and carried out functions of the state. They could be re-elected. The Generals, the Council and the Court of Magistrates had a popular character. Pericles declared that Athenian democracy stood for freedom and the people took part in all decisions of the government.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Fill in the blanks.

a)   Aristotle was of the view that the state was a …. institution.

b)   The state existed not for the sake of life but for the sake of …. life.

c)   In ancient Greece, only…. were given political rights.

d)   Monarchy… and polity were the three forms of government.

2)   Which of the following statements are true or false?

a)   According to Aristotle, the state was a product   (   )
of social contract

b)   In aristocracy it is the poor people who dominate

c)   Citizen is one who can sit in authority and judgement

9.6   CAUSES OF REVOLUTION

The Greek thinkers discussed the causes of revolution in the state. Plato was of the view that changes in the constitution of the state took place because of changes in the attitudes and the nature of the people who constituted it. The social and economic changes in society got reflected in changes in the constitutions.

Aristotle elaborately discussed the causes of revolutions. He examined both the general as well as the particular causes which were related to a particular constitution. The most general cause of revolution, according to him, was a passion for some concept of equality which was involved in the idea of justice. If any group felt that it did not enjoy the share of constitutional rights that it felt entitled to, on the basis of its conception of justice, it would rebel and try to change the system. He also discussed ways and means to prevent recurrence of revolution in different states.

9.7 ACHIEVEMENTS AND FAILURES OF GREEK POLITICAL TRADITIONS

There is no doubt that Greek political ideas and institutions are one of the most spectacular achievements in human history. The Greeks were the first to develop a science of politics, divorcing it form ethics and philosophy. Also, the Greeks developed the concept of constitution, and emphasised its importance in political life of the state. They also discussed different types of states. They developed the first democratic form of government in which citizens participated in full degree. The Greek concept of politics was essentially moral; hence, they developed the concept of an ideal state in which man could live the good life; the life which would bring the best out of man.

But along with these achievements, there were some failures as well. The Greeks failed to give citizenship rights to more than half of their population. They did not

realise that in the course of social and economic development, the city-state as a unit of governance had become outdated as big territorial states became the order of the day. The Greek city-states took recourse to the policy of forming federations in order to check internal disturbances, but they failed to establish stable or permanent states. The classical Greek theorists did not distinguish between state and society clearly; hence, they failed to distinguish properly between the interests of individuals and that of the state.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Fill in the blanks

   a)   The Athenian democracy reached its glory during the age of….

   b)   In Athens, elections took place on the basis of….

   c)   It was…. who discussed the causes of revolution.

   d)   The Greeks were the first to develop a science of…..

2.   Which of the following statements are true or false?

   a)   In Athenian democracy, the general assembly elected the   ( )
   generals

   b)   Revolutions took place because of change in social conditions   ( )

   c)   The Greeks were the first to develop a constitutional form of   ( )
   government for the empire

3)   What are the major achievements of Greek political traditions? Write about five lines.

9.8   TRANSITION FROM ANCIENT GREECE TO ANCIENT ROME

The ancient Greek city-states lost their significance in 4th century B.C. as the Macedonians established their empire in Europe and Asia. Some of the elements of Greek tradition were carried forward by Alexander and his successors. The Roman Republic emerged during this peirod and dominated the history of the world for one thousand years. The most important contribution of Rome was advocacy of the theory of universal community for a universal state. As a result, the nature of Roman state was radically different from that of the Greek city-states. The Romans developed the concepts of law and state which sought to encompass different sections of society all over the known world.

Roman political history can be divided into two parts : (1) Republican Rome and (2) Imperial Rome. In the following pages, we shall discuss different aspects of the Roman political traditions.

9.9   HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The republic of Rome developed by the 5th century B.C. and in it , the well entrenched institutions of popular assemblies and the Senate played a very important role. During this period, Roman society consisted of (1) Patricians who represented the upper classes, (2) Plebians who were commoners and (3) Slaves. The Patricians and the Plebians possessed political rights, but the Patricians dominated. Therefore, there was

a continuous struggle in early Roman history between these two classes as the Plebians wanted to secure the rights that were denied to them. In a large measure, the Plebians succeeded in securing these rights, but the slaves remained condemned to bondage. The Republic was ruled by Consuls who were elected by the Senate.

9.9.1   Establishment of Monarchy

The Republic of Rome lost its republican character, when republican institutions were not in a position to solve the problems of the empire. It was during the reign of Augustus that the republic was finally destroyed and monarchy established. During the period of imperial Rome, in the 4th century A.D., Constantine embraced Christianity and the concept of universal community became popular. The Roman political traditions should be understood through Cicero and Saint Augustine, who combined the stoic doctrine of the law of nature with that of the Christian doctrine of universal brotherhood.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Fill in the blanks

   a)   Ancient Roman state was the first…. state.

   b)   In Republican Rome, there were two classes of Patricians and…

   c)   In ancient Rome, the end of the Republic took place in the reign of….

   d)   It was Constantine who embraced… religion.

2)   Which of the statements are true or false?

   a)   Patricians belonged to the lower classes of society

   b)   Emperor Augustine embraced Christianity

   c)   Plebians succeeded in securing the rights enjoyed by Patricians

9.10   THE REPUBLIC OF ROME

The Republic of Rome emerged in the 4th century B.C. and developed unique political institutions. These institutions were the product of an era in which there was a close link between the people and the state. The Popular Assembly and the Senate were the two major institutions and they were subordinate to law. Every major decision was taken in the assembly and even great generals had to get their mandate renewed from the Senate.

9.10.1   Patricians and Plebians

As already mentioned above, the Roman society was divided into the two classes of Patricians and Plebians. The Patricians constituted only 10% of the total population, but they enjoyed enormous power because of their social prestige, customs, religious rights and cults; on the other hand, the Plebians, though numerous, were poor and hence, lacked political power. In ancient Rome, social relations were shaped by the patron-client framework. The client was a free man and entrusted himself to the patronage of another and received protection from him in return. The client helped his patron in his public life with all the means available at his command and the patron gave him financial and legal support.

9.10.2   Rule by Consuls

The Republic was governed by two elected Consuls. In an emergency, a dictator could be nominated. Normally, a Consul was elected for a year. The Consuls possessed

supreme administrative powers. They were the commanders of the army and had a right to interpret and execute laws. The centre of political activity was not the legislature, but the executive. The two Consuls had to take decisions after holding consultations with each other. They were subject to one another's veto; hence, they could not take arbitrary decisions.

9.11 ROMAN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS

9.11.1 Popular Assembly

The popular assembly was perhaps the most important institution in Republican Rome. It was identified with the people of Rome. The Commands issued by the popular assembly were considered as commands issued by the sovereign people of Rome. The resolutions were passed in the name of the two bodies-the popular assembly and the senate. Hence, the commands were issued in the name of the 'Senate and the People of Rome'. The assembly enacted laws, made proposals about war and peace and most importantly, nominated the consuls. The names of the consuls were proposed by Senators from their own ranks. In the earlier phase, popular assembly was powerful, but slowly the Senate gained power. In the first century B.C., the Senate secured power to make laws. The assembly was ultimately controlled by the Senate because of its superior prestige and wealth.

9.11.2 The Senate

The Senate was a powerful body in the Republic of Rome. Initially, the total membership of the Senate was 300 and during Augustus's period, it was raised to 600. The members of the Senate were elected by a lot. Under the Republic, the Senate owed its influence and prestige mainly to the fact that it comprised practically of all those who possessed administrative and political experience. The Senate was a powerful body. It possessed no administrative power, but advised elected officials on domestic and foreign policy, finance and religion. It had the power of making war and peace and concluding treaties with foreign countries. By the end of the first century B.C., the power of the Senate grew. It enjoyed legitimacy and even great generals had to get their mandate renewed from it because it was supported by the people. There were dissensions in the Senate and the patron - client relationship played a key role in its functioning.

Along with the Roman Assembly and the Senate, the Courts of Magistrates played an important role in the administration of justice.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Fill in the blanks

a)   Popular assembly and…..................... were two important democratic institutions in Rome

b)   Initially, the total strength of the Senate was…....................

c)   All laws were declared in the name of…................ and …..............

d)   Normally, a Consul was elected for a term of …....................

2) Which of the following statements are true or false?

  a)   Since the beginning, the Senate was more powerful than   (   )
       the Assembly of Rome

  b)   the Consuls had to consult each other before taking   (   )
       decisions

  c)   The Courts of Magistrates played an important   (   )
       role in judicial administration

9.12   THE ROMAN CONCEPT OF LAW

The greatest contribution of Rome to history is the concept of law which was developed and refined by a large number of Roman jurists. The Latin word for the general body of law is 'jus', which is broader and more comprehensive than 'lex'. For the Romans, law meant a body of rules enforced by courts. During the Roman period, law was divided into natural and positive law. Natural law meant the law imposed on humanity by our common human nature and positive law meant the law imposed by the state. The Romans understood the importance of natural law and held that there were some rules of morality, justice, reasonableness in conduct, which were binding upon all men, not due to the fact that they were laid down in the positive law of the state, but because they were intrinsically right and deserved our respect.

9.12.1   Sources of Law

The Romans were of the opinion that there were three sources of law : the customs of people, legislative declarations and legislative formulations. The customs of people were evolved over a period of time and they helped a great deal in the formation of law. The legislative declarations meant the declarations made by the Roman Assembly, the Senate and in the later period, the imperial declarations. The third source of law was legislative formulation which came from the decisions of the courts of magistrates. The responses of private persons skilled in law who gave their opinions when they were consulted could also be included in legislative formulations. These three sources were responsible for the making of positive laws in ancient Rome.

9.13   CONTRIBUTIONS OF CICERO

Cicero was one of the greatest of Roman lawyers who wanted to preserve the Roman Republic as a stable form of government. Cicero was known for developing the Roman concept of law. It was to the credit of Cicero that he gave the stoic doctrine of natural law, a political dimension and declared that true law was right reason in accordance with nature and applied to all men. It was eternal and unchangeable. He held that no legislation that contravened it could become a law and that no people could make what was right into a wrong. By its commands, law summoned people to perform their duties and restrained them from doing anything wrong. It could not lay down one rule at Rome and another at Athens, nor could there be one rule today and another tomorrow.

9.13.1   Cicero's Views on the Nature of Man and the State

Cicero held that all men were equal before the law. All races of men possessed the same capacity for experience and the sense of discrimination between right and wrong. He maintained that since all men were equal and subject to one law, they were fellow citizens. He was of the view that the state could not exist permanently, unless it acknowledged and gave effect to the consciousness of mutual obligations and mutual recognition of the right that held its citizens together. Cicero called the

state the 'Commonwealth', because it was a corporate body and its membership was the common possession of all. It existed to supply its citizens with advantages of mutual aid and just government. He maintained that the state itself and its laws were always subject to the law of God or the moral or natural law.

Cicero led a long Roman tradition of lawyers who tried to refine the concepts of law and justice in ancient Rome.

9.14   CHURCH AND STATE

The Romans established the first universal state in the world in the first century A.D. The Roman state was a huge empire which brought under its control vast areas of Europe and Asia. This empire needed a bond which could hold different races together. The universal Roman community needed a universal religion and in the 4th century A.D, the emperor Constantine fulfilled this need by embracing Christianity. At that time, the Church alone possessed universal aims and an efficient coherent organisation, which could unite the various conflicting people and classes of the empire in a single whole.

9.14.1   Views of the Church

The Church represented spiritual authority and claimed that it was a distinct institution from the state and entitled to govern the spiritual concerns of mankind independent of the state. The state represented temporal power and the church and the state represented two separate authorities. The Church during this period maintained that it was obligatory on the part of a Christian to respect constituted authority. In the temporal sphere, he should obey the orders of the state and in the spiritual sphere, the orders of the church. Thus, every man was a citizen of two states. The early Christian thinkers were more interested in maintaining the autonomy of the church.

9.14.2   Saint Augustine on Men and God

Saint Augustine wrote his books on politics in the 5th century A.D. and developed the concept of two cities - the city of God and the city of man. He held that there was a contest between the two as the city of man was dominated by possessive impulses and the city of God was based on heavenly peace and salvation. Only in the heavenly city was peace possible and only the spiritual kingdom was permanent. As a result, man's salvation lies in the attainment of city of God.

9.15   ACHIEVEMENTS OF ROMAN POLITICAL TRADITIONS

The Roman tradition served as a bridge between the ancient Greek and Christian traditions. The Romans expounded the concept of equality before law and did not discriminate between different races of people. Republican Rome successfully ran political institutions like the popular Assembly and the Senate. They evolved the concept of universal state that encompassed different communities coming under the empire. They opposed Greek exclusiveness and evolved the concept of law which gave justice to all. They were firmly rooted in the concept of morality. The Romans under Christian influence tried to demarcate the relationship between the church and the state.

The Romans used excursive force to suppress the opponents of the government. They did not reject the practice of slavery. They failed to fully develop the concept of state and the doctrine of political obligation which could bind people together. The

brutality of the Roman political class was legendary. As a result, the Roman empire could never enjoy political stability and political unity.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

    ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Fill in the blanks.

    a)   …............… and ….........… were two important democratic institutions of ancient…............. of Rome.

    b)   According to Romans, …..................... of the people legislative….......... And …...............… formulations formed the bases of law.

2)   What were the main characteristics of the Greek concept of constitutions?

3)   What were the powers and the position of Roman political institutions?

9.16   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied ancient Greek and Roman political traditions in detail. We have seen that the Greeks developed a very advanced concept of state and citizenship. For the Greeks, the state was a natural institution which tried to create conditions for living the good life. They also developed a very mature view of the constitution and causes of revolution or change of constitution in the state. The Greek concept of politics was limited to the concept of the city-state.

The Roman political tradition was less spectacular and original than the Greeks, but the Romans excelled in developing the concept of law and administration. They broadened the concept of state to bind together different communities of the world. Therefore, it was a universal state for a universal community. During the later period, the Romans divided the authority between the church and the state and pleaded for the division of man's obligations between the two.

Political science and political traditions developed by the ancient Greeks and Romans is greatly relevant today, because the Greek concepts of state, citizenship and constitutions and the Roman concepts of law and universal community still form the basis of political science proper.

9.17   KEY WORDS

Polis	:	Polis means city-state. It was a small political unit, in which citizens took active interest. The word politics is derived from the word 'Polis'.
Agora	:	means any open air meeting place in the city state; reserved for free born gentlemen in the city. 'Agora' or free square was meant for public recreation and as a market square where different things could be exchanged. It was a must for Athenian democracy.
Deme	:	The basic unit of the system in which every citizen had to enroll himself. The Greek reformer Cleisthenes divided old tribes in 'deme'. The demes, he created in the city were artificial. Every citizen had to be

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described by the name of the deme to which he belonged. There were 150 demes in Aristotle's time. There was a complex blending of tribal and territorial identities in the Deme. Enrolment in a deme corresponded to inscription in the voting registers in the modern state.

Timocracy : It was a form of government described by Plato in his 'Republic'. It was the second best form of constitution after the ideal state. Plato was of the view that in timocracy, the element of spirit would dominate reason and the rule would be in the hands of those who valued valour.

Pericles : He was one of the greatest Athenian statesmen who greatly democratised the Athenian constitution. He ruled over Athens from 446 B.C. to 432 B.C. In his famous speech, he called Athens 'the School of Greece'. He was a great general who consolidated the Athenian empire.

The Stoic Doctrine : This school of philosophy was founded in third century B.C. by Zeno of Citium. It was the Hellenistic school of thought. It was reshaped by Chrysippus of Stoa. The Stoics believed that there was a world-state and both gods and men were citizens of it. It had a constitution which was right reason; teaching men what must be done, what must be avoided. Right reason was the law of nature, which provided standards for what was right and just.

Universal Community : After the decline of the city-state which was self-governing, a new society where man was recognised as an individual emerged. He had to establish cordial relations with other individuals as brothers. He believed in the idea of universal brotherhood of all human beings in the world state which sought to bring them together despite racial, social and national divisions. It was the Romans who developed the concept of universal community.

9.18   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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Ehrenberg, *The Greek State*, Basic Blackwell, Oxford, 1966.

Sabine George, *History of Political Theory*, Oxford, 1973.

J.B. Bury and Others, *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Vol. 5, Edited Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1979

Grant M., *The History of Rome*, Weidenfield and Nicolson, London, 1978

9.19   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

1) **Check Your Progress 1**

    a) Foreigners   b)   Tribes and clans

    c) Discipline   d)   1000 Sq. Miles

    2) a)   True   b)   False   c) True

2) **Check Your Progress 2**

    1) a)   Natural b)   Good   c)   Citizens   d)   Aristocracy

    2) a)   False   b)   False   c)   True

3) 1) a)   Pericles b)   Lots   c)   Aristotle d)   Politics

    2) a)   True   b)   True   c)   False

    c)   The Greeks were the first to develop a science of politics and discuss the rights and duties of citizens. The Greeks developed the theory of state and held that with the help of the state only, we could live the good and perfect life. They also discussed the nature of the constitution and the causes of changes in the state.

4) 1) a)   Universal   b)   Plebians

    c)   Augustus   d)   Christian

    2) a)   False   b)   False   c)   True

5) 1) a)   Senate b)   300   c)   People of Rome   d) A year

    2) a)   False   b) True   c)   True

6) 1) a)   Popular Assembly and the Senate, Republic

    2) b)   Customs, Proclamation, legislative.

    3)   The main characteristics of the Greek concept of constitution. The Greeks were of the view that Monarchy, Aristocracy and Polity were the three forms of government and Tyranny, Oligarchy and Democracy were their deviations. A constitution provided for the distribution of power and offices in different classes of society. When there was a change in social conditions, changes in the constitution would also take place.

    4)   In Rome, the Popular assembly and the Senate were the two important political institutions. All the laws and commands were issued in the name of the Roman people and the Senate. In the later period, the Senate nominated consuls and made decisions about war and peace. The Senate elected two consuls for the year; they formed the executive authority and managed the affairs of the state.

UNIT 10 WESTERN: LIBERAL AND MARXIST TRADITIONS

Structure

10.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the Liberal – Marxist tradition which taken together and spread across the world represented proposing and defending a set of principles, public institutions and practices which were markedly different from other political traditions. Taken apart, they represented the most significant ideological cleavage in the world in the past two centuries. After going through the unit, you will:

● Know the characteristics of the Liberal – Marxist traditions as a whole;

● Be able to demarcate the liberal tradition from the Marxist tradition;

● Be able to identify the significantly different expressions of the Liberal tradition;

● Be able to identify the significantly different expressions of the Marxist tradition; and

● Be able to suggest the impact that these traditions left on political theory and practice.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

A tradition is a broadly shared body of ideas, beliefs and practices handed down and believed to be enjoying continuity across generations. A tradition is something accepted

and is common place relative to ideology, which involves partisanship and advocacy. An ideology, however, by finding a wider acceptance could become a tradition and sometimes by singling out certain elements of a tradition for advocacy and ignoring the rest, a tradition could become an ideology.

Often we find the liberal political being pitted against the Marxist political tradition. Mainstream expressions of these traditions in many respects are significantly different from each other so as to justify such a stance. However, in relation to other political traditions, there are many issues and concerns which are shared between these two traditions so as to make them look alike vis-a-vis the former. It provides a justification to consider the Liberal-Marxist tradition together. Even with respect to themselves there is a vast space – philosophical, epistemological and even substantial stipulations – shared between them.

While there is much that makes the Liberal-Marxist tradition a continuum, there are also major cleavages between them and significant differences arising therefrom. Of course, the extents of differences vary across their specific tendencies. Therefore, each one of them can be considered as an independent tradition.

What constitutes the Liberal tradition on one hand and the Marxist tradition on the other? It is difficult to lay down the boundaries of either of these traditions or both of them considered together, although there may not be much of a disagreement on what constitutes their respective cores. There is, however, little agreement on their elements that are mutually congruent and those that set them apart.

Further being traditions, and not merely theories, the Liberal and Marxist traditions are inclusive covering within their scope critically reflected views of their respective theories on a range of issues and concerns; the habits and dispositions of those who service these traditions; the world-views they are based on or support and the ways of life they spawn. As traditions, they get fused with common sense and shape many of our unreflected ways even before we make our deliberated choices by invoking them as a whole or a few or their elements.

10.2   THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LIBERAL – MARXIST TRADITIONS

We can identify some characteristics that are common for the Liberal-Marxist tradition as a whole. They are shared across the tradition, although the way we draw the boundaries of the tradition and mark the internal cleavages within it may affect our perception of these characteristics.

The Liberal-Marxist tradition is distinctly a part of the modern civilisation and consequently, shares a common ground with some of its central premises. This tradition sometimes attempts, methodologically or substantively, to coopt perspectives and elements from the pre-modern civilisations. Sometimes, an attempt may be made to construct a pre-history of this tradition by digging into the past. In the West, some of the scholars have traced Liberal and Marxist ideas and elements of ways of life among the Greeks and in early Christianity. Similarly in India, scholars have found strong traces of this tradition in Buddhism. Nevertheless, it does not make this tradition pre-modern, but retrieves akin elements from the past into its fold while remaining essentially modern.

The Liberal-Marxist tradition is grounded on collective human experience, reason and argumentation much more than pre-modern political resting on custom, usage, authority or revelation. The medieval Christian tradition for instance, saw revelation as a uniquely privileged site providing access to truth. The Marxist – Liberal tradition may

think that revelation cannot be a source of truth as far as constituting the common good is concerned and may such contending conceptions of it.

Being reflective about their own understanding, the Liberal and Marxist traditions could not prevent investigation into their own premises, formulations and recommendations and in the process, led to reformulation of their own positions and that too drastically, at times. The freedoms to which these traditions were committed to such as speech, expression, access to knowledge and information inevitably opened the door wide to pluralism of beliefs and values, which were in tune with free inquiry. Both reflective understanding and personal liberty, therefore, led to pluralism of beliefs and practices.

Liberals and Marxists agreed on a large number of issues as significant. In many respects, they shared a common conception of human beings and the centrality of man on earth. Both considered their explorations as reasonable and warded off prejudices and localisms of all sorts. Both of them believed that freedom and a political community conductive to freedom are values to be greatly cherished. They upheld the essential equality among human beings and the singular role that man is called upon to play in nature. Both of them believed that political participation opens up prospects for greatly enriching life. Ultimately, human beings have to take charge of their collective life and destiny and cannot let this charge be handed over to an all-merciful God or to the bounty of public institutions. However, they profoundly disagreed on the understanding and implications of issues. They disagreed on the prioritisation of concerns and mapped their consequences differently. Sometimes, one of them ignored an issue, which the other thought as significant.

The Liberal-Marxist tradition as a whole saw the role of the masses positively. They were committed to draw the masses actively into the political domain and determine its course. They, however, differed on how to conceptualise the masses and how they could assert their say. Sometimes, their positions varied overtime. Liberals who were initially enthusiastic about drawing the masses into the political arena against autocracy and political fragmentation started dragging their feet on the question once they were in power and resorted to the language of the rule of law and constitutionalism. Similarly, Marxists renounced the language of self-rule and resorted to that of responsibility once the Marxist parties were in power.

The Liberal-Marxist tradition is directed at understanding and stipulating the basis, the extent and limits of public authority rather than merely attuning to it. Attunement to the political system as a whole and the role one was expected to play in it were the hallmark of the pre-liberal-Marxist traditions.

The basis, the extent and limits of public authority rather than merely attuning to it. Attunement to the political system as a whole and the role one was expected to play in it were the hallmark of the pre-liberal-Marxist traditions.

The pre-modern political traditions were confined in space and time. On the contrary, the Liberal-Marxist traditions, proposed, procedurally and substantially, universal designs of organising and reorganising world.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

    ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   The following characteristics are common across the Liberal – Marxist Traditions

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2) Write four sentences on the Liberal – Marxist conception of human nature.

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10.3 THE LIBERAL TRADITION VERSUS THE MARXIST TRADITION

While the Liberal tradition shares common ground with the Marxist tradition, in many respects, they cannot be collapsed into each other. There are significant differences between them. Further, these differences assume specific forms when we compare different versions of one tradition with those of the other.

Liberalism assumes a relatively fixed and rounded off conception of human nature. Human nature, in this conception, is endowed with rationality and agency as integral to it. Marxism, on the other hand, sees human nature as a historical product. It is shaped in the vortex of the social relations it is located in while it, in turn, shapes those very social relations. While Marxism does not deny human rationality and agency, it argues that they are circumscribed by and have to take into account prevailing social relations.

Given its emphasis on agency, the Liberal tradition often tends to make freedom and equality metaphysical conditions of human existence and they precede legal and political order. Since Marxists believe these human agencies to be hedged in by the prevailing social relations, they tend to appreciate necessity and the factors that qualify, shape and direct human choices. They formulate conditions and strategies to expand the space for freedom and equality.

Marxists subscribe to a theory of history, which argues that societies go through both quantitative and qualitative changes. The former involves growth in productive forces and corresponding political, legal and cultural changes. The latter denotes transformation of prevailing social, political and cultural arrangements that uphold such relations. Generally, Liberals do not take the historical antecedents of social agents seriously, except hypothetically, to enable them and the society and state they live in to highlight certain characteristics of human beings as Hobbes or Locke do prior to the formulation of the social contract.

Liberalism tends to give more foreplay to the human mind to construe reality. Marxism tends to demarcate the sphere of objective reality from the subjective appropriation of the same. Further, it accords primacy to the former over the latter. However, Marxism agrees that ideas, when they become practices or take possession of the hearts and minds of the people, could become independent actors.

There is a marked distinction in the concepts and categories that Marxism deploys for social analysis and advocacy relative to what Liberalism does. For Liberalism, concept and categories such as 'human' rights and freedoms, civil society, representation, separation of powers, public opinion, justice and equality are central to its discourse. Marxism, however, has its framework in a body of concepts such as classes and class struggle, modes of production, production relations and productive forces, base and superstructure, surplus appropriation, state, revolution and transitions.

Marxism lays stress on social classes as basic units of a society. It does not wholly undermine the individual agency, but a historical role is ascribed to social classes. By and large, Liberalism, privileges the individual rational agent and invests him or her with the capacity to make autonomous decisions and pursue a life of his/ her own.

Marxism draws attention to the processes underway in a class divided society, which stunts and distorts human life and deprives human beings from exploring the rich potentialities or their life. Generally, Liberals confine human beings to a limited sphere of shared aspirations and leaves them to determine the kind of human being they wish to be by employing their freedoms.

By and large, Marxism tends to provide a comprehensive explanation of the course of human affairs and man's relation to nature compared to Liberalism.

Marxism is not otherworldly. It makes the world inform our ends and purposes. It, however, need not exclude certain spiritual pursuits as it envisages a rich constitution of the self by freely determining subjects. While there are persuasive strands of thought within Liberalism that confine human striving to this world, it is much more open to wards accommodating the transcendental and other-worldly strivings of human beings. Liberals easily leave greater space for spiritual and other worldly pursuits.

Marxism subscribes to a state of affairs where there is no exploitation and where a rich constitution of the self goes hand in with the decomposition of the community. Its theory of history considers the course of class struggle in a capitalist society as oriented towards such an end. Liberalism while upholding various kinds of equalities attempts to balance them with freedom of choice. It is disposed to reform the existing society than to strive after a society founded on non-exploitation and non-oppression. Community was not central to the Liberal imagination. However, in the wake of the rise of communitarianism as a distinctive body of thought, Liberals are attempting to reach out to community in a big way.

Marxists have a well-formulated and passionate conception of revolutionary transformation. Liberals tend to make the present human condition as eternal and permanent and if they subscribe to political radicalism, it is narrowly circumscribed as a last resort. For Marxists, revolutionary transformation is placed on the agenda by the turn social relations take, while for the Liberals it is a moral act in defense of rights and justice.

Marxists and Liberals differ on the conception, role and necessity of the state. Liberals tend to accept the state as an unavoidable evil. Its denial begets greater harm than its sufferance. Marxists see the state as an historical product arising in the wake of the irresolvable class antagonisms in society. Claming to represent the society, it lords over the society and ensures the interests of the dominant classes. They argue that the state will wither away with the dissolution of class conflicts and class relations.

Liberalism has enjoyed a close kinship with capitalism historically. Certain versions of Liberalism such as *classical liberalism* are closely intertwined with the early phases of the development of capitalism. Some of the tends of Liberalism such as freedom of trade and occupation and equality before law can be effectively employed

to argue a case for capitalism. By its appeal to general human conditions and shared citizenship, it tends to ignore class relations and thereby, let class dominance to prevail. Although Liberalism could be distanced from capitalism, it has not succeeded in doing so, atleast so far, as the kind of rights it avows tend to defend private rights over productive resources. Marxism, of course, is committed to the overthrow of capitalism and sees most of the evils of modern society as due to its association with capitalism.

There is also a major difference between the different versions of Marxism in relation to the Liberal versions. Many of the later versions of the Marxist tradition considered themselves as the authentic bearers of the legacies of their founding fathers. Leninism claimed to be the exclusive bearer of the legacies of Marx and Engels. Similarly, Maoism declared itself as the inheritor of the legacy of Marx, Engels and Lenin. The subsequent Liberal versions rarely claim themselves as the authentic voices of the preceding versions. They claim a philosophical and moral affinity, but not faithful continuity.

The different versions of Marxism are deeply stamped by the thought of a specific thinker compared to the Liberal versions. Therefore, distinct versions of Marxism often go under the name of their distinguished proponent.

In the Marxist tradition, although the later versions claimed an exclusive legacy of the tradition for themselves, they infact, became increasingly exclusive. Such exclusiveness combined with the claim that it represented the authentic tradition, led to internecine conflicts among the claimants. The Liberal tradition, however, allowed greater deal of internal differences and conflicts. The triumph of one did not bring forth the elimination of the other. The Marxist versions, inspite of their claim to represent the whole, became confined while Liberal versions without necessarily claiming themselves as the 'true' or 'authentic' bearers of the tradition, were able to reach out to the larger tradition.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Write five significant differences between the Liberal and the Marxist traditions.

i)   iii)   v)

ii)   iv)

2)   Write three sentences on the differing approach of Liberals and Marxists towards human freedom.

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10.4   VERSIONS OF THE LIBERAL TRADITION

The Liberal tradition went through several mutations as its internal co-ordinates assumed different significance as they were challenged and critiqued. Further, it gave rise to several regional variations as it came to be formulated in interface with diverse ideological and social contexts. The following versions of this tradition could be considered as notable.

10.4.1   Classical Liberalism

John Locke (1632-1704) is the central figure as far as this version is concerned. It fused together a relatively coherent body of ideas and dispositions. It unleashed and directed the course of social and political process in markedly different ways than hitherto accustomed. It instilled and promoted a different set of norms and values. It gave rise to a characteristic set of public institutions and subjected them to the scrutiny of its own principles. It attempted to fashion a commonsense and way of life infused by its ideas and dispositions. It made selective forays into the legacies available to it to retrieve elements conducive to the forging of this agenda.

Classical Liberalism subscribed to certain individual rights such as life, liberty and property, While there were significant differences on the perception of these rights, there was a predominant tendency to perceive them as expressions of natural law that informed human beings. Many thinkers who avowed this version argued that human beings were brought into society and were wielded together into a common will and authority through a social contract. In such a formulation, human nature was conceived as pre-social rather than formed in and through associational ties and belonging. Human nature was cast by this version into a timeless and universal scale emptying if from historical and contextual anchoring. Classical Liberalism, particularly the Lockean version of it, believed that private property was not created by civil society but was prior to it. Civil society and state had no right to interfere in it. On the contrary, it was indispensable for the pursuit of common good. Liberty, in this version, was conceived in its negative connotation as absence of restraint.

Classical Liberalism conceived the role of civil society and state as basically protective of rights. Therefore, state could not interfere in the domain of rights in the name of promoting some other value or impose limitation on the scope of rights, unless protection of rights itself required such an intervention. It stood for a limited government. It proposed a number of mechanisms to keep the government within bounds. The sphere of rights begot a civil society made of different associations and groups who monitored and constantly kept a watch over the activities of the state. The various freedoms enabled a civil society to maintain a constant and continuous watch over the organs of government. A representative legislature, separation of powers, securing dispersal of public authority across different organs of government and periodic elections were central to the disposition of this version. It avowed majority consent rather than majority rule. It did require every adult to express his representational preference through his vote. Virtual representation, i.e., representation through those entitled to act as such, was enough.

The economic counterpart of this version was free market and laissez-faire. Infact, classical liberalism admirably suited as an ideology for the emerging bourgeois class with its characteristic emphasis on private property, limited and formal avowal of freedom and emphasis on freedom of trade. Freedom of exchange expressed in market was supposed to assign a fair value to the product on exchange. It was construed as keeping the state at bay.

10.4.2 New Liberalism

Many ideas of New Liberalism, which consolidated itself as a distinct version of Liberalism by the end of the 19th century, were initially formulated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Liberty for him was not merely freedom of choice, but is the creative ability of people to realise their full potential as human beings. Participation in the affairs of the community expanded creative potentialities tremendously by placing at one's disposal collective resources against the solitary resources one could muster in the pre-social state. Participation in the political community and its processes enabled one to discover his real will and to shed contingencies of passing and lingering prejudices.

New Liberalism was deeply influenced by the thought of German enlightenment and particularly by the ideas of Emmanuel Kant and F.W.G. Hegel. Kant distinguished between a real and rational self, which he considered as a higher and a lower self-moved by desires provoked by the senses. The higher self was the genuine locus of freedom. True freedom for Kant was freedom heteronomy i.e., subjection to the will of the other and from empirically caused desires. "Such independence" Kant wrote "is called freedom in the strictest, i.e., transcendental sense."

This is the freedom of the pure autonomous rational will, rightly according to the purely formal moral law it gives to itself, obstacles to want satisfaction or limits upon choice are not constraints upon such freedom, but everything that hinders a moral life based on pure reason. Hegel sought to give to Kantian freedom a social and political expression. He argued that freedom expressed in the sphere of the particular and limited pursuits beguiles itself as freedom. He argued,

> "It is the moral whole, the state, which is that form of reality in which the individual has and enjoys his freedom; but on the condition of his recognising, believing in and willing that which is common to the whole".

Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) was to formulate the framework of the new liberal version more anyone else. He attempted to reverse the terms of classical liberalism by drawing attention to the quality of the political community and its institutions enabling one to exercise the kinds of choices one would wish to exercise. He argued that a community possessing law and government and which relies not on force, but on the consent of its citizens is the indispensable condition for freedom. Members of such a community feel morally obligated to one another and it is such concerns and supports that enable one to make the kind of choices that one makes. Citizens under such a dispensation accept their responsibilities to the state and towards other citizens because their own lives and liberties get respected and promoted in the process.

For New Liberals, freedom is a value to be cherished. However, a particular kind of state and society are the preconditions for the sustenance of such a value. Freedom requires morally formed individuals and social institutions make possible the formation of such individuals. These institutions in turn are expressions of the activity of its members.

In Green's formulation, rights and law were integral to freedom. Rights safeguard those freedoms which individuals and social groups claim for them selves and grant to others. In law the creative reason of the political community is at work, transcending narrow interests and establishing conditions, for the nurturing of freedom. The system of law guards the rights of citizens. The state removes the obstacles to and provides the condition favouring moral development. The state is not merely governmental and legal institutions of a society, but includes citizens and independent associations participating in the making and execution of governmental decisions and policy.

New Liberalism reconceptualised human nature from being a timeless one to a dynamic one. Human nature is formed and informed by the kind of institutions and supports that nurture and nourish it and these institutions and supports in turn, reflect the kind of human beings that sustain them.

New Liberalism opened the way for economic interventionist policies, welfare measures and redistribution of wealth. It provided arguments and justifications to tackle problems of unemployment and poverty. It sought a more equalitarian and cooperative society. The emphasis of the new liberals on the health of institutions as a pre-requisite for the formation of a robust citizenry was a powerful impulse for the making of a welfare state.

10.4.3 Libertarianism

In the past three decades, there has been a sustained attempt to limit and circumscribe the role of the state in the economy and society and valorise the role of the market. It has brought into vogue a version of liberalism called 'libertarianism'. It asserts the primacy of liberty vis-a-vis other values. It narrows down liberalism to what is permissible with the existence of the market, in which it sees the embodiment of freedom. Some of the important spokespersons of libertarianism are Robert Nozick, Milton Friedman and F.A. Hayek.

The Libertarians deplore the welfare state, which they think has become 'unlimited'. It acts as if it knows what is good for the citizens rather than let the citizens decide what each one of them thinks is good for himself. It is critical of governments by majorities, which have degenerated into exercises for the pursuit of power by concluding deals with various groups for the division of spoils. Majority rule has become a rule based on a coalition of various minority interests. Libertarians, therefore, strive to dissociate liberalism from majority rule.

Against a situation where governments feel free to make any law they see fit, libertarians advocate that people should be *Free to Choose* (Title of one of the books by Milton Friedman and his wife). They call for a minimal state, which would be merely concerned with determining, arbitrating and enforcing the rules of the game. They want to transfer the moral entitlement to the individuals composing a society from the state, which has come to arrogate it to itself.

The right to property, which libertarians consider as a matter of convention, is regarded as central to freedom by them. F.A. Hayek was to say,

> "What our generation has forgotten is that the system of private property is the most important guarantee of freedom, not only for those who own property, but scarcely less for those who do not. It is only because the control of the means of production is divided among people acting independently that nobody has complete power over us, that we as individuals can decide what to do with ourselves" (F.A. Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, London, Routledge, 1944, p. 78)

Libertarians attempt to set up an unbreakable bond between freedom, the market and the efficient pursuit of policies and measures. They feel that the existence of liberty leaves room for the unforeseeable and the unpredictable upon which science and civilization rest. They argue that our most useful knowledge is inherently decentralised and available to person for rapid adaptation rather than placed at the disposal of the planners. Changes in the ground situation make the elaborately designed plans archaic. An individual is better equipped to arrive at relevant and appropriate knowledge and put it to optimum use rather than welfare state bureaucracies. Markets facilitate rational allocative decisions by disseminating relevant knowledge. The markets, according to them, cannot involve coercion as free agents freely negotiate themselves

in its arena. Therefore, for a free system to thrive, it is not enough that the rule of law prevails, but that it ensures that the market will work tolerably well.

10.4.4 Equalitarian Liberalism

An important version of liberalism that has been formulated in recent years has been equalitarian liberalism. John Rawls' pioneering work presented in *A Theory of Justice* (1971) and *Political Liberalism* (1993) has contributed greatly to the elaboration of this perspective. Rawls in *A Theory of Justice* is critical of utilitarianism, which employs net aggregate satisfactions to assess the fairness of public policy and institutions. Rawls feels that such a position runs the risk of undermining liberty by stipulating a good prior to choice, upholding a form of majoritarianism that does not prioritise utility by rights and tending to make human persons instrumental for the satisfaction of others.

Against the utilitarian canons and falling upon the moral theory of Immanuel Kant, Rawls argues a just order should be based on the principles of "Self before its Ends' and 'Right prior to Good'. It is the self through deliberations and choice that identifies the ends to be pursued rather than certain pre-given ends determining the course a person should take. Such a perspective is considered deontological as it is not committed to certain prior ends governing our activity. Rawls resorts to the social contract device to formulate the principles on which all can agree to base their social and political institutions. These principles are: (1) Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with similar liberty for others, (2) Social and economic liberties are to be arranged in such a way that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. Each of these principles has their consequences. The first principle generates specific rights and duties such as right to speech, assembly, conscience, personal property and political liberties with regard to voting and holding of office. The second principle regulates the fair distribution of wealth and power. Rawls proposes a constitutional, legal, judicial and civil life based upon these principles.

In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls finds the conception outlined by him in *A Theory of Justice* as not taking into account the plural, but reasonable comprehensive pursuits of life that prevail in a modern democratic society. For the purpose, he proposes the idea of justice as fairness as a free-standing view on which the reasonable ways of life agree and thereby, find an overlapping consensus. Accordingly, he modifies the two principles that he had proposed in *A Theory of Justice* to an extent. These principles advocate and express an egalitarian form of liberalism by emphasizing on three elements. These three elements are (a) the guarantee of the fair value of the political liberties which is not satisfied with their pure formal value; (b) fair equality of opportunity and (c) the difference principle, according to which the social and economic inequalities are to be adjusted so that greatest benefit accrues to the least advantaged.

10.4.5 Other Liberal Versions

10.4.5.1 Country Specific Liberal Traditions

The versions of the liberal tradition that we have outlined above understand the significance and relationship across a body of ideas, beliefs and values and the consequences that flow therefrom differently. These versions blazed their own distinctive trails in different societies. Some of these societies displayed greater receptivity to certain versions in relation to others. For instance, new liberalism exerted a great deal of influence on the Indian National Movement and for years on the policies of the country after independence. Cultural expressions of different

countries and their constitutional, legal and political expressions domesticated some of these versions making their liberal traditions greatly homegrown.

10.4.5.2   Liberalism in the U.S.A.

The American version of liberalism threw up certain distinctive body of ideas which over the years interacted with the different versions of liberalism that came into vogue. In the U.S.A., the right to representation was not virtual as in Britain and tied to the concerns of the constituency and its electorate rather than to the interests of the political community as a whole. Further, through the system of representation, identifying the 'better sort' of people was emphasized. In the U.S.A., emphasis on property and local interests was much stronger. Further government was conceived in much more interventionist terms in the U.S.A. than the laissez-faire doctrine visualised in Britain. At the same time, the notion of popular sovereignity, which the people as a political community continuously exercised and guarded, come to be deeply ingrained in the U.S.A.. The institutional complex of liberalism too was differently emphasized. Divisible sovereignty, which enhanced localism and reduced the dangers of centralism, independent judicial branch, respect for rule of law and separation between religion and government found greater emphasis in the U.S.A. relative to Britain. Civil associations and their political significance in the U.S.A. were noted by the great french political philosopher, Alexis de Tocqueville. He saw it as a counterweight to democratic despotism that he felt was a potential threat in the U.S.A.

> "If men are to remain civilized or to become so, the art of associating together must grow and improve in the same ratio in which the equality of conditions increases" (A. De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, New York, Random House, p. 118)

American liberalism threw up its characteristic idea of pluralism. It argued that the state in only one of the associations that a person is engaged with at a point of time. There are other associations with whom he is bound in terms of his interests and loyalties and every association is supreme in its own chosen field. Therefore, the state has no overriding powers and needs to function alongside other associations.

10.4.5.3   Liberal Tradition in Continental Europe

The liberal tradition in continental Europe is complex and layered. The pre-Rousseouan liberal tradition in France had a certain distinctive emphasis. The various freedoms, of speech, belief, association and press were pronounced in the work of Voltaire. The Physiocrats argued strongly for the freedom of the market. The philosophers stressed on reason as a bond uniting all men and women. There was also a powerful civic-republican tradition in France which at times joined hands with liberal concerns and agendas.

Rousseau's conception of radical democracy and the relation that he set up between it and liberty ran counter to the formation of factions and interest groups. Factions upheld partisan interests and could not be squared with the real will formulated by the general will. The French state, which was supposed to be the bearer of this general will, was conceived as having a direct relationship with citizens. Between citizens and the state, there were no other interests. On the contrary, American kind of pluralism thrived on the assertion of such interests.

Liberalism in other parts of the continent took on strongly rationalist overtones. This was the case particularly in Germany. It was directed against autocracy, feudal fragmentation and the dominant say the Church had on beliefs and morals.

The relationship between tradition and nationalism remained ambivalent. When liberalism consolidated itself directing itself against feudal fragmentation, autocracy and the Church, it often went with nationalism and consolidated a version of liberalism called liberal. But there also emerged a brand of nationalism supported by the Church and traditional interests which directed itself against liberal nationalism.

10.4.5.4 Liberal Tradition in India

India has a liberal legacy that goes back for about 200 years now. There are some distinct emphases in this tradition. It called for social reforms as integral to the national project in India, which was simultaneously conceived as liberal. Liberals in India argued that the existing social institutions in India were not conducive to the pursuit of rights and liberties. Social reforms aimed at reform of the caste system and gender relations. They directed themselves against certain prevalent social evils such as sati, prevention of widow remarriage and illiteracy. Unlike the Indian National Congress, Indian liberalism sought constitutional reforms enthusiastically. Constitutionalism was to become an important plank of the liberal project in India. The liberals denounced the existence of untouchability in India and called for its speedy abolition. They favoured a governmental complex where power is both separated across different organs as well as decentralised. Secularism was integral to the liberal project in India. It demanded that religion be not mixed up with the affairs of the state, no religion be preferred over the others and the state remains neutral in religious matters. According equal treatment to all religions too has its roots in the liberal legacies in India.

The liberal project in India involved a strong state which enabled citizens and groups to pursue goals and values which they regarded as their own and which were in tune with the substantial characteristics of their projects. Such a state was held in check by the division and distribution of powers and their decentralisation and by interweaving the great diversity of India into its fold. Equal treatment of citizens came to be qualified by according preferential treatment to groups and communities which suffered disadvantage of one kind or the other.

The Liberal project in India has existed in an uneasy relation with the demands of nationalism and democracy. It has made extraordinary demands on its citizens calling upon them to be equally regardful of others which inevitably involves differential regard, particularly in a context of age-old hierarchical relations and exclusive ways of life.

The above three cases of the spread of liberal tradition in India are not exhaustive. They, however, demonstrate the variegated reception that this tradition found across the world.

10.4.5.4 Liberal in Conjunction

One of the major ways that liberalism has succeeded in being acceptable is by cohabiting with variegated perspectives and ways of life. There are a bewildering number of such combinations from the widely accepted such as 'liberal democracy' and 'liberal nationalism' to the relatively recent conjunctions such as 'liberal communitarianism'. In all such uses, the term 'liberal' does not carry the same connotations, but acquires a deeply context-bound meaning.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

    ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Mention the differences between classical liberalism and new liberalism with regard to the state in three sentences.

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2) State the approach of libertarians with regard to the following issues in two
    sentences each:

    i)   Welfare State

    ii)   Majority rule

    iii) Private property

    iv)   The market

3) Mention three important contributions of John Rawls to the liberal tradition.

    i)

    ii)

    iii)

4) Identify three characteristic features of American liberalism.

    i)

    ii)

    iii)

5) Mention four characteristics of the liberal tradition that came to prevail in India.

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10.5   VERSIONS OF THE MARXIST TRADITION

Like the liberal tradition, the marxist tradition too has several distinct expressions as
it came to be expounded and interpreted, took stock of the changing class relations
and applied to distinct and unevenly developed societies. The following versions of
this tradition are noteworthy.

10.5.1 Marxism

Marxism refers to a body of thought and social practices that took hold of the radical forces directed against capitalist society from the second half of the 19th century. At the head of these radical forces was the working class. Karl Marx (1818 – 1883) gave expression to the central core of this thought and shaped the emerging socialist movement. His friend and colleague, Friedrich Engels (1820 – 1895) was his life-long partner in this endeavour.

As a current of thought, Marxism was formulated by critiquing German Idealism, political economy centered in Britain and the currents of Utopian Socialism that prevailed in different quarters. It claimed to be scientific socialism and argued that socialist practice is directed against the entire capitalist order and can be led only by the proletariat. It sketched developments that led to the capitalist mode of production, pieced together the various relations informing it and suggested the role of the proletariat in transforming these relations. Given the uneven development of capitalism, it saw the role of the working class differently in different countries. In some, it might join hands with others for a democratic revolution and elsewhere, it could head an alliance for a socialist revolution.

Marx grounded his social understanding on a distinct philosophical and epistemological basis, which he called as *materialist dialectics* and is popularly known as *Dialectical Materialism*. It distinguished being from thinking and accorded primacy to the former over the latter. Some of the characteristic features of this perspective were the following: The mode of being is inter-related but contradictory. The inter-related and contradictory character of reality begets its differential and uneven expressions and sets the course of its transformation. There are two kinds of transformations: The first is quantitative which does not change the basic characteristics of reality. The second alters the very character of being as the contradictions internal to the constitution of being find expression, reconstituting it afresh. However, new contradictions inform the being even when it goes through qualitative transformations. The kind of contradictions constituting an object cannot be foretold, but need to be grasped. Lenin later called it as the 'concrete analysis of the concrete situation'.

Marx saw human beings as labouring creating and recreating themselves in the process. Through his labour, man creatively engages himself with nature and begets his bonds with other human beings, both associational and sensous. As long as productive forces were little developed, everyone had to be productively engaged to eke out his living. With the development of the means of production, however, the productivity of labour increased, resulting in surplus, over and above the immediate social needs. This surplus production, however, was appropriated by a certain social strata leading to class relations and class antagonism between those who produce and those who appropriate the social surplus. Marx and Engels find certain other contradictions such as between manual and mental labour and town and countryside as inextricably bound with the above contradiction. Given the class antagonisms in society, the state emerges to hold the antagonistic classes in check and thereby enable the reproduction of society. However, given the fact that the reproduction of society takes place on the basis of certain dominant relations, the state becomes the agency par excellence of the dominant classes.

Marx argues that different societies have gone through several modes of production till the rise of capitalism. A mode of production consists of the economy made of a specific combination of productive forces and relations among produces, or production relations. He calls it as the base. The spheres of politics, law, religion and culture are intimately connected to the base and get shaped by it. He calls them as superstructures. In his Introduction to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, he says:

"In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness" (K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow, Progress Pub., 1970, p. 20)

Marx argues that social agents caught in a particular mode of production pursue development of productive forces. However, when it is not possible to do so within the prevailing production relations, they resort to changing production relations thereby precipitating revolutionary transformation.

For Marx, capitalism is the final mode of antagonistic class relations. This mode of production develops productive forces to an extent unthinkable before. It is also a mode that envelops the whole world bringing all the extant elements of other modes of production under its sway. The basic class contradiction in this mode of production is between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. There are other classes and strata within a capitalist society. They begin to get polarised across the basic classes in the course of the development of productive forces. Marx argued that the polarisation of the working class and peasantry is essential for the pursuit of revolutionary transformation.

Marx argued that capitalism is susceptible to periodic crises resulting in a huge loss of productive forces. He also felt that along with the development of capitalism, there also develops the working class which initially deals with capital on terms set by the latter. However, as class relations turn sour, the working class is no longer prepared to abide by the terms set by capital. When further development of productive forces, i.e., a state of affairs providing overall satisfaction to a society, cannot be ensured the politically organised working class will launch its attack on the prevailing state power and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat. Such a political shift will inaugurate the phase of socialism, which will undermine capitalist relations and pave the way for communism.

Marx saw communism as a mode of production where the productive forces belong to the community as a whole and they are developed to the highest level so as to meet the needs of each and every one of its members. It makes human beings free to pursue the kind of work, which they relish and consider as the prime want of their life. Such a society, he feels comes to be governed by the principles "From everyone according to his capacity; to everyone according to his need". Marx thought that as long as labour was a necessity, there could not be freedom. Only with communism man becomes truly fee.

Communism can dawn only by putting and end to such age-old contradictions such as town and countryside and manual and mental labour. It will do away with division of labour. Marx thought that communism will lead to the highest development of the self along with the recomposition of the community.

Marxism called for a profound critique of the then existing socialism which he thought were based upon utopian ideals. For him revolutionary practice is not an act of the will and cannot be launched at any time. It requires the maturation of the appropriate social conditions. However, class itself was both a reflection and intensification of the contradictions of a society.

10.5.2 Leninism

Based on Marxist ideas, socialist parties arose sometimes struggling against existing parties bearing the label. These parties were committed to a profound transformation

of the existing social relations through revolutionary transformation. Coincidentally, liberal democracy too at this stage was increasingly becoming inclusive conceding a number of political rights to the workers. One of the tasks that confronted the nascent socialist parties was to define their relation with liberal democracy. There was also the problem of the relation between the socialist party on one hand and the movement organised around trade unions, cooperative, media and elections. There were also profound changes in the nature of capitalism underway at this stage. How will these changes affect the corpus of Marxist idea? This was an important issue before the socialist parties. At the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th, we find the rise of national movements struggling for their nationhood. The relationship of the socialist movement to these nationalist struggles was yet to be worked out; and finally as socialism spread across the world unevenly shaped by capitalism, the stage of the revolution and the strategy appropriate for the same were important issues for consideration.

Confronted with these challenges, we find a strong current of reformism developing within the socialist movement initially given expression to by Edward Bernstein, an important ideologue and leader of the German Socialist party. He called for a revision of Marxism as a number of its tenets were outdated. He questioned proletarian internationalism and sought to insert the workers within the nation-state. He did not want the party to lead the movement but instead, the German Socialist Party, saw the socialist revolution as a continuation and intensification of the agenda of the liberal democratic revolution.

Lenin intervened at this stage and attempted to formulate a characteristic response to all these questions. Lenin distinguished liberal democracy sharply from the revolutionary pursuits of the working class and argued that the working class cannot emancipate itself by expanding the framework of liberal democracy. He called for a break from the mould of liberal democracy. In his well-known work *What Is To Be Done*, he argued that the working class movement without being led by the socialist party will be caught within the ambit of capitalism. He, therefore, called for a party autonomous from the movement and capable of providing revolutionary leadership to the working class movement as a whole. Lenin acknowledged that they were profound changes in the nature of capitalism, changes which were not available to Marx when he wrote on capitalism. However, instead of qualifying Marx's ideas on capitalism, these changes, he argued, confirmed Marx's analysis. He termed the great changes underway in capitalism as imperialism, which on account of the contradictions inherent in it opens the door for revolutionary transformation. Lenin distinguished between oppressed nationalities and oppressor nationalism. He argued that the oppressed nationalities are struggling against dominant nationalism, which are the agents of imperialism. Therefore, he called for a global solidarity between revolutionary movement led by the working class and oppressed nationalities.

The uneven spread of capitalism, Lenin argued, called for the concrete analysis of the concrete situation that a revolutionary movement confronts in each country. He submitted Russia to such an analysis and redrafted the revolutionary design for Rusia. Based upon his analysis of imperialism, Lenin argued that although Russia was not industrialised like Western Europe and the proportion of the workers in the population as a whole was small, there was no possibility of the further development of productive forces in Russia. It would be inserted more and more in the imperialist network. He considered Russia the weakest link in the imperialist chain as all the contradictions were concentrated there : It had not gone through an agrarian revolution; its bourgeois was weak; its state apparatuses were autocratic; there were few civil liberties and the state was hugely dependent on foreign capital while at the same time it nurtured the ambitions of being a great power.

Lenin saw the bourgeois deserting its liberal claims in the wake of the growth of the working class movement as well as under the demands of imperialism. It made him

to stress the need for a violent overthrow of the existing state apparatuses so as to make space for the exercise of power by the proletariat.

Lenin rejected the modes of institutionalisation of political power brought about under liberal persuasion. He felt that its modes of representation, separation of powers and periodic elections were meant to be devices to keep the masses away from political power. He argued that the soviets must be the organs of power under socialism. All powers were to be concentrated in the soviets and the revolutionary masses should have a direct say in running its affairs. At the same time, Lenin stood for a centralised economy with the small industry making place for the big. When centralisation and bureaucratisation, however, threatened to eat up revolutionary gains, Lenin called for an autonomous organisation of worker-peasant alliance to subject these processes to revolutionary accountability. There were contradictory stances in these approaches, which were to tell on the revolutionary credentials of the emerging Soviet state.

10.5.3 Maoism

Mao-Ze-Dong was to raise fundamental questions on revolutionary transformation from the perspective of colonies and people subjected to colonial domination. Colonial domination generally enlisted the support of feudalism and reactionary forces as the social base of its support. There was little autonomous development of capitalism in the colonies. There was not merely a feeble bourgeoisie, but a relatively insignificant proletarian base. A peculiar strata of bourgeoisie arose under such conditions which nurtured itself by being the middleman of imperialist capital. Mao called it as 'compradore bourgeoisie'. Besides, there were differences in the nature of colonial domination; Some were fully colonies and the others were semi-colonies. Mao drew attention to the issue of the issue of culture under colonialism wherein the languages mores, beliefs and habits of subject peoples were subjected to marginalisation and subordination under the imperialist culture.

The nature of the revolutionary task in such societies, he argued, was to bring forth a new kind of democracy, which he called as *New Democracy*. For Mao, this was a radical form of compradore bourgeoisie. Such a revolution, he felt, must release the masses from age-old bonds they were subject to, release their energy and enhance their capacity to determine the course of their own emancipation. It required a conscious attempt to promote nationalist culture vis-à-vis the imperialist culture.

Who can bring about such a revolutionary transformation? Mao argued that the bourgeoisie cannot lead such a revolution in China and the only class under capitalism which can do so were the proletariat. But given the presence of the industrial proletariat in China, it can become effective only by firmly joining itself with the poor peasantry and leading the agrarian revolution. The task of the Communists Party as the vanguard of the revolution therefore, was to bring about an agrarian revolution.

Such an agrarian revolution cannot be undertaken by concentrating on urban revolution, but by shifting over to rural revolution and joining hands with the struggling peasantry. Urban uprising in the conditions of China, he felt, was mere adventurism.

How to bring about such an agrarian revolution? The strategy, he suggested was a protracted armed struggle by liberating areas and moving on to liberated regions. Guerilla tactics he found suitable to confront the enemy particularly at the initial stages.

Mao also spelled out the strategy of the agrarian revolution in greater detail. It involved basing oneself firmly on landless and poor peasants, taking in the middle peasant and enlisting the support of the rich peasant as much as possible. He also argued that depending on the kind of enemy that the revolution faced, the issues identified for agrarian transformation need to be modified.

Therefore, one of the major shifts that Mao heralded was the shift of revolutionary locale from urban areas to rural areas; founding a new axis of worker-peasant alliance and suggesting a specific strategy for the agrarian transformation.

Mao argued that certain conductive external conditions were needed for the realisation of a strategy of this kind for the establishment of new democracy. He felt that the existence of the Soviet Union was such a condition. Otherwise, the agrarian could be nipped in the bud by hostile forces. For Mao, new democracy was a different form of democracy in comparison to liberal democracy. Liberal democracy was tilted towards capitalism, while new democracy was tilted towards socialism. New democracy was the form appropriate for colonies/semi-colonies under conditions of imperialism and it would create enabling conditions for the building of socialism capitalism.

The second major innovation of Mao lies in understanding socialist transformation. He departed significantly from the Russian model in this regard. He argued that under socialism, primacy must lay on transforming production relations rather than merely developing productive forces. Socialism is a stage of transition from capitalism and communism. During this entire stage, there is the class struggle between the capitalist line and the communist line of advance. The struggle must not be merely against survival of old capitalist relations, but against capitalist relations that constantly emerge from the contradictory location of socialism. He argued that existing government, party and societal relations exclude the masses from asserting their direct and collective control over common affairs. Therefore, primacy under socialism must be still on the question of power rather than on development. The Cultural Revolution was supposed to be a political revolution under conditions of socialism to build socialism.

Mao argued that building socialism should not be mirrored in the imagery of capitalist development, as a passive process unfolding behind the masses. It should be a process in which the masses directly participate and determine the course of developments. The free creativity of the masses should find open expression under socialism and they should not be subjected to bureaucratically drawn plans.

He felt that the state apparatuses and development agendas require major alteration and reorientation under socialism. It is necessary that agriculture and industry be developed, but they need to feed on each other and complement from the upwards. Therefore, it was required that the commune, as the self-sufficient and self-governing unit under socialism, be developed and resources and recognition be accorded to it.

Mao argued that under socialism, it is necessary to break the division between manual and mental labour and town and countryside. Labour campaigns were launched to make administrators and professionals undertake certain number of hours of manual work.

For Mao, the cultural sphere became very crucial under socialism, advancing or retarding the march towards communism depending on the significance accorded to it.

Values such as the middle path of Confucius, he felt, were meant to balance off the extremes and not to strengthen revolution.

These ideas threw China into continued turmoil. The revolutionary zeal expressed in Mao was to be contained after his death by policy of modernisation initiated by Deng-Ziao-Ping.

10.5.4 Other Marxist Versions

Marxism has thrown up numerous other versions, which have survived as distinct traditions in several countries offering limited or more comprehensive resolution of issues. Some of these proposals have remained merely at the level of theory and have not been effectively translated into practice.

10.5.4.1 Western Marxism

Something, scholars have identified a distinct tradition of Western Marxism. It is, however, composed of the work of a variegated body of intellectuals, political parties, trends of thought, working class and radical initiatives and even individual witnesses. Its legacy remains deeply fragmented, uneven, contested and even contradictory. While it has made attempts to capture power through elections, mass uprisings and armed insurrections, its primary investment lay in shaping intellectual and civic tendencies and developing a sustained critique of capitalism. Some of the important spokes/persons of this tradition are Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebnecht, George Lukacs and Karl Korsch, Antonio Gramsci and Jean Paul Sartre, Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin and Bertold Brecht and in recent years, Louis Althusser, Michael Foucault and Jurgen Habermas. It has spawned a number of distinct schools of thought such as Council Communism, Austro-Marxism, The Franfurt School and Structural Marxism. There is the palpable influence of Leon Trotsky in some strands of this tradition. Radical feminism has been an important input in this tradition in recent years. Strong traces of psychoanalysis, particularly of Sigmund Freud, can be found in some of its orientations and inclinations. Some of its following features are noteworthy:

i) It identified alienation, fetishization and commodification of social relations as important issues before the socialist movement.

ii) It has been deeply apprehensive of the loss and stunting of critical reason under the sway and machinations of capital.

iii) It has drawn attention to the domain of superstructures, particularly culture and argued for the need to contend against dominance, suppression, repression and marginalisation manifest in this sphere. It has drawn attention to the presence of subaltern cultures and the creative possibilities they hold out to contend against dominance and pose radical alternatives.

iv) It has displayed a strong commitment to the promotion of socialist democracy and for the purpose shown greater sensitivity to learn lessons from liberal democracy. It has displayed greater sensitivity towards political values such as freedom and rights. It has been deeply critical of some of the socialist regimes for disregarding democratic norms and the restrictions they have placed on freedoms and rights.

v) It has tried to face the predicament of the failure of revolutionary socialist movements in the West by advancing alternative explanations. The work of Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Marxist, has been pioneering in this regard. He explores the issue of the reproduction of dominance of the dominant classes by invoking consent of the dominated. These alternative explanations have called attention to the intervention of socialists in the arena of civil society, ideology and popular cultures much more differently than earlier versions of Marxism suggested.

vi) Western Marxism has tended to stress on mass movements and popular mobilisation for the purpose of political ascendancy of the proletariat. The stress on revolutionary violence that we find in Leninism and Maoism is less visible in this version.

10.5.4.2 Latin American Marxism

Dependency and exploitation reproduced in their relations with the developed world, particularly the U.S.A., has remained an important theme in Latin American Marxism. The local structures of economy and power that collude in reproducing dependency and exploitation figure prominently in its lore. Given the coercive role of the state in the reproduction of the system of dominance, Latin American Marxism has invested a great deal of attention on capturing the loci of political power. Armed struggle and resistance have been the inevitable outcome of such a focus.

The Catholic Church has a powerful presence in Latin America. The radical movements under the auspices of Marxist organisations have often prompted the Church to think and redefine its goals and objectives differently. One of the major attempts in this direction is the formulation of a version of theology called 'liberation theology', which attempts to relate struggles against oppression with the salvific message of Jesus.

10.5.4.3 Indian Marxism

For long, Indian Marxism took shelter under the ideological formulations and guidance of Soviet and Chinese Marxism. However, it has attempted to strike on its own with regard to the following issues:

i) It has attempted to come to terms with Indian nationalism in whose formulation it did not have many roles to play, unlike the Communist Party in China.

ii) Mass movements, particularly, those avowed to non-violent pursuit of their goals have been central to Indian nationalism. Marxism has rarely been exposed to movements to this scale. Indian Communism while being well disposed to such movements and pioneering some of them under its own leadership, has not adequately reflected on them.

iii) Indian Communism confronted parliamentary democracy and it raised a number of theoretical issues before it. However, over the years it has come to accommodate itself to its demands while attempting to save itself from being wholly absorbed within electoral pragmatism.

iv) The great Indian diversity, uneven levels of development and pluralism have posed great challenged before Indian Communism pulling it in different directions and occasioning splits and splits. Hitherto, it has demonstrated little theoretical capacity to handle these social realities, although it has displayed greater political ingenuity to form political coalitions and alliances for the purpose.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Outline Marx's analysis of capitalist society in eight sentences.

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2)   State four distinctive features of Western Marxism.

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3) Mention three issues regarding which Indian Marxism has by and large charted its own course.

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10.6   LET US SUM UP

The Liberal-Marxist tradition as a whole has led to the constitution and reconstitution of the world as no tradition has done so far. It is generally believed that the Liberal tradition is hostile to the Marxist tradition. This unit highlights the issues they have in common and the mutually shared consequences that flow from their core concerns. At the same time, the Liberal tradition is markedly different from the Marxist tradition and it would do them great injustice if they were to be collapsed into each other. This unit highlights the differences between these traditions.

There is no uniform liberal tradition. We can think of several versions of the liberal tradition. This unit provides an outline of some of the important versions of the liberal tradition based on the shifts in its central tenets on one hand, and appropriations of this tradition by a political community on the other. For the first, we have considered classical liberalism, new liberalism, libertarianism and equalitarian liberalism. For the second, we have dealt on american liberalism and continental liberalism. The Marxist tradition too has undergone major transformation over-time. This unit provides a sketch of the tradition that Marx and Engels initiated, the Leninist recasting of this legacy and the Maoist version of this tradition. In terms of the appropriation of this tradition, we have outlined the West European, Latin American and Indian versions of this tradition.

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10.8   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1)   See Sections 8.2 and 8.3

2)   See Sections 8.2 and 8.3

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See above

2)   See above

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See sub-sections 8.4.1 and 8.4.2

2)   See sub-section 8.4.3

3)   See sub-section 8.4.4

4)   See sub- sub section 8.4.5.2

5)   See sub- sub section 8.4.5.4

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See sub-section 8.5.1

2)   See sub-sub section 8.5.4.1

3)   See sub-sub section 8.5.4.1

UNIT 11 MEANING AND NATURE OF THE STATE

Structure

11.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the greatest of all human association, viz. the state, which is the main concern of political science. There is such a great diversity in the uses of the word 'state' that it creates confusion. Thus, an attempt has been made to elucidate the basic features and tenets of the state in comparison to the synonyms of the state like nation, country, society and government. After reading this unit, you should be able to:

● Understand the meaning and derivations of the term state and know its basic characteristics;

● Differentiate the state from its various synonyms; and

● Understand the major theoretical framework about the nature of state.

11.1   INTRODUCTION

As mentioned before, one of the ways of studying political science is to study the state in all its varied manifestations. But the word state has often been used indiscriminately to express a general tendency or an idea like the "state" of a man's health, of his mind or of his economic conditions. In political science too, it has been used in different shades; as a synonym of government, federation or its constituent units. So, what 'is' the state, does it promote progress or restrain it, how much powers should the state have and in what spheres of human activity, how is it different from other existing institutions and what is the exact explanation about the nature of state?

These questions have been the concern of political philosophers since the days of ancient Athens; however, conscious efforts to formulate principles concerning the state of political theory began in the western world, along with the ancient Greeks. Thus, it becomes imperative to understand the concept as a basic theme of the discipline.

11.2   THE STATE AND ITS DERIVATIONS

As has been stated, one aspect of political science is to deal with the state, the highest of all human associations. The Greeks used the word "polis" for which the word city-states corresponds most closely to the English term 'Civitas', which also means the same along with the notion of 'public welfare'. The Teutons employed the term 'status' which forms only a part of the phrase. The modern term 'state' has been derived from the word "status" earlier employed by the Teutons. It was Niccolo Machiavelli who first used the term "state" in political science. Thus, it becomes very clear that the term state did not become very popular until the sixteenth century. The people living in a greater part of Medieval Europe did not know the concept of modern state. In course of time, the word became popular and acquired a neutral sense of authority.

11.3   MEANING AND DEFINITION OF THE STATE

Since the state is one of the important components in the study of political science, a clear understanding of what is meant by the term 'state' is important. From the beginning of social life, mankind has lived under some form of authority. This authority has varied in its nature and has exercised its function through different forms of organization. Beneath these differences in the concrete manifestation of political life may be observed a practical identity of purpose; and by disregarding non-essential elements and modifications that arise because of the demand of time, place and circumstances, we may discover the very essence of state, different from other organizations.

From a consideration of matters of terminology, we now come to inquire what the state is. Definitions of the state are, as the German writer Schulze remarked, innumerable. Naturally, these definitions are colored by the opinions of their authors and are effected by the point of view from which the state is envisaged. The sociologists view it as a social phenomenon, while the jurists regard the state as a juridical establishment; writers on international law emphasize certain elements, which the political scientists ignore, and finally philosophical writers formulate their definitions in abstract terms. However, we should remember that the state is both an abstract conception and a concrete organization. i.e. identified with physical elements. Thus, in all these senses, state can be taken to mean the following:

i)   An organization of individuals i.e. mankind viewed as an organized unit

ii)   Politically organized people of a definite territory

iii)   An organization of public law that is monopolistic over the use of violence against a group or population

iv)   An organization which in internal matters carries out its functions through a unified set of institutions known as the government.

11.3.1 Elements of the State

The state, as said earlier, may be viewed as both a concrete thing and an abstract idea. A concrete thing means that it is a specific human group or association and viewed in abstract terms, it is a corporation possessing a juristic personality. The state is composed, therefore, of both physical and metaphysical or spiritual elements. These elements are:

i)   A group of human beings, i.e. population (Population)

ii)   A territory upon which they permanently reside (Territory)

iii)   Internal sovereignty and independence from foreign control (Sovereignty)

iv)   A political organization or agency through which the collective will of the population is expressed, i.e. government (Government)

Students of political science should, thus, understand that the absence of any one of these elements nullifies the state; all must exist together. The state is not the people, nor the land nor the government, but all of them and in addition, the state must possess that unity which makes it a distinct and independent political entity. These features are common to all states, irrespective of their historically specific manifestations. For instance, it applies to the Greek City states, the medieval kingdom, the modern monarchy and all the other kinds of states that exist today-liberal democracies, military dictatorships and communist regimes. So, this explanation of four elements is common to all the states; this does not, however, clearly throw light on the socio-political meaning of the state.

11.3.2 Distinction Between the State and Other Associations

The common man does not make any distinction between the state and many other institutions like society, government, nation and others. But the legalistic view of the state, which says that the state is a law making power, makes a distinction between the state and other institutions.

The distinction between state and society is quite important because society is much wider than the state. In a society, all the social institutions and social relationships are included, whereas the state only covers an aspect of society. Many idealists and monistic writers on politics have not made any distinction between society and state. But the liberal writers make such a distinction and contend that the state is the servant of society and is within the society; that society is much older than the state and does not have the four elements like the state; the state is a highly organized institution with sovereignty, while society may be even unorganized and does not possess sovereignty; the state is not a natural institution, whereas society is. The Pluralists have always given importance to the distinction between state and society, because they regard the state merely as an institution, equal to the other associations of society to serve the specific interests of society.

Government is one of the constituents of the state, but the two terms, state and government, have been indiscriminately used for each other. But as a matter of fact, government is only an agency of the state through which the collective will is formulated, expressed and executed. In terms of stability, sovereignty and extensiveness, the state is in possession of all these rather than the government. It is also important to note that the state is regarded as a recently developed institution, while government is very old. Even the most primitive human societies must have developed some elementary form of government to manage the common life of the community. Therefore, government is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for the existence of the state.

Pluralists do not make a distinction between the state and other institutions of society and maintain that the state is like any other association of society. But, generally, the state is distinguished from other social associations because of its sovereignty. In every liberal democracy, the material apparatuses of state sovereignty viz.: police, military, bureaucracy and prison have become stronger. Today, a sovereign state has got tremendous material power to crush revolts, which the other associations do not have.

The difference between state and nation stroke nationalities has been a matter of great dispute because modern states are also nation-states. But the students of political science should understand the main distinction between state and nation, which is that the basis of a nation is psychological and cultural unity, while that of a state is

physical and political unity. Nations emerged with the development of capitalism, whereas states existed prior to it. The essential elements of a state are not the pre-requisites of a nation.

11.3.3 Is this Distinction Real?

The legalist view of the state makes a distinctions between the state as a legal concept and other social institutions. But with the emergence of the welfare state, the difference between state and society almost disappeared; the distinction between state and government is merely a technical one and government for all practical purposes, is equivalent to the state. Similarly, with the emergence of the nation-state, the difference between nation and state is no more important and the differences between state and other associations were washed away by the pluralists.

The activities of state must be seen with reference to the whole society. The state should be understood as the whole of the political system, which is operating in society to perform certain functions, activities and processes in the whole static legal institutions having population, definite territory, government and sovereignty. The supreme power to make laws is a political system which performs the functions of maintaining stability and equilibrium, policy making and serving the common welfare functions in society.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by the term state?

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2)   Distinguish between the state and other associations. Is this distinction for real?

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11.4 NATURE OF THE STATE: DIFFERENT THEORIES

The state has been envisaged from various points of views. Every theorist conceives and defines the state in terms of his own discipline. Each has given his own theory regarding the origin, nature, sphere, function and ends of the state. These theories often differ from one another in form and substance. In this unit, we shall make an attempt to deal with the various theories regarding the nature of state.

11.4.1 The Liberal Theory

Before looking into the liberal theory of the origin and nature of the state, it will be proper to have some understanding of liberalism itself. With the emergence of the new bourgeois class (middle class) in the 16th and the 17th centuries, the philosophy of liberalism came into being as a progressive revolt against the reactionary forces represented by feudalism, the church and the monarchy. It was a voice for the recognition of the consent of the individuals based on individual's rights and liberty. Its concept of the individual was that of the 'possessive individual' and it was a political movement for the establishment of a democratic government.

This theory is based on the liberal notion of man, which gives due importance to man as a free agent in this world, having a free will of his own. So as regards the origin of the state, it assigns due role to individuals, their natures, activities, interests and objectives. The state is seen as a necessity, an institution – evil or otherwise – which may establish law and order, peace and justice in society. The state is there to serve the general interest of society as a whole. It is regarded as an agency of human welfare, which will secure life and property of man. It is regarded as a contributor to moral and social development of man. Liberalism distinguishes between state and society and maintains that state is for society and not otherwise.

Liberal views on the functions of state have been changing from time to time. During the 17th century, the requirements of the capitalist class – which supported liberalism- were quite different and during the 18th, 19th and the 20th centuries, the requirements of this class changed, thereby necessitating a different role of the state in society. Classical liberalism of the 18th and the early 19th century, which supported the negative state with minimal functions, changed to modern liberalism in the later half of the 19th and the early 20th century that supported the positive state with welfare functions.

Classical liberalism is also known as the theory of 'liassez-faire' or the police state, or the theory of individualism that regards the state as a necessary evil. Necessary, because of the selfish nature of man and an evil, because it is an enemy of individual liberty. The state and individual freedom are seen as each other's opposite and classical liberalism wants to give more freedom to the individual by increasing the sphere of his activities and decreasing the sphere of the state. The function of the state is to provide physical security to the individual so that he can develop his personality without state interference. In brief, it means minimal state function and maximum individual liberty. Adam Smith supported this on an economic basis and Bentham on a moral and political basis. Later liberalism or modern liberalism is also called the 'theory of welfare state', 'revisionist' or 'reformist liberalism'. Here, the state is not regarded merely as a necessary evil, but it is assumed that the state can perform various functions of social welfare, can bring equilibrium and can satisfy socio-economic demands of the masses. Various thinkers - Mill, Freeman, Hobhouse, Lindsay, Keynes, Tawney, Cole, Barker, Laski and MacIver - gave the philosophy of the positive functions of the state.

Thus, the increasing democratization of the liberal state through the extension of franchise to all adults compelled the state to initiate policies of significant intervention

in the economy. It also meant transferring resources from the wealthier to the less wealthy through taxation and state subsidy. Unlike the minimal state, which was the original form of the liberal sate, the welfare state was called upon to make public welfare one of its principal concerns. The welfare state was not simply a response to electoral pressure, but also a response to the increasing awareness among common people of their power, expressed through associations like the trade unions and public opinion. But the welfare state should not be seen as a radical shift from the classical minimal state. Rather, we should consider it as an attempt to give maximum concessions to the people consistent with the needs of a liberal, capitalist market economy.

Liberalism, in the late 20th century, has taken a new turn in the form of neo-liberalism. It may be regarded as going back to the ideas of classical political economy. The neo-liberal goal is to 'roll back the frontiers of the state', in the belief that unregulated market capitalism will deliver efficiency, growth and widespread prosperity. The neo-liberal view of the state is found in the writings of economists like Friedrick Hayek and Milton Friedman, and philosophers like Robert Nozick.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

　　　　 ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the salient features of the liberal theory of state?

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2) What is classical liberalism?

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11.4.2 The Marxist Theory

The Marxist theory of state emerged as a criticism of, and as an alternative to the liberal theory of state. If liberalism was a socio-economic and political philosophy of the working class, Marxism was a product of the capitalist economic system itself.

According to the liberal view, state is the product of social contract, consent and consensus, and is there to serve the general interest of the whole community by

maintaining law and order, and providing justice and welfare services. While according to the Marxist theory, the state is a product of class division and class struggle and serves only the interest of one particular class, because all the classes cannot have a single interest/common interests. It rejects the state, associates its pressure with the presence of classes, and suggests that by a revolution and the establishment of a classless society, the institution of the state would be done away with. You should know that in social sciences, the debate with regard to "consensus model" and "conflict model" remained hot for a longtime. The consensus model on which liberalism is based, maintains that the basis of society and social institutions, including the state is shared values, norms, beliefs, interests, ideas and institutions. The conflict theory gives importance to conflict and struggle and draws the conclusion that the state and many other institutions are the product of conflict.

Let us analyse carefully the Marxist assumptions about the nature, function and legitimacy of the state, which Karl Marx built through his various writings including 'Das-Capital' and 'The Critique of the Gotha Programme.' Though Marx himself never formulated a theory of state separately, discussion of the state is scattered in almost all the writings of Marx. Marx was busy with the historical analysis of the capitalist mode of production, so he could not concentrate on specific issues like the state. But Engels and other Marxist scholars and revolutionaries have written on this aspect.

The main points of the Marxian theory of state deserve the attention of students of political science. Marx made it clear in his early writings that the state is an organized power of one class oppressing the other i.e. the economically dominant minority class through dominant political dominance rules over the majority working class. Marx regarded the state as an alienated and parasitical social force and rejected Hegel's idea of the state as 'a march of god on earth'. He never regarded the state as a higher morality ending conflicts in society and bringing unity and harmony. The state to him was neither equal to society nor above it, but was merely its product at a certain stage of historical development. Thus, Marx believes in a general theoretical framework known as 'Dialectical Materialism' and in the materialistic interpretation of history. Dialectical Materialism is a more general philosophical system from which is derived the more specific theory of historical development, which is termed 'Historical Materialism' or the materialistic interpretation of history.

Marxists hold that all phenomena that we experience are material, concrete and objective, outside our mind and consciousness. Also, all the phenomena are characterised by internal contradictions, leading to conflicts and then, eventually rising to a higher level of development. This whole process is termed by Marx as dialectical materialism. Therefore, to understand any phenomenon, one must grasp the way it changes.

A capitalist society is one that is based on the capitalist mode of production, where the capitalists (a minority class) own the means of production and the motive of production is profit and the workers (a majority class) sell their labour power to the capitalists for wages. In such a society politics, culture, morality and social norms are determined by the capitalist mode of production and the society is sharply divided into capitalists and workers. As the interests of these two classes are opposed to each other, class struggle between them is fundamental. The western liberal democracies-the USA, England, France, West Germany, Italy, etc – are examples of such societies. For the abolition of classes, Marx gives the theory of revolution, which is the most important aspect of the Marxian theory of state. The task of Marxian philosophy is two-fold to understand the world and to change it. Marxism does not suggest reforms of the exploitative capitalist system, but suggests that it should be over-thrown by a violent revolution and a socialist state and economy established. This socialist state will be a temporary phenomenon; it will abolish private property and classes; and thereafter, it will wither away.

Thus, the Marxian theory of state does not glorify the state; rather it is a theory of its overthrow, its withering away, in a classless society. According to the theory, politics and state are parts of the superstructure which is based on the economic system or the mode of production of a given society. Marxian theory of the origin of state is also based on this general view of state and politics.

A state originated with the division of society into classes and with the beginning of the struggle between classes. The historical analysis of the origin of state is that the state is by no means a power forced on society; rather, it is a product of society at a certain stage of development that is entangled in contradictions with it. The state has, thus, originated with the birth of classes and class struggle in society and is merely an instrument of exploitation in the hands of a dominant class. With the help of the state, ruling classes maintain their power over economically poor classes.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Explain the Marxist theory of state in your own words.

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11.4.3 The Gandhian Theory

Let us now try to see how Gandhi conceptualized the nature of state. Before briefly examining it, we should note that it shows similarities and differences with the concept of state found in Liberal and Marxist perspectives. We may also note that though it is derived from the Indian tradition of thinking on state, it also shows some influence of western thinking on the subject.

First of all, Gandhi accepts the need of the state; though as an advocate of non-violence, he does see that the state implies the use of violence or coercion. This is because Gandhi accepts the idea that man is by nature non-violent and that this applies to man in the ideal sense. Taking a realistic view, he agrees that there is some need of the state since in practice, men may not possess the ideal qualities of non-violence and sociability. But having said this, Gandhi also holds that state as an institution of violence must be limited. In other words, Gandhi accepts the minimal state.

Secondly, Gandhi suggests that the state should be limited on the basis of certain considerations. On the one hand, the authority of the state should be reduced by a system based on decentralization of power, in which communities below the level of state should have greater autonomy and independence from the central state. The

unit of such autonomy should be the village community. That community itself through a process of consensus should decide all decisions affecting the rural community. The Gandhian position is that insofar as the crucial local community decisions are taken at that level, the central state would be minimal, presumably concerned with the defence of the overall territory under its jurisdiction, foreign relations and any other problems affecting the territory as a whole. The power of the state is also minimized in the Gandhian perspective by the ethical norms embedded in the society as a whole through customs and traditions.

Thirdly, and only non-violently, the state is also limited by moral challenges arising from the individual "conscience" or the "inner voice". In his great classic work, *Hind Swaraj*, he held this kind of polity in which political powers are dispersed over a large number of self-governing village communities, to be a *Swaraj Polity*. Gandhi claimed that this was a genuinely Indian political system evolved over centuries in India. However, the Gandhian state cannot be separated from its economic and social systems. Therefore, the concept of Swaraj or self-government extends to economic and social arrangements. Within the rural community itself, Gandhi emphasizes the significance of groups over individuals.

Thus, it would be wrong to call Gandhi an anarchist, if by that is meant a thinker who denies the need of the state. Certainly, he limits the state, but this does not mean that he dispenses with it. The case of the minimal state is that it involves minimal violence, and it also means the acceptance of the Gandhian political principle of Swaraj. While Gandhi's emphasis on individual conscience has a parallel with the liberal emphasis on individual rights, it should be differentiated from the notion of individual right. Gandhian rights are not given to the individual on liberal grounds of individualism, but on moral grounds; that is, the claim that one has a duty to act morally. The Gandhian notion of *Satyagraha* or the political action of protest or resistance to untruth is a moral right and duty, and the Gandhian state is also subject to this type of action.

Gandhi's conception of the state resembles the Marxist state in the sense that both regard the state as a system of violence. Gandhi also lays emphasis on duties rather than on rights, given his moral perspective. Further, the Gandhian state rests more on a moral, communitarian consensus than on any notion of a collectivity of individual wills. In many ways, the Gandhian state is a distinctively Indian form of state. Today, Gandhian elements are reflected in the notion of the Panchayat Raj or the ideals of democratic decentralization. Infact, one of the crucial issues in Indian politics has been whether and to what extent the Gandhian form of state can be introduced in India.

Summarising the three perspectives of the state, we may say that the Liberal state is based on individual rights; that according to the Marxists, the state is based on class dominance and class exploitation, and the Gandhian state is based on a moral and communitarian consensus.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Enumerate the salient features of the Gandhian theory of state.

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2) Compare and contrast the Gandhian theory of state with either the Liberal or the Marxist theory.

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11.5 LET US SUM UP

So far, different notions of the state have been analysed above, which confirms that the state is a historical entity. Its meaning, nature, functions and scope have changed with change in time and circumstances, which gives us a better understanding of the state. However, one situation is confirmed; that since society is a collection of diverse groups, interests and conflicts, the state remains a platform for the promotion and articulation of the common interests of society as a whole.

Politics should be understood as a dimension of social processes rather than merely the study of state and government. According to the liberal view, the state is not merely a legal institution, having sovereign law-making powers and the coercive power to enforce laws, but its most important aspect is to serve society and satisfy the maximum demands of the maximum number of people in society. While Marxism emphasized the class nature of the state, it maintained that the basis of society is the sub-structure- the mode of production that determined classes in society – and on this is based the cultural, moral and political super structure of society. This to them, is a coercive instrument belonging to one particular dominant economic class of society. On the other hand, the Gandhian state is based on a moral and communitarian consensus, with the ideals of democratic decentralization.

In all these various perspectives, the need of the state is greatly felt. Whether the state is viewed as a class organization or a power system, or a necessary or unnecessary evil, or the welfare system, or the very basis of life, it serves its purpose during the various phases of its historical development.

11.6 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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MacIver, R.M., *The Modern State*, Oxford Universities Press: London, 1976.

11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sections 11.2, 11.3 and sub-section 11.3.1

2) See sub-sections 11.3.2 and 11.3.3

Check Your Progress 2

1) See sub-section 11.4.1

2) See sub-section 11.4.1

Check Your Progress 3

1) See sub-section 11.4.2

Check Your Progress 4

1) See sub-section 11.4.3

2) See sub-section 11.4.3

UNIT 12 SOVEREIGNTY

Structure

12.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with one of the most important concept used in Political Science, namely, Sovereignty. After studying this unit, you should able to:

• Understand the concept of sovereignty and know its nature and characteristics;

• Trace the genesis of the doctrine and explain its location and varieties;

• Critically evaluate the attacks leveled against the concept of sovereignty; and

• To know the relevance of the concept in today's world.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

Before we begin to analyse the concept of sovereignty, we should have an insight about the meaning of politics, relation of politics with other social sciences and the meaning of the state. The Liberal view regards politics as a social process to resolve conflict, maintain unity: an activity to serve the common good of society and to prepare the way for peaceful social change. The Marxist view regards politics as a study of class relations and class struggles in society. Similarly, the state has been understood as an institution, which performs all these functions in society. One fundamental question crops up here-how does the state perform all these functions? In reply to this question, it may be said that it performs all these functions with the help of some authority or coercive power, which is known as sovereignty. If there

are conflicts in society and these conflicts are resolved by a coercive power, then many questions arise-what is this coercive power? What is its nature? What are its bases? How can it maintain unity in a crisis-ridden, class-divided society? Should the state have all this power or is it to be shared with other associations of society? All these questions are associated with the issue of sovereignty in one way or the other, which shall be dealt with in this unit.

12.2 NATURE OF SOVEREIGNTY

The relation of state to state, of a state to its citizens, and of one citizen to another can be understood only after a further discussion of that characteristic which distinguishes the state from all other organizations, its sovereignty. Another consideration is the nature of law, since in that form the sovereignty of the state manifests itself.

The concept of sovereignty is the basis of modern political science. It underlies the validity of all laws and determines all international relations. It may be briefly outlined as follows: The state comes into being when an independent group of people are organized by means of a government which creates and enforces laws. Within this group, there must be supremacy of will and power. It must contain some person or body of persons whose commands receive obedience and who can, if necessary, execute those commands by means of force. Such a person or body of persons exercises sovereignty, and such commands are called laws. Evidently, there can be no legal limit to sovereignty, since that would imply a higher lawmaking body, and that in turn would be sovereign. The state, therefore, is legally sovereign.

While possessing unlimited legal power, the state grants certain rights and privileges to individuals and sets limits to its own activities. A state may grant a large measure of autonomy to its colonies or may give extensive powers to its local divisions, and still retain sovereignty, if it can legally withdraw these delegated powers at any time.

A distinction is usually made between internal and external sovereignty. Writers, especially on international law, speak sometimes of internal sovereignty as the power to make and enforce laws over all persons in the territory of a state, and of external sovereignty as the power to establish and carry on relations with other states, including the power to declare war and make peace. This conception of external sovereignty is objectionable, because it implies that a state possesses sovereign power vis-à-vis other states, which is not true. Other writers view external sovereignty as the freedom of the state from subjection or control by another state. Treaties or the rules of international law by which states agree to certain limitations on their complete freedom of action does not destroy their sovereignty, since there is no superior legal compelling authority to enforce them. If a state is internally sovereign, it must of necessity be legally independent externally. Sovereignty, properly speaking, deals with the internal relations of a state with its inhabitants ; it is a term of constitutional law rather than of international law. It is a legal concept and deals with positive law only.

In the last analysis, sovereignty rests upon either force or consent or a combination of force and consent. Men obey because they agree that it is desirable to do so. In despotic states, men obey through fear, while in democratic states the majority of men obey through consent. Force is only required for the few who refuse to obey. It is this possession of force to support its commands and to compel obedience that distinguishes the state from all other associations and that makes it sovereign.

12.3 WHAT IS SOVEREIGNTY?

Like the notion of the state, sovereignty has also undergone changes in historical circumstances. During the 18th and the 19th centuries, the legal notion of sovereignty

would have been sufficient, but in our times it is not so. The state cannot run its affairs on the basis of law or command alone. Today, the naked power of the ruler of earlier times is replaced by the power to control public opinion to enforce sovereignty. Its legitimacy is based more on its ability to resolve social conflict, establish order and serve the general interest of the community. This gives a proper understanding of the authority of the state. Its authority rests more on the will of the people to render obedience than on its coercive power. This is the liberal meaning of sovereignty. However, the liberals do not reject the coercive power of the state altogether, and opine that in order to save the socio-economic and political order, its use may be legitimate, when necessary.

There is yet another view of sovereignty, which regards sovereignty to be the power of one particular class of society over another class. This view is based on a scientific analysis of society and is the Marxian view. According to this view, state and sovereignty are the power of an economically dominant class, which uses this to further its own interest. Marxism suggests that sovereignty in a capitalist state should be destroyed by a socialist revolution and it should be replaced by the sovereignty of the working class— the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. The state will wither away in a classless society. In a classless society, sovereignty, which is a class power, will have no place.

In the present century, some pluralists and behaviouralists have given a new interpretation of sovereignty. According to the pluralist conception, power in a society is not centralized in the state, but divided among different associations and groups. Behaviouralists maintain that in a democratic society, power is shared by a competing plural elite. Thus, power is assumed as diffused, rather than centralized, in a democratic society.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is Sovereignty?

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2)   Explain the nature of sovereignty in your own words.

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12.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOVEREIGNTY

In this section of the unit, we shall discuss several key characteristics of sovereignty, which makes it imperative for the citizens to obey the state. The characteristics of sovereignty may be summarized as follows:

1) **Absoluteness:** This means that there can be no legal power within the state superior to it, and there can be no legal limit to the supreme law making power of the state. It is absolute in the sense of not being subject to any restraint, legal or otherwise. In a civil society, although the laws passed by the sovereign are binding on all associations and citizens, still this does not mean that there are no practical limitations on the sovereignty of the state. Although certain self-imposed limitations, internal or external, cannot be legally treated as limitations. These limitations are overcome by the "absolute" nature of the state.

2) **Universality:** The sovereignty of the state extends over every person and every association of persons in the state. The apparent exception in the case of diplomatic representatives is an international courtesy, which the state may remove any time.

3) **Permanence:** The sovereignty of the state continues as long as the state itself exists. Those who exercise it may change, and the whole state may be reorganized; but sovereignty, wherever located, persists. Only by the destruction of the state itself can sovereignty be destroyed.

4) **Indivisibility:** This implies that there can be but one sovereignty in a state. To divide sovereignty is to destroy it. The exercise of its powers may be distributed among various governmental organs, but sovereignty is a unit, just as the state is a unit. There must be as many states as there are sovereignties. A divided sovereignty is a contradiction in terms.

The theory of indivisibility of sovereignty has been attacked from various points of view. Writers on international law speak of part sovereign states, such as protectorates. The theory of divided sovereignty was held by most American thinkers, who viewed the United States as sovereign with regard to the powers conferred upon the national government, and the states as sovereign with regard to those powers reserved for them. German writers revived this theory at the time of formation of the German Empire, but it has now been abandoned. What is divided in a federal system is not sovereignty, which resides in the state, but the exercise of its various powers, which are distributed in accordance with a constitutional system among various governmental organs. More recently the theory of divided sovereignty has been revived by the pluralists, who deny that the state alone is sovereign and who hold that other associations in the state, such as churches or economic groups, are sovereign over their particular interests.

12.5 DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA OF SOVEREIGNTY

The idea of sovereignty can be traced back to Aristotle, who wrote of the 'supreme power' of the state. Roman lawyers and medieval writers, however, had a somewhat vague and confused idea of the nature of sovereignty. In the Middle Ages, the state in the modern sense did not exist. Feudalism was a governmental system based on personal allegiance. However, the feudal nobles were weakened by the crusades and their own quarrels. Taking advantage of their weakness, the king increased his power and importance until he became supreme in the state. Later, as men began to realize that government was an agent rather than a master, sovereignty was applied to the state itself, instead of to the king.

It was the struggle between the rising national state and its various internal and external rivals-the feudal lords, the Papacy and the Holy Roman Empire-that gave rise to the modern doctrine of sovereignty. Jean Bodin in the 16th century was the first writer to discuss at length the nature and characteristics of sovereignty. The state was recognized as supreme over all its citizens and free from any external compulsions. The idea was further developed by Hobbes who justified its absolute powers. Rousseau too agreed that sovereignty was absolute and unlimited, although he located it in the general will of the people. Finally, in the writings of John Austin, the legal theory of sovereignty received its most elaborate analysis. He held that in every state, there must be a determinate body, which possesses sovereign power, that its authority is indivisible and legally unlimited and that its commands alone create law. This theory serves as the basis for modern jurisprudence, although it has been criticized by many writers.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Enumerate the salient features of sovereignty.

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2)   Trace the development of the concept of sovereignty.

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12.6   LEGAL AND POLITICAL SOVEREIGNTY

It is important for the students of political science to understand the line of distinction between legal and political sovereignty.

Legal sovereignty represents sovereignty as the supreme law making power; that is, to issue the highest orders. It is bound neither by moral nor by natural laws. Laws made by the sovereign are to be obeyed by all compulsorily. But then the question arises, where does this legal sovereignty lie in the modern state? In a federal state, the legislature cannot make laws on matters assigned to the states, since powers are decentralized between the center and the states according to the constitution. Thus, legal sovereignty does not reside with the legislature. Even the British parliament, where the king makes any law that it derives, unrestrained by the courts, is also bound by public opinion and by moral and other laws. To elaborate further, even

dictators like Napoleon, Hitler and Mussolini did not have unlimited powers of law making. Thus, in real political life, legal sovereignty, as undisputed supreme power to make any law, is not generally seen.

Thus, to enumerate again, legal sovereignty is determinate and definite, has supreme and unlimited powers to make laws, its laws are obeyed by all and involve punishment or disobedience, and finally it being the fountain head of all legal rights, it alone has the power to make laws. The most explicit statement of legal sovereignty is found in the Austinian theory of sovereignty.

Now, we have seen that legal sovereignty presents merely a legal viewpoint of sovereignty. In every society, there is an unseen power behind legal sovereignty. This unseen power is known as political sovereignty, which is expressed in many forms like public meetings, processions and demonstrations. If the laws of the legal sovereign are immoral, this unorganized power of political sovereignty can compel the legal sovereign to bow down. Thus, political sovereignty is unseen and a bigger command. It is the revolutionary power of the alert and conscious people.

History has shown several instances of this revolutionary political sovereignty destroying the legal sovereign; e.g. Czar Nicholas of Russia was overthrown by Lenin's political sovereignty in 1917, Chiang Kai-Shek of China was destroyed by the leadership of Mao-Zedong, and similar events happened in Iran, South Africa and Rhodesia against despotic regimes. It is the fear of this sovereignty, which keeps the legal sovereign tight and alert. If legal sovereignty has to survive, then it must work in close cooperation with political sovereignty.

In a representative democracy, the difference between legal and political sovereignty can be seen clearly, since the representatives of people (government) are the legal sovereign and the electorate are the political sovereign. But in a direct democracy, this difference is not seen since the people (political sovereign) are also the legal sovereign as they make laws themselves. In socialist countries like China and Russia, participation through organized mass organizations is enough to end the difference between the legal and the political sovereign. However, in despotic states, this difference becomes very clear- the police, the army, the prisons, lathi, bullets etc. reflect legal sovereignty; and the people, their organizations, mass movements and struggles, strikes, demonstrations etc. reflect political sovereignty. In their struggle, political sovereignty predominates. But this is quite impossible in a class divided society because the class interests of both the classes – property owners and the property less – are diametrically opposed.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Distinguish between legal and political sovereignty.

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12.7 LOCATION OF SOVEREIGNTY

One of the most difficult questions in political theory is that of the location of sovereignty in the state. Now, that we know that sovereignty is the essence of the state, implies external and internal independence from other states and involves legal supremacy over persons, the question of its exact location still remains. To this, various solutions have been offered, which we would now be looking into.

12.7.1 Sovereignty of the Monarch

Sovereignty of the state was identified with the power of the Monarch in the sixteenth century. This was so because, in order to establish personal independence and supremacy, the kings underwent struggles, that gave rise to the conception of sovereignty. When success was achieved over rivals, sovereignty was accorded to the kings. The king was the sovereign and even said, "I am the state". This theory made the king the source of all law and authority; he could do no wrong; subjects were to render passive obedience. However, modern democracy came to the forefront via revolutions and thus, destroyed this theory and the kings became unimportant parts of the government.

12.7.2 Sovereignty of the People

This theory was also known as the theory of popular sovereignty, which meant that the people have the supreme power and they are the source of all powers. It means that sovereignty of the states is not based either on God or on naked power, but only on the people's will. The demand for popular sovereignty was raised by the supporters of the Conciliar Movement during the 15th century against the authority of the Church. But in modern times, it is associated with the name of Rousseau, who supported it in his theory of general will during the 18th century. The theory of popular sovereignty overthrew the French monarchy, caused the American Revolution and has been the burning idea behind all the revolutions against despotism. This theory was also responsible for making Europe the graveyard of monarchies. Thus, popular sovereignty has emerged as a powerful revolutionary idea in Europe. This principle, infact, is the basis of all modern democracies.

But the main difficulty with the principle of popular sovereignty is the assumption that the whole of the people have one will. This theory does not assume that society is class-divided and that the interests of different classes are opposed to each other. In a class-divided society, there are always two wills-one of the exploiting rich class and the other of the exploited poor class. These wills can never meet and as such, the whole of the people cannot have a single will. In view of this, the principle of popular sovereignty becomes vague and indeterminate. From the legal viewpoint, the principle of popular sovereignty is merely a fiction, as it does not fit into the realities of modern-day political life. The elitist theory of democracy has proved that popular sovereignty is a bogus principle even in modern democracies. According to some writers, popular sovereignty can be located in the electorate or the majority of the electorate and according to others, it can be located in unorganized masses. But this view is not really true. People's sovereignty is not expressed in elections, but it finds an expression in the people's revolutionary struggles and mass movements. In a class-divided society, popular sovereignty is manipulated by the ruling class or it tries to crush it.

In conclusion, it may be said that popular sovereignty regards power of the people as the basis of state sovereignty. This principle has shaken monarchies, but in European democracies and class-divided societies, this principle does not hold much water now. The 18th century principle of popular sovereignty in the European world has converted itself into the principle of sovereignty of the bourgeoisie in the present century.

12.7.3 Sovereignty as Constitution Making Power

After the theory of popular sovereignty had successfully accomplished its work of overthrowing royal sovereignty and establishing democratic governments, it was re-examined in an effort to find a more definite and legal location of sovereign power. This was the work of a number of jurists in the nineteenth century, who reached the conclusion that sovereignty is located in that body of person/persons who make the constitution of the state or who, once the constitution is made, possess the legal power to amend it. This theory, which is essentially juristic in nature, reasoned as follows: The supreme law in a state is its constitution. This body of principles creates the framework of government, outlines its powers, and adjusts the relation of the state to its citizens. Hence, the government is limited in its power by the constitution, and is inferior in authority to the body that may create or change this fundamental law. Whoever creates the constitution makes the supreme law of the state and expresses its direct will; therefore, they may be sovereign. In some states, the national legislature exercises this power; in others, a special organ or a special method of procedure is required for constitution making.

But a more serious objection strikes at the root of the apparent legality of this theory. The constitution-amending organ does not posses the legally unlimited power that is the essence of sovereignty. It can legally do one thing only and that is to amend the constitution. Any attempt to go beyond this power and to make any other law would be an illegal usurpation of power. We, thus, have the contradiction of the sovereign body being legally limited to the exercise of a single and specific function. The constitution making body, therefore, is not sovereign. It is merely a part of the government, possessing the legal power to exercise the limited, though important, function of redistributing the total exercise of sovereign power among the various other organs of government.

12.7.4 Sovereignty of Law Making Power

This theory locates sovereignty in the sum total of all the lawmaking bodies in the government in accordance with law. All the bodies in the state, legally sharing themselves in the expression of the state's will, were sovereign too. These included courts (as they created law), administrative officials (since they had discretionary powers), the electorate (as they decided issues through elections or referendum) and such other special bodies. This theory considers state and government as a unit each and sovereignty resides in both of them, but is exercised by the government. Thus as a whole, the state is a unit but its exercise of power is to be distributed among numerous organs of government. Thus, this theory avoids the vagueness and loose thinking of the theory of popular sovereignty. Sovereignty ultimately resides in the state, but only through the laws made and administered by its government can sovereignty be manifested.

12.8 DE JURE AND DE FACTO SOVEREIGNTY

This aspect of sovereignty has been established by international law. Whenever there is a political upheaval or a civil war in a country or a similar situation, we have two types of government- the legal government, which has been uprooted and the new government which though not legal, holds actual power. In such a situation, the question of recognition of (which) power arises. De jure sovereignty is one, which is legally competent to issue the highest command of the state. It has the legal right to exercise sovereign power and has the obedience of the masses. A de facto (factual) sovereign is the one who has got actual power and who has real command to go with it. His authority rests on his physical force and control. He may be a usurping king, a dictator, a priest, a prophet, or a charismatic leader. In any of these instances, his power rests not on law, but on physical force and actual control.

History is full of examples of de facto exercise of sovereignty. In 1649, Cromwell in England became the de facto sovereign after he dismissed the long standing Parliament. Nepoleon became the de facto sovereign of France after overthrowing the Directory. Czar Nicolas was overthrown by the Russian people in 1917 and de-facto sovereign power came into the hands of the Bolshevik Party under the leadership of Lenin. Similarly, de jure sovereign Chiang kai-shek was over-thrown by the Communist Party of China, under the leadership of Mao-Zedong in 1949, and the socialist state under his leadership became the de facto sovereign in China. Similar situations arose because of military coups in Bangladesh in 1975, Argentina and Lebanon in 1976, Pakistan in 1977 and again in 2001, Afghanistan in 1978, Iran in 1979 and Uganda in 1980. Similar situations may arise when a civil war takes place in a country.

A de facto sovereign in the long run becomes a de jure sovereign also, because he has the actual power. It is always the endeavor of the de facto sovereign to turn himself into a de jure sovereign. As the actual power lies with the de facto sovereign, he is in a better position to stake his claim, and be recognized as a legal sovereign in the long run.

However, some jurists maintain that sovereignty is a mere legal concept and the distinction between de facto and de jure sovereignty is a political fiction, because the authority of a de facto sovereign is unlawful. But here one thing must be understood, viz., that the distinction between de facto and de jure sovereignty is with regard to the exercise of sovereign power. It is mainly important from the viewpoint of international law and diplomacy. This question becomes important only in the case of a revolution, a coup, a civil war, etc., in a state because in such cases there exist too many political claims to sovereignty.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

  ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   List the various sources of sovereignty.

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2)   Describe any two sources of sovereignty.

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12.9   LIMITATIONS ON SOVEREIGNTY

We have already discussed at length that sovereignty is the supreme power of the state with no legal limitations. But in actual practice, there are some limitations, which may or should limit the exercise of its powers.

12.9.1 Moral Limitations

Many early writers argued that sovereignty was limited by divine law, by natural law, or by moral law. They generally accepted the principles of religion, morality and justice which undoubtedly influence the exercise of sovereignty. But the law of gods and of nature must be interpreted by human agencies; they exercise no sovereignty by themselves. They are not legal limits, but a part of the intellectual atmosphere in which laws are made. They limit sovereignty only in the sense that a wise state will not enact laws contrary to generally accepted ideas of morality and justice, because of the opposition such laws would arouse, leading to difficulties in enforcement or even leading to a revolution. Only such laws are supported by a general consensus of opinion that can be successfully administered. In modern states, many aspects of life are exempt from governmental interference, and any state which attempts to exercise its legal power to interfere in certain relations of human life would face a lot of resistance and may even be overthrown by a revolution.

12.9.2 Constitutional Limitations

Some writers have argued that sovereignty is limited by the constitution of the state. They make a distinction between fundamental or constitutional law and the ordinary laws made by the government, holding the former to be the higher law, and the latter to be valid only if they accord with the former. To this point of view, two objections may be raised. The sovereignty of the state is not limited by the constitution, since the state may legally amend its constitution whenever it desires. A limitation self-imposed and removable at pleasure is not a real or a legal limitation. What is limited by the constitution is not the state or its sovereignty, but the government of the state. But this provision for a legal distribution of the exercise of its sovereign powers places no limitation on sovereignty itself.

In the second place, there is no such thing as a higher law and a lower law. Laws may differ in the importance of the question with which they deal. Both are exercising that share of the sovereign power of the state which its legal system of organization allots to them. The constitution differs from the other laws in nature and purpose, but not in legal validity. Like other laws, it is an expression of the sovereign will of the state and not a limitation upon it.

12.9.3 International Limitations

Many writers today hold that the sovereignty of a state is limited by the rules of international law and by the treaties and conventions into which it enters with other states. According to the strictly, juristic theory of sovereignty, these restrictions are not legally binding. They are voluntary limitations, self-imposed, which a state may legally repudiate, and no legal authority exists to enforce them. Sovereign states must be, in the last analysis, judges of their rights and obligations to the other states. They may repudiate their treaties, refuse to be bound by the accepted rules of international law, and declare war in defense of their interpretation of international rights. International law is not law in the sense that it is the will of a determinate sovereign, enforceable on subjects.

If, as some writers believe, the present tendency is towards the development of an international organization with unified control, the result would be a world sovereign

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state, with the right to create and enforce law. In that case, what we now call international law would be law, but it would cease to be international, being the unified will of a world state. What is now called external sovereignty would cease to exist, being swallowed up by the internal sovereignty of the world system. Most writers, however, believe that it is more feasible, under present conditions, to develop internationalism on the basis of sovereign national states. If this is to be done, the traditional theory of external sovereignty and equality of states must be modified to permit a certain degree of international control.

12.10 ATTACKS ON THE THEORY OF SOVEREIGNTY

The concept of sovereignty as the essence of the state has been severely criticized. One group of writers contend that sovereignty is not necessary for state existence, while another group of writers denies that sovereignty is the source of law; still an other group denies that sovereignty is the exclusive possession of the state and argues for the plurality of sovereignties possessed by various associations.

Writers who maintain that sovereignty is not necessary, hold that states may be partly sovereign and the test of statehood is the right to govern. These writers were from Germany, Switzerland and USA and they agreed on claiming statehood but not full sovereignty. Even the political bodies of today, which posses their own constitution and government, are not fully sovereign. Some writers regard the doctrine as futile and dangerous as it leads to unlimited powers; while the others attack the idea of state sovereignty because of their desire to give full autonomy to associations other than the state; others because of their interest in individual freedom. The attack on state sovereignty is valuable in pointing out certain defects in the governmental organization of the modern state which impede the exercise of sovereign power.

In the recent past, criticism has been leveled by a group of jurists against state sovereignty as the supreme and only source of law. The theory that the sovereignty of the state is legally limited by natural laws, cannot be accepted, since the state judges and observes those principles. Such limitations are not legally binding, but only self-limiting. This does not mean a limitation on sovereignty.

Another attack on the theory holds that the state's claim to supreme authority is not in accord with actual factors in the complex world of today. They discredited the state, opposed the theory of a single and unified sovereignty and demanded for other agencies, a larger share of social control. The purpose of such an attack was to focus on the decentralization of authority and greater individual freedom.

At present, the growth of economic interests and the strength of economic associations have created conflicts of authority between them and the existing organs of government. The state does not immediately adapt its organization and law to correspond with the new condition. At such a time, the doctrine of absolute and unlimited authority of the state seems dangerous and undesirable. Hence, pluralism is the natural point of view. The pluralists emphasize the necessity of studying the actual facts of political life in a rapidly changing social system. In this connection, they point out the growing importance of non-political groups, the danger of over-interference by the state with regard to the working of such groups and the desirability of giving to such groups greater legal recognition in the political system.

Nevertheless, this is a problem of the proper internal organization of the state and of the proper scope of its activities, and does not imply the abandonment of the theory of state sovereignty. Somewhere, there must be an organization of supreme legal control and however, much the state may limit its activities or reorganize its internal structure, a sovereign state still remains. Even in the current era of globalisation, when state sovereignty is seemingly under threat from various supra-national actors.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

      ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   How is sovereignty limited by morality?

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2)   Discuss either the constitutional or the international limitations on sovereignty.

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3)   Examine the grounds on which sovereignty has been attacked.

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12.11   LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have taken a thorough look into the concept of sovereignty which essentially means that the state performs all its functions with the help of some authority or power. Its basic features comprise of absoluteness which means no internal or external limitations; universality meaning its power over every person in the state, permanence meaning its continuity as long as the state exists and indivisibility implying that there is only one sovereignty.

Sovereignty rose largely owing to the conflict between the rising national states. When the state was recognized as supreme over all its citizens, the concept of sovereignty was established as absolute and unlimited. However, the notion of sovereignty was interpreted in a different frame-work. Legal sovereignty was understood as a supreme law making power, not bound by any laws. Its laws were to be obeyed by all and involved punishments on disobedience. Austin was the chief exponent of this notion. On the other hand, political sovereignty was revolutionary

power of the people which could destroy any legal sovereign. So, in a representative democracy, legal sovereignty had to work in close proximity with political sovereignty. Otherwise, there was a fear of destruction of the legal sovereign by revolutionary political sovereignty.

Sovereignty is also understood to mean that the people have supreme power and that they are the source of all powers. Rousseau supported this in his theory of general will during the eighteenth century. This principle is the basis of modern democracies. The popular sovereignty theory recognizes that in modern democratic states, sovereign powers are widely distributed and exercised by a large number of citizens.

Every state exercises its sovereign power with the help of certain material and ideological apparatuses. Material apparatuses are those which make the sovereignty of the state effective in a material way or in a real visible way. Ideological apparatuses are those which make or generate a habit of obedience in the general public and create an atmosphere in which the consent of the people towards sovereignty may be achieved. Material apparatus of the state uses physical force to obtain obedience and thus, makes the command of the sovereign effective. Ideological apparatuses make sovereignty effective by generating a mood of obedience in the general public and provide legitimacy to the existing socio-economic and political order.

The present century has been a century of reaction against all authoritarian thoughts. The pluralist view of sovereignty was a reaction against the legal, traditional, monistic, absolutist, Austinian theory of sovereignty and against the theory of fascist, unlimited, absolute state supported by idealist philosophers like Hegel and other supporters of the power view of state and politics like Nietzsche, Treitschke and Bernhardi. It may be termed as a strong voice for decentralization of authority against the absolute centralized sovereignty of the state. It was an attack launched in the last decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the 20th century, against those who regarded the state as the highest and supreme power in society. Thus, pluralism was a reaction against unlimited state and sovereignty ; it was an attack on the absolutism of state and its absolute sovereignty; it was a voice to control, limit and divide the sovereignty of state; it was a movement of labour, economic, religious and professional associations and unions for the fulfillment of demands of rights and power against the state.

12.12 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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12.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 12.1 to 12.3

2) See Section 12.1 to 12.3

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Section 12.4

2)   See Section 12.5

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 12.6

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See Section 12.7 and sub-sections 12.7.1 to 12.7.4

2)   See Sections 12.7.1 to 12.7.3

Check Your Progress 5

1)   See sub-section 12.9.1

2)   See sub-section 12.9.2 and 12.9.3

3)   See Section 12.10

UNIT 13 STATE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY

Structure

13.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the theories of civil society and its relationship with the state and the community. After reading this unit, you will be able to:

- Know the meanings and theories of civil society;

- Understand the reasons of its origin;

- Comprehend the relationship between civil society and community; and

- Assess the significance of civil society for democracy

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The concepts of state, civil society and community are very important in social sciences, especially in the discipline of Political Science. Any debate on democracy, rights, citizenship, social capital, etc., is related to these phenomena. What is the relationship between the particular and the universal rights? How the citizens are able to enjoy their rights, achieve basic development depend on the role the state, the civil society and the community play. There exists conflicting opinion on their relevance to democracy and development. In the following section, you will understand these concepts and their relationship.

13.2 MEANINGS AND RELATIONSHIPS

13.2.1 State and Civil Society

You have already read about the meaning and the nature of the state in Unit 11. We shall not repeat it here. In this sub-section, we shall discuss straight the nature of relationships between the civil society and the state. The state is among the most important concepts discussed in political theory. As you know, the state is distinct from other associations of the society, i.e., government, civil society, community, nation, etc. According to the liberal tradition, the state is supposed to remove the constraints for the development of the society as well as provide measures for social welfare. On the other hand, the Marxist tradition views the state as partisan to the propertied classes. With the concept of civil society gaining currency, the relationship of the state to the civil society has again occupied an important place in the discourse of political theory.

Recently, especially from the 1980s onwards, the concept of civil society has acquired a special significance in the discourse on political theory. The rise of new social movements having their organisations, structure and ideology aiming at social change and development in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have generated interest in the civil society. Both these developments show the erosion in the credibility of the state and emergence of parallel centres of power. The origin and evolution of the civil society owes a lot to its relationship with the state. As you have read above, the nature of the relationships between the civil society and the state occupies an important place in political theory.

The recent attention to the civil society can also be traced to the eruption of social movements or resentment of the people against the state. Civil society is the space which exists between the community and the state. It is represented by those associations, the NGO's, individuals, academicians, intellectuals which stroke who strive for the establishment of democracy in society. Since the civil society institutions exist between the state and the community and question the state, they are generally referred to as the institutions, which are distant from the state. The civil society is considered both complimentary and sometimes as a substitute for the state institutions. The basis of the formation of civil society is secular. Caste and kinship linkages, religion or tribal mobilization etc. are not the basis of the formation of civil society. According to Neera Chandhoke, the organisations based on primordial bonds are, infact, "counter – civil society" movements.

Before we proceed further, it is essential to note that in the old European tradition till the eighteenth century, the terms state and civil society were used interchangeably. Dominique Colas traced the history of the concept of civil society and found that throughout the 16th and the 17th centuries it was used as a concept opposed to religious fanaticism. At that time, it was the state which opposed the church as an institution of rights. It means that the state functioned as a civil society or there was no distinction between them. The civil society was an aspect of the state (as opposed to the church). It is, in-fact, in the following period that these came to be known as two distinct entities. The fact whether there exists a civil society or not depends on the nature of the relationship it has with the state. This gave rise to several questions in political theory. Is the state subordinate or superior to the civil society? Can one exist without the other? Are they inimical or supportive of each other's interests? Whose interest does the state serve in comparison to the civil society? Basically, there are four perspectives which deal with these questions in political theory – Tocquevillian, Lockean, Hegelian and Marxian. De Tocqueville studies the reasons for the existence of democracy in America and its absence in France in his book 'Democracy in America'. He observes that it is the nature of the state in both the countries on which the existence or the absence of democracy depends. It was present in America because a liberal democratic state there allowed the formation of the associations of people, which indicated presence of mutual trust among them. As you shall read in the next sub-section, formation of association relations is an indication of the civil society. The civil society in turn reflects democracy. In France, de Tocqueville observes, that unlike America, there did not exist the civic association or society due to the despotic or undemocratic nature of the state.

In the case of John Locke, the 17th century thinker of England, the relationship between the state and the civil society can be viewed in terms of the relationships between the two entities in the state of nature and after the state of nature. As one of the social contractualist thinker, Locke believed that the state is the result of a contract which was made among the individuals who were living in the state of nature. They enjoyed certain rights, which were entailed to them by nature. But there was no authority which could protect the rights of the individuals, provide them security or could regulate their affairs. Such an authority could be the state, which was born out of the social contract which the individuals made with each other. Through this contract, the political society of the state of nature was transformed into

a civil society. Locke, infact, uses the civil and the political interchangeably. It is difficult to distinguish between the civil and political society of Locke. Suffice it to say that according to Locke, the civil society was born to secure the rights which were already available in the state of nature. As Neera Chandhoke observes, Locke's "political society" was a "civil state" as opposed to the natural. Civil or political society was created to protect the rights which the individuals had inherited from the nature of the state. (see how Gurpreet Mahajan interprets it)

Hegel, the German philosopher, has most systematically dealt with the relationship between the civil society and the state. In his book 'Philosophy of Rights', Hegel considers the *civil society* as one of the moments of ethical life, the other two being the *family* and the *state*. This civil society is to be distinguished from both the family and the state. In the family, Hegel argues, particular interests are transcended in a natural and unreflective unity, and transactions between the members are guided by love and concern; while in the state, universality is institutionalized as the highest form of ethical life as the 'actuality of the ethical idea'. Civil society, by contrast, is the domain of particularity, of the self-seeking individual concerned with the fulfillment of his private need. In this stage, the ethos of the family i.e., natural love and altruism disintegrate; but equally, it is here that the principle of universality which the state comes to embody is found in an embryonic form. Civil society as an important stage in the transition from the unreflective consciousness of the family, to conscious ethical life, becomes the site where the Hegelian philosophical concern that particularity has to be mediated by universality, can be realized.

The civil society in the Marxian tradition represents the interests of the propertied classes, the bourgeoisie. There are, however, two approaches in the Marxian tradition regarding the civil society. One is the classical approach. It is related to Marx, who inherited the Hegelian perspective on civil society, but he led the analysis further to interrogate the system itself. To Marx, it is not only the ground where one man's selfish interest meets another man's selfish interest; it is the place where the appropriation of surplus labour takes place. The historical stage must be transcended. But Marx, unlike Hegel, rejected the possibility that any existing institution can do it. Civil society must find a new agency from within itself to transcend egoism and self-interest, exploitation and humanity. And given the nature of the sphere, this transformation had to be revolutionary. Only then could the individual be integrated into the society and the state. Revolutionary transformation becomes the organising principle to civilize civil society.

The other within the Marxian paradigm is the Gramscian tradition. Gramsci, although he uses civil society to refer to the private or the non-state sphere, including the economy, his depiction of civil society is very different from that of Marx. Gramsci's main proposition is that the state cannot be understood without an understanding of the civil society. Civil society, to Gramsci is not simply a sphere of individual needs, but of organisations, and has the potential of rational self-regulation and freedom. Gramsci insists on its complex organisation, as the 'ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private' where hegemony and 'spontaneous consent' are organised'. While Marx insists on the separation between the state and the civil society, Gramsci emphasises the inter-relationship between the two, arguing that whereas the everyday, narrow use of the word state may refer to government, the concept of state in-fact includes elements of civil society. The state narrowly conceived of as government is protected by the hegemony of the dominant class fortified by the coercive state apparatus. To Gramsci, political society is the location where the coercive apparatus of the state is concentrated in prisons, the judicial system, the armed forces and the police. Civil society is the 'location' where the state operates to enfoce invisible, intangible and subtle forms of power through educational, cultural, religious systems and other institutions. In fact, the withering away of the state is redefined by Gramsci in terms of a full development of the self-regulating attributes of civil society.

It had been first mentioned in the writings of John Locke. As mentioned earlier, he mentioned that the civil society emerged as a result of the transformation of the state of nature into a civil society. He differentiated the civil society from the state of nature and the political society. The civil society gets transferred into the political society by the laws framed by the common authority that emerged as a result of the contract. Civil society is a (political) society where the rights of individuals get priority. The civil society is different from other associations in the sense that unlike the former, it accords priority to the individual rights. It does not stand outside the state, rather it (civil society) emerged with the presence of the state. It means that the people who were living in the state of nature, enjoying natural rights to life, liberty and property entered into a social contract under a common public authority, with one another for establishing a just society in which the rights of each individual can be protected. The common authority has the right to make laws about the people or the civil society. This civil society is different from the state of nature where people enjoyed equal natural rights, but did not have any authority to punish the offenders. Before the formation of the social contract, the society existed as an uncivil society. Thus, in the civil society the rights of each individual are protected.

In the 19th century when Hegel elaborated the idea of civil society, it was after nearly two centuries of Locke's. But there were differences between the concept as devised by the two thinkers. The main concern in the Lockean understanding is the particularistic or subjective rights of individuals. He does not mention anything about the relationships between the particularistic or subjective rights and universal rights. As mentioned earlier, Hegel on the other hand, believes that a civil society can exist only if there is ethical order in the society. Ethical order, according to him, means the existence in harmony of subjective and universalistic laws. The subjective laws originate in the communities, and are related to the specificity of that community – about its traditions, customs, place of the individual member in the community, his/her relationships with elders, priests, position of women, etc. These are particularistic. On the other hand, the universalistic laws belong to the laws of the state, which might be enshrined in the written or unwritten consititution of the state. These laws are based on the universal principles of rights of individuals – equality, liberty, property and fraternity. If the universalistic and particularistic rights exist together, one does not negate the other despite the differences existing between them. Infact, then an ethical order exists in the society. This, in the view of Hegel means that in such an order of coexistence, the civil society exists.

The concept of civil society again came in the currency in the twentieth century. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in the 1980s revived the interest in this concept. The loss of faith in the state due to its failure revived the interest in the civil society. The notion of state came under attack, more specifically, during the latter half of the twentieth century. It came to be seen as an alternative to the state.

Even as the Marxists consider the civil society to be partisan and contributory to the perpetuation of unequal and discriminatory class relations, the non-Marxists find in the civil society a panacea for the failure of the state. Non-Marxist models of civil society, which view it as an alternative to the state, belong to the associative model of democracy.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What do you understand by civil society? Examine its relationship with the state.

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2)   Trace the evolution of the concept of civil society.

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13.2.2 Democracy and Civil Society

Democracy and Civil Society are inseparably related to each other. A healthy liberal democracy needs the support of a vibrant civil society. As mentioned in the earlier sub-section, the foundation of the democracy-civil society nexus thesis could be traced in Tocqueville's classic writings on American politics.

In recent years, there are several scholars who have developed this democracy-civil society relation in various models of democracy. One such model is the 'Associative Model of Democracy' as developed by Sunil Khilnani, Paul Trust and Benjamin Barber. According to them, the decentralisation of power is the basis of formation of civil society. The decentralised units of power are inclined towards trust, association and democracy. But the basis of the formation of the smaller communities is secular-equality, not ascriptive. The advocates of this perspective are critical of the centralised authority of the state, which they find too imposing. They pin their hopes on the communities or the decentralisation in the western democracies. The perspective of the civil society is related to that literature which emerged in the wake of the decline of socialist societies, especially in Eastern Europe. Here, the civil society emerged in contrast to the totalitarian state. The rights of the individuals, which were violated during the totalitarian regimes, were seen to be protected in the civil society.

The existence of civil society also indicates the extent of democracy in a society, viz, formal democracy like elections, multi-party system or a democratic constitution. It also means, at the same time, existence of democratic norms and values like coexistence of differences along with tolerance of each other's culture and views. According to Gellner, the institutional notion of democracy is less comprehensive than that of civil society. Civil society is an arena of contestation and debate. Neera Chandhoke says that civil society is a space where individuals set their norms in association with each other. It resides in the life of those who question the state's imposition on them. They make the state respond to their voices. Each group in the civil society is entitled to maintain its specificity, culture. These are based on the principles of freedom and equality. According to Manoranjan Mohanty, the civil society organisations may be called "creature societies", because these associations question the state and strive to create an egalitarian and democratic order.

A new generation of neo-Tocquevillians, the most prominent amongst whom is Robert Putnam, have since the 1990s revived the concept of civil society as the bedrock of democracy. Putnam popularized a concept called 'Social Capital' which stands for "features of social organisations such as trust, norms and networks". The linkage between democracy and social capital takes off from one of Putnam's famous study of the varying performances of local governments across North and South Italy. The work argues that North Italy generally promoted better institutional performance than the South, because here conditions were historically geared to wider public participation in civic affairs, which itself resulted from the availability of better inter-personal and institutional trust in the society.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What is the Associative Model of Democracy?

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2) Discuss Robert Putnam's views on civil society.

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13.2.3 Community and Civil Society

Community is a group of people knit into relationships on the basis of primordial factors, i.e., religion, kin, family ties, caste, etc. These set rules for the individuals, which constitute the community. The nature of the rules of the community about the rights of the individuals and citizens show the nature of polity and society. The rules of the community are particularistic and those of the state are universalistic. If there are conflicts between the two sets of rules, the democratic edifice of the polity gets eroded. But if on the other hand, the rights of the individuals in a society are in consonance with those of the state, the polity represents democratic traits. The community exists between the state and civil society. The status of the democratic rights of individuals within the society – of women, of disadvantaged groups, of minorities, etc.–depends on the nature of all the three institutions of state, civil society and community.

The sociological argument on the distinction between community and civil society takes its purest, most systematic and most elaborate form in the work of Ferdinand Tonnies. Tonnies called these 'real or organic' life and 'imaginary or mechanical structures' – Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. In Tonnie's words, Gemeinschaft is old; Gesellschaft is new. In rural life, community among people is stronger and more alive; it is the lasting and genuine form of living together. In contrast to Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft (society) is transitory and superficial. Accordingly, Gemeinschaft (community) should be understood as a living organism, Gesellschaft as a mechanical aggregate and an artifact.

Sudipta Kaviraj in an article 'In search of Civil Society' points to a connection between the two dichotomies: the state and the civil society on one hand, and the civil society and the community on the other. There are significant connections between these two separate arguments in several types of analyses of Third World politics. It has been argued that the proper working of a modern constitutional state requires a distinction not merely between the state and the other organisations in society, but the sphere of non-state organisations being governed by Gesellschaft like principles.

13.3 CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

There have been such diverse analyses of civil society, that the term may seem to be confusing. So a look at the features of civil society may help to comprehend the subject. Following Diamond, the features of civil society may be enumerated as follows:

First, civil society is the realm of organised social life that is open, voluntary, self-generating, at least partially self-supporting, autonomous from the state and bound by a legal order or set of shared rules. It is distinct from "society" in general in that it involves citizens acting collectively in a public sphere.

Second, civil society is concerned with public ends rather than private ends. It is an intermediary phenomenon standing between the private sphere and the state. Thus, it excludes parochial society: individual and family life and inward-looking group activity; and it excludes economic society: the profit-making enterprise of individual business firms.

Third, civil society is related to the state in some way, but does not seek to control the state; it does not seek to "govern the polity as a whole".

Fourth, civil society encompasses pluralism and diversity. It encompasses a vast array of organizations, formal and informal, including economic, cultural, informational and educational, interest groups, developmental, issue-oriented and civic groups. In addition, civil society encompasses what Thomas Metzger calls "the ideological marketplace", the flow of information and ideas, including those which evaluate and critique the state.

Fifth, it follows from the fourth that civil society does not seek to represent the complete set of interests of a person or a community. Rather different groups represent or encompass different aspects of interest.

Sixth, civil society should be distinguished from the more clearly democracy-enhancing phenomenon of civic community. Diamonds argues that civic community is both a broader and narrower concept than civil society: broader in that it encompasses all manner of associations (parochial included); narrower in that it includes only associations structured horizontally around ties that are more or less mutual, cooperative, symmetrical and trusting.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are Ferdinand Tonnies' views on the distinction between civil society and community?

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2)   Enumerate and describe the basic characteristics of civil society.

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13.4 LET US SUM UP

Civil society, although has a root to Lockean tradition, gains currency in the twentieth century, in the wake of the demise of the East European Socialist regimes.

Apart from Locke, earlier thinkers who contributed to the development of the idea of civil society were Tocqueville, Hegel and Marx. Extending the Marxian vision further, Hegel explained it from a different perspective.

Civil society can be defined in terms of enumerating certain features which you have found in this unit.

The relations between civil society, on the one hand, and state, democracy and community, on the other have also been mentioned.

13.5 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Chandhoke, N., *State and Civil Society*, New Delhi: Sage, 1995

Cohen, J. and Arato, A., *Civil Society and Political Theory*, Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 1992

Hayness, Jeff., *Democracy and Civil Society in the Third World*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997.

13.6 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 13.2

2) See Section 13.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) See sub-section 13.2.2

2) See sub-section 13.2.2

Check Your Progress 3

1) See sub-section 13.2.3

2) See Section 13.3

UNIT 14 POWER AND AUTHORITY

Structure

14.0   OBJECTIVES

The unit deals with the most significant area of fundamental research; namely, Power and Authority. It is the central theme of political ideology. After going through this unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the concept of power in its varied ramifications

- Differentiate between power and related themes

- Explain the concept of authority and identify its types

- Understand the relative meaning of Power and Authority

14.1   INTRODUCTION

Recently, the idea of power has assumed an importance of its own, in the realm of political theory. This is so because the meaning of politics has changed from one of being a 'study of state and government' to that of being a 'study of power'. Power is the primary objective of foreign policy. In international relations, power is the capacity of a state to influence or control the behaviour of other states for the purpose of promoting its own vital interest. Power capacity includes skills and techniques in the use of consent and constraint, as well as the ability to persuade, threaten or coerce to gain ascendancy over other states. States vary notably in power capacity. Belgium and Switzerland are probably evenly matched, but the mismatch between Belgium and United States is apparent. Some states are characterized as 'haves' and the others as 'have-nots'. The former are well endowed with the assets of power, while the latter seek to better their position at the expense of the "haves". This situation gives power struggle its essential character.

We all know what power is, in a broader sense. Although we see it everywhere in our lives, it is hard to define. While doing social and political theory, we try, however, to make the concepts of power and authority more precise and clear. It is with these basic concepts and definitions, we can later understand the other complex concepts in the realm of national and international politics.

14.2   POWER: MEANING OF THE CONCEPT

Power is seen in different walks of life— in the structures of government administration, bureaucracy, elections, family and society. In the instances of a teacher scolding an erring student in school, to a powerful state making war against its neighbor or any terrorist organization bombing a target, power is used. So it becomes imperative to see what exactly is common in these examples and how they justify the concept.

In political theory, power is the central issue, whether it is clothed in law that qualifies it or whether authority that renders obedience to it voluntarily sustains it. Power is force, exercised by the state in the name of law. Power is central to political theory, because it is concerned about the state, which is force. This is a school of thought belonging to the Realists. On the other hand, the Jurists who regard the state as a legal association argue that the notion of imperative and superior force associated with the state is not arbitrary; but it is qualified force; to put it more simply, it is force exercised 'in the name of law'. For the state is closely associated with the notion of power exercised in accordance with definite procedures and with rules that are known. Thus, power is force expressed in terms of law; it is force qualified and expressed in a regular and uniform manner.

To further substantiate the concept of power, the jurists have refined the concept of the state by identifying it with certain essential attributes. Now according to this, the state is a political community and in any given political community, there exists a supreme power (*Summa potestas* as the Roman jurist Cicero calls it) from which the law emanates. This supreme power which John Austin describes as 'sovereignty', distinguishes the state from other associations. The conception of sovereignty implies that the final authority is the state. The important point here is that there is in the state a sovereign power which, whether held by the people or by the prince, is the source of law. It is power conditioned by law, whether from the point of view of those over whom it is exercised or from the point of view of the actual holder of power.

Another significant point which needs to be explained here is that sovereign power converts the rule of force into a rule of law. Thus, Hobbes does not consider the state a phenomenon of force; but a phenomenon of power, of which sovereignty is the highest and the most complete expression. The transition from the 'state of nature' to the 'civil state' is the transition from the rule of force where there is no security, to that of law, where human relations are secure. Also, just as the state is not pure force, so sovereignty is not arbitrary will according to Hobbes. The sovereign representative is entrusted with the power to procure safety of the people. Hence, it cannot violate the very reason for which it was entrusted with sovereign power. Thus, authorization, not habitual obedience, is what makes the sovereign, which converts force into power.

Two centuries later, Alexander Hamilton asked, 'What is power, but the ability or faculty of doing a thing?' During the mid-20th century, Harold Lasswell and Abraham Kaplan construed exercises of power as 'acts… affecting or determining other acts'. Shortly thereafter, Robert Dahl defined power as one actor's ability to make another do something that the latter 'would not otherwise do'. At the same time, however, Hannah Arendt argued that power is not the property of lone agents or actors, but of groups or collectivities acting together.

So far as the views of different authors are concerned, it surely help us to understand the meaning of the concept in various perspectives. For Friedrich, power is 'a certain kind of human relationship', while for Tawney, 'it is the capacity of an individual or a group to modify others' conduct as one desires'. While communist leader Mao-Zedong thought of power as "flowing from the barrel of the gun", Gandhi, an apostle of peace, regarded it as the power of love and truth. Power is ascribed to different things on different grounds. For instance, we speak of economic power, military power, power of the brain, political/ executive power and social power. The common thread in all these power manifestations means "ability" or 'capacity'. However, we come to one common generalization that power is the sum total of those external influences and pressures which can make an individual or a body of individuals to move in a required direction.

14.2.1 Distinction Between Power and Related Themes

The precise connotation of power became difficult, when the term became inter-changeable with several related themes like control, influence, authority, force, domination, coercion and the like. Keeping this in mind, that it might create confusion for students of Political Science, it is necessary to highlight the important points of distinction between power and related themes.

Power as discussed earlier is the capacity to conquer, or one's ability to control others. In doing so, power could be based on elements like fraud, tactics, manipulation, or even be derived from legal and constitutional procedures. International politics is nothing but a manifestation of power struggle.

Force, on the other hand, is different from power. It is the most brutal manifestation of power. The techniques involved in physical force are restraint, coercion, threat, intimidation, blackmail, terrorism and military domination. So power can be called latent force, while force is manifest power.

If force stands on one extreme, ***influence*** stands on the other. It represents the sublimation of power. It may be due to social prestige, intellectual and spiritual eminence, high morality and the like. So, while influence is persuasive, power is coercive.

Coming to the notion of *authority*, it implies moralization and legitimization of power through legal or traditional sanctions. It is essentially the institutional code within which the use of power as a medium is organized and is made legal. An elaborate analysis of the concept of authority will be done later in this unit.

Finally, speaking of ***control*** as a theme related to power also has its own distinct feature, different from power. It is more comprehensive and less concentrated than power. Control could be of a different nature like legislative, executive, judicial, financial and the like. Power is more intense, when compared to control.

Thus, we see that because of this diversity in the meaning of the term 'power', its comprehensive study becomes necessary.

14.2.2 Implications of Power

From what has been discussed so far, certain implications may be gathered about the concept of power.

- Power cannot be merely encircled in a political or economic framework; it is broadly a social phenomenon.

- The distinctness of power with the other concepts like influence, control, authority, prestige, rights and the like, enables us to understand the concept of power more precisely and in a subtle way, which becomes useful for students of political science.

- Power is latent force, force is manifest power, and authority is institutionalized power.

- Power appears in different ways on different occasions, be it either in a formal organization, or in an informal organization or in organized/unorganized community.

- Power resides in a combination of numbers (especially majorities), social organization and resources. This is the source of power.

14.3 THE POWER THEORY

To say that the state is a sovereign power is to say that its rules, regulations and laws have final authority. There is no appeal against them to any more ultimate set of rules. In other words, within the state the rules made by other associations are subordinate to the authority of the state's rule. This power theory of sovereignty is regarded by political theorists, believing in democracy, as of no relevance to politics for which we need the concept of political sovereignty to be defined in terms of power instead of legal authority. Legal sovereignty treats the state as a final legal authority.

From the *moral* point of view, one may say that the laws of the state do not have final authority. If the conscience of the individual tells him that he ought not to obey some particular law, then from a moral point of view, he is entitled to disobey; for in most matters of morals, the final authority is conscience, when he appeals to a higher law, the natural law. For example, when the Greek tyrant, Creon, forbade Antigone to bury her dead brother, she disobeyed his order on the ground that the higher law, the natural law, required that the dead should be respected. The discussion on conscientious objection illustrates that 'power' means not only the ability to have one's will carried out, but the ability to do so by the threat of force.

In conclusion, we may say that the sovereignty of the state, for the purpose of politics, should be defined as the supremacy of coercive power rather than that of legal authority. Because, the one that is sovereign is the one that can *substantiate* its claim, and the state certainly does so because it possesses the power of armed force.

The power theory as said earlier, had its first brilliant expression in the 'Leviathan' of Thomas Hobbes. He tells us that man desires power and even greater power, which becomes the root cause of competition among individuals. But at the same time, men like to live in peace in order to enjoy the power that they possess. So they are disposed to live under a common power. After Hobbes, Hegel absolutised sovereign power of the state to the extent of discarding all ethics of international morality. Among the leading advocates of this theory in the present century, mention may be made of Prof. H. J. Morganthau, who says that politics is nothing but a struggle for power. The power theory found its concrete manifestation, when the Italian Dictator Benito Mussolini declared 'nothing against the state, nothing above it' giving birth to the ideology of Fascism.

In all the above analyses of power theory, power is spoken only in a political sense. However, power includes much more, within itself, like the power of soul, mind and the power of one's ideas. Reference in this context may be made from Buddha to Gandhi who had displayed their power of thought and ideology to the world.

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

     ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   Explain how power is conceptualised in political theory.

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2)   Does power always involve coercion?

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14.3.1 Liberal Democratic Theory

In liberal democratic theory, power has been identified with developmental and extractive capacities. In other words, power means ability of use and development of human capacities. It has two aspects, extractive and developmental, which can be called ethical and empirical dimensions, respectively. Since a man's ability to use and develop his capacities becomes the "power", it is called man's developmental power and it has a qualitative character. Besides, man should use his capacities in a way so that he may extract benefits from others. It leads to the idea of extractive power. Here, we see that the liberal theory of power integrates the idea of political power with the power of money. Elections, propaganda, persuasion, control- all are governed by the role of money power. This is why the destiny of millions is often controlled by a dozen families having monopoly over the money of the nation. However, the theory also emphasizes the maximization of democracy, so that values of humanism are not destroyed.

14.3.2 Marxian Theory

The Marxian view, links politics and economics through the instrument of power. Karl Marx viewed political power as being possessed by those who control the means of production as compared to the labour force which has little or no control over such means of production. This "relation of production", therefore, determines the distribution of political power. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels state that political power, so called, is merely the organized form of one class oppressing another, and that political power is the general and pervasive power which a dominant class exercises in order to maintain and defend its predominance in a civil society.

Further, class power "does tend to be taken over by the state itself, and gladly surrenders to it; even in normal circumstance of advanced capitalism, the state takes over more and more functions performed by the dominant class having a greater share in the performance of these functions".

Thus, Marx sees a close integration between political power and the prevailing socio-economic system and regards it as transient — it shall disappear with the rise of the stateless and classless society.

14.3.3 Michael Foucault on Power

There are many misconceptions and confusions about 'power' as a discourse and a practice. In this connection, Michael Foucault's path-breaking analysis of power needs to be invoked to illuminate the deeper implications of power as a flow, manifested in relations at multiple locations.

Foucault's approach to the social phenomenon of 'power' is clearly revealed in the following quotation:

"Let us not ask why certain people want to dominate, what they seek, what is their overall strategy. Let us ask, instead, how things work at the level of on-going subjugation, at the level of those continuous and uninterrupted processes which subject our bodies, govern our gestures, dictate our behaviours etc. In other words, rather than ask ourselves how the sovereign appears to us in his lofty isolation, we should try to discover how it is that subjects are gradually, progressively, really and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts etc."

Foucault, thus, moves away from the sovereignty-centric (Hobbesian) conception of power toward what he calls "disciplinary power" or the micro mechanisms of power––the techniques and tactics of domination— that, as a closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions, keeps the social body in a steady state (**a society of normalization**).

The state in this situation, becomes a superstructural meta power, rooted in a whole series of multiple and indefinite power relations, and as Foucault argues, "The state consists in the codification of a whole number of power relations which render its functioning possible…".

Foucault's analysis has opened up new ways of looking at power in society, not so much as a juridical concept as a socially networked relations of domination and subjugation.

According to Foucalut, in common parlance, power has been viewed in reductionist term. It is the top-down vision that has always looked at power as a striking force and a visible and effective meat-power. Those who hold power at the top are favourably stationed to take advantage of a number of apparatuses and devices–particular techniques, knowledge, modalities of political power. In other words, they have the means of power to which they have access because of the strategic positions they occupy. A senior bureaucrat, because of his position, can easily accord sanction to a project or stop it when things are not working out to his satisfaction.

In Foucault's analysis, to ascribe all phenomena of power to the prevailing power apparatuses is a form of unrealistic reductionism. Power, in this view, is not what and where people think it is. In reality, it is the expression of hundreds of micro-processes defining various currents coming from a multitude of different sources. The reductionist view ignores that "the state, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further… the state can only operate, on the basis of other, already existing power relations."

To understand the real nature of power, one has to move away from the juridical edifice of sovereignty, the state apparatuses and the accompanying ideologies. Instead attention should be paid to domination and the material operators of power. One should focus on the form of subjection and the inflection and utilizations of their localized systems and on the strategic apparatuses.

Foucault calls this power 'non-sovereign power, lying outside the form of sovereignty. It is disciplinary power taking the shape of closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions intended to assure the cohesion of the social body. As Foucault exhorted : "we must eschew the model of Leviathan in the study of power. We must escape from the limited field of juridical sovereignty and state institutions and instead base our analysis of power on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination…."

14.4 WHAT IS AUTHORITY?

To understand political realities, we should be knowing the three aspects of state— force, power and authority. The notion of state recalls to our mind, power, which is exercised in accordance with definite procedures and known rules. The state is force exercised in the name of law. Force become power, when the element of arbitrariness is removed from its exercise by definite procedures laid down by the laws of the state. The recognition of this power exercised as per definite rules implies the recognition of an obligation to submit to these rules. The word 'state' in this sense provides a term of reference for these obligations. It refers not merely to a force which exists in actual fact, or to power which makes itself felt in accordance with certain rules, but to an authority which is recognized as warranted and justified in practice.

14.5 CLASSIFICATION OF AUTHORITY

The German sociologist Max Weber suggested a three fold classification of the sources of authority in a modern state. They are rational-legal, traditional and charismatic authority.

Rational-legal authority is explicit and has the right to give orders and to have them obeyed by virtue of an office held within a system of deliberately framed rules which set out rights and duties. Bureaucracy is the best example of rational-legal authority. When a citizen accepts the authority of a bureaucrat, he does so not because of anything else but due to the powers allocated to the official by a legal system. The office, the individual holds, is important and not the individual himself or herself.

Traditional authority exists where a person, such as a king or a tribal chief, holds a superior position of command in accordance with long tradition and is obeyed, because everyone accepts the sanctity of the tradition. Religious authority is of this kind.

Charismatic authority rests on the possesion of exceptional personal qualities that cause a person to be accepted as a leader. There may be qualities of saintly virtue giving their possesor religious authority or qualities of outstanding heroism, intellect, oratory that bring a following of loyal devotion in politics, in wars and other kinds of enterprise. The charismatic leader has the gift of divine grace and extraordinary qualities. Lenin or Mahatma Gandhi got their position on account of their charisma and qualities. Of the three sources, the first two belong to one group – where the agent and the source of authority are different. Here, the source can be criticised without criticising the agent and the agent, therefore, enjoys a relatively stable position. But in the case of charismatic authority, the source and the agent of authority are the same. Hence, any criticism against the source can be directed against the agent

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as well. So the agent does not enjoy a stable position. A charismatic authority tends to be institutionalised. This is what Weber calls 'routinization of charisma'.

Weber, however, recognised that none of these categories existed in pure form. The British system is a mixture of traditional and rational-legal sources of authority. India, according to Weber was a combination of rational-legal and charismatic authority.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   What are the different types of authority?

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2)   How do the Liberal and Marxist views of the power theory differ?

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14.6   DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE CONCEPTS OF POWER AND AUTHORITY

The concepts of "power" and "authority" are related ones. But a distinction between them is necessary. Both the terms refer to different properties.But because of their logical grammar being commonly misconstrued, unnecessary difficulty has arisen. However, they are the names of not different, but related entities of which one somehow depends on the other.

When we speak of an act giving a minister the power to do this or that, we mean giving him authority. Jean Bodin in his work, *The Six Books of Republic* says, "Sovereignty is the absolute and perpetual power of a state, that is to say, the supreme power to command". His discussion gives the impression that sovereignty means power in the ordinary sense of the word. If by absolute power, Bodin means the ability to issue effective commands, it would be ***power,*** properly speaking. If he means the entitlement or the right to issue commands and have them obeyed, it would be ***authority.*** His account of sovereignty makes it clear that he means authority, whereas his use of the expression, "absolute power" suggests the first.

Prof. Raphael in his ***Problems of Political Philosophy*** distinguishes three meanings of the term "power". First, the most general meaning of power is simply ***ability.*** We use the same word for the power of a dynamo, political power or will power. Secondly, we speak of power in a social context, when we think of power as a specific kind of ability i.e. ***the ability to make other people do what one wants them to do.*** A man may be able to get others to do what he wants, because he holds a special office, or because he has the strength to make things difficult for them, if they refuse. The two examples illustrate the exercise of political power and the second is prominent in situations of conflict. Thirdly, there is ***coercive power*** which is using the threat of superior force to make others do what one wants them to do when they are unwilling. Because coercive power is so prominent in political conflict, the word "power" which at first meant ability of any kind, has come to be associated with enforcement.

Thus, the term power has three meanings mentioned above, and it can be used either with or without association of empowerment. Power is often used to mean authority when we speak of giving someone legal powers. A person with power holds a special office (e.g. a minister or a President); this means that he has authority and is able by virtue of that position to get others to do what he tells them to do; his power is the exercise of authority. That is why the word power can be used to mean authority.

14.6.1 Implications of Authority

Authority is the right to do a thing. The two meanings of right are a) the right here of action and b) the right of recipience. The right of action is the right to do something; for instance, the right of the worker to strike and the right of the employer to lock out. In this sense, a right is a freedom. The right of recipience is a claim to do something; for example, if A has the right to fifty rupees that B owes him, it is A's right to receive fifty rupees from B. It is A's right against B and it corresponds to B's obligations to pay up.

Now, the authority to give orders is the right of recipience. For example, when a minister is authorized (or empowered) by a statute to make regulations, this not only allows him to do something (i.e. he has the right of action) but also imposes an obligation on citizens to confirm to the regulations that he may make. Thus, his authority gives him a right to issue them.

In both senses - the right to something and the right to receive obedience – a right of being authorized is a facility and so, a power. The power to make other people do what a person requires may depend on the fact that he holds a special office. By virtue of holding that office, that person has the authority to ask certain requirements of other people, and they do what he requires, because they acknowledge his authority. His authority and others' acceptance of it are what he requires. We can, therefore, think of authority as a specific kind of ability or power to make other people do what one wants them to do. This specific ability or power is coordinate with coercive power. The possession of coercive force is one way of getting people to do what a person requires; it is one specific form of power. The possession of authority, provided it is acknowledged, is another.

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Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   What is the implication of authority in politics?

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2)   Are the terms power and authority related? Explain their relationship and highlight the distinction between the two.

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14.7   LET US SUM UP

Power is thus, one of the key concepts in political theory. It is the ability to control others and make them do what one wants. It is both normative and empirical; i.e. it is also a fact as well as a value to be pursued. It is a very comprehensive term, identified with related themes like authority, influence, control and the like. It is integrally connected with the case of political legitimacy. Legitimate power is authority. On the other hand, influence is a wider term where sanctions may not be used. Power is then a special case of influence.

14.8   KEY WORDS

Empirical	:	based on facts and on activities of everyday life.
Sublimation	:	to change, having noble qualities.
Arbitrary	:	exercise of power over the others without considering their opinion.
Coercive	:	compelling, forcing.

14.9 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Ball, A. R., *Modern Politics and Government*, 1978 (London: Macmillan)

Dahl, Robert A, *Modern Political Analysis,* 1976, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall)

Friedrich, Carl J, *Authority,* 1958, (Camb., Mass: Harvard Univ. Press)

Ray and Bhattacharya, *Political Theory: Ideas and Institutions,* 1968 (Calcutta: World Press)

Verma S. P., *Modern Political Theory,* 1975 (Delhi: Vikas)

14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) Power in political theory is a comprehensive term. Power may be physical, political, economic, spiritual, moral or intellectual. Broadly speaking, it is one's ability to control others.

2) Power can be called latent force, while force is manifest power.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Traditional, Rational-Legal, and Charismatic.

2) The liberal view presupposes the state as an institution serving all the sections of the people. It also grants equality to all citizens; in law, in voting and rights. It considers the state to be an impartial institution. The Marxist theory of state believes in historical evolution of the state, which is a product of the society in which it exists. It reflects the class character of the rulers. It also believes in class division of the society. The state for them is not an impartial arbiter of disputes, as it is partial to the ruling class.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Authority is the right to do a thing. The two meanings of right are:

   i) the right of action and ii) the right of recipience.

2) Power and Authority are the names of two different, but related entities of which one somehow depends on the other. "Power" is often used to mean "authority" when we speak of giving someone legal powers.

UNIT 15 LEGITIMACY

Structure

15.0 OBJECTIVES

The ideas of authority and legitimacy are integral to the understanding of state, politics and civil society. We must bear in mind that authority and legitimacy are reflective of the manner in which the political community is organized. All human organizations are based on a set of rules. Authority and legitimacy refer to how and why these rules are acknowledged by members of the community as being worthy of obedience and having a binding character. In the sections which follow, we shall explore the manner in which these concepts have been understood in various strands of political thought and how they serve as tools for understanding modern state and society. The sections are followed by questions to enable you to check your progress. A list of further readings is given at the end of the lesson.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

Authority and legitimacy have been among the most basic and enduring issues in political analysis. Political philosophers, political scientists and sociologists have for long occupied themselves with exploring these concepts as useful tools for understanding public authority and government. These concepts must, however, be seen as having evolved over the last few centuries, constituted and reconstituted at particular historical conjectures. They can, thus be, seen as reflecting the various strands, which have historically contributed to their evolution.

15.1.1 Reference to the Nature of Public and Political Authority

Before we examine these various strands, let us first bear in mind that both authority and legitimacy refer to the nature of public and political authority. All human societies, as mentioned earlier, live by rules, which give them cohesion and a distinctive identity. These rules are seen as authoritative and legitimate, if they are willingly accepted by people as binding. While obedience to rules can be elicited by governments through fear and coercion, forcible extraction of compliance is not regarded as legitimate (See 'Introduction', *Legitimacy/Legitimite*, edited by Athanasios Moulakis, p.4).

15.1.2 Authority is Legitimate Power

Let us first try to understand what these concepts mean in simple terms. Simply put, authority is understood as a form of power. While power denotes the capacity or the ability to affect and change one's environment, authority refers to both the capacity to change as well as the right to change. Authority may, therefore, be seen as a modified form of power, where power is acknowledged as rightful. This means that authority does not depend on any form of coercion or manipulation, and invokes instead, a duty of obedience and compliance. In order to elicit voluntary or willing obedience, essential to effect changes, authority has to lay claims to being right. Legitimacy provides to authority, the quality of correctness and justness, invoking thereby, obedience and compliance as a matter of duty rather than as an outcome of coercion and force. Thus, authority when associated with legitimacy, may be thought of as "legitimate power".

15.1.3 Authority and Legitimacy: Both Descriptive and Normative

This general explanation of the meanings of authority and legitimacy, should make it clear to us, that the concepts may be used as both descriptive and normative categories. As descriptive categories, they illustrate or describe the nature of political organisation and rule. As normative categories, they provide the moral standard to evaluate claims to a 'right to rule'. At the same time, we must remember that the two ideas do not have a fixed meaning. Their meanings have changed and developed historically. At any given historical moment, moreover, the concepts have been interpreted and defined in contesting ways. Thus, while Liberals would see legitimacy as having a positive connotation, Marxists would be less inclined to see legitimacy as providing any valid moral claims or 'right to rule'. Liberals and Socialists view authority as rational, purposeful and limited; a view reflected in a preference for legal-rational authority and public accountability. Conservatives, by contrast, see authority as arising from natural necessity, being exercised 'from above' by virtue of unequal distribution of experiences, social position and wisdom. The justification for authority is centered around the argument that it is essential for the maintenance of order, and the only means of escape from the barbarity and injustice of the 'state of nature', a society without political rule (See Heywood, *Politics*, p. 193).

15.1.4 The Problem of Political Obligation

The issue of legitimacy, or the rightfulness of a regime or system of rule, is linked ultimately to one of the most fundamental of political debates, the problem of political obligation. It addresses the following questions: why citizens feel obliged to acknowledge the authority of government, and whether they have a duty to respect the state and obey its laws. In modern political debate, however, legitimacy is also understood in terms of political behaviors and beliefs. In other words, it addresses not only the question of why people should obey the state in an abstract sense, but also the question of why they obey a particular state or a system of rule and not others. In other words, it explores the problem of the conditions or processes, which encourage people to obey, or, in other words, to see authority as rightful. These concerns reflect

a shift in focus towards the empirical or practical aspects of the concept, i.e., the legal and constitutional contexts within which power is exercised (see Paschalis Kitromolders, 'Enlightenment and Legitimacy' in Athanasios Moulakis, *Legitimacy/ Legitimite*, 1986, p.60)

In the sections which follow, we shall look at the manner in which authority and legitimacy figure in various philosophical traditions, and the various meanings which have been attributed to them in the course of their historical evolution. We will also take up for study, two prominent and mutually conflicting formulations, put forward by the sociologist Max Weber, and the political philosopher Jurgen Habermas. In order to understand the distinction between the two, we must remember the relationship between legitimacy and authority; that legitimacy transforms power into authority. Political philosophers treat legitimacy as a rational principle, as indicative of the grounds on which governments demand obedience from citizens. An exploration of these claims to legitimacy are more important than the actual fact or obedience. Sociologists, however, see legitimacy in sociological terms focussing attention on the manner in which obedience to rules unfolds. Let us now see how the ideas have developed historically and the attributes they assumed at specific historical conjectures.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) Explain the relationship between authority and ligitimacy.

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2) What is political obligation?

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15.2   TOWARDS A HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

15.2.1 Divine Conception of Political Authority

The idea of legitimacy remained marginal to the understanding of political authority, until the advent of the modern age. Before the seventeenth century, it was widely assumed that political authority was divinely ordained and natural, and therefore, reasonable. Those who upheld this view believed in the unquestioned domination of one set of people over the other. This domination was sustained by the belief that the rulers represented divine will and authority, and they alone knew what was good for the people, and the appropriate ways to pursue, this good. From the seventeenth century, however, legitimacy, which had so for remained submerged in the notion of divine authority, started taking shape and developing the characteristics, which we associate with it today.

15.2.2 17th Century: Challenges to the Divine Conception

Seventeenth century thinkers like Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) challenged the assumption of the divine right of kings to rule, by advocating the view that human beings are, by nature and before God, free and equal. Since all human beings were free and equal, no human could possess, naturally or divinely ordained, authority to rule over fellow human beings. The notion of natural freedom and equality of all human beings was used to contest and erode the claims to rule by absolutist monarchies in England and France.

15.2.3 Social Contract Theories

The postulates of natural equality, were fitted into contract theories which flourished in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, in a way so as to provide a theoretical and logical basis for legitimate government. Contract theorists like Hobbes and John Locke started from the basic premise that all human beings were and are equal, had authority over their own selves, and had, therefore, the capacity as well as the right to take decisions affecting themselves. These free and equal human beings, in order to create suitable conditions in which they could exercise economic freedom, take the decision to transfer some of their self-determination rights to others, authorizing the latter to rule them on their behalf. When this transfer takes place on a large scale, i.e., a large number of people transfer their natural right to self-government, political authority takes form. This political authority or government, which ensues as a result of renunciation of certain rights and freedoms, is said to possess legitimacy. The legitimate power of the government to rule, is demonstrated by the consent of the governed, which is expressed and renewed periodically.

From the seventeenth century thus, we can see the idea of legitimacy develop in liberal and republican traditions, in the form of a criticism or a challenge to the authority of the existing absolutist regimes. In both the English (1688) and the French revolutions (1789), the issue of legitimacy may infact be seen as having become fundamental to the questions concerning the form of government that could reasonably and lawfully be obeyed. Within liberalism, legitimacy of authority was made contingent upon an individualist social contract and the consent of the governed.

15.2.4 Montesquieu's Alternative Views on Legitimacy

Rejecting the individualist framework of legitimation espoused by the contractualists, Montesquieu (1689-1775), in his work *The Spirit of the Laws* (1748), counterpoised alternative forms of legitimacy. This alternative form intended to curtail the arbitrariness of an individualist free will placing the exercise of authority within the social context.

Montesquieu included in his framework a socially responsible role for the state by including elements of social reform, constitutionalism, and the safeguard of basic civil liberties. All of these were seen as contributing towards or constituting the essence of legitimate authority.

15.2.5 Rousseau: Going beyond Montesquieu

Jean–Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) represented the republican challenge to the legitimacy envisaged within the liberal-individualistic framework. In his theory of false contract in the *Second Discourse*, Rousseau attempted to build where Montesquieu had left. Pointing to the limits of a liberal individualist theory of society and politics, Rousseau, like Montesquieu attempted to cover and thus included in his formulation, the broader sphere of social issues. Going beyond Montesquieu's formulation however, Rousseau sought to include within this social sphere, the aspirations of those sections of society, that did not find an expression which the liberal framework. The social contract, Rousseau felt was a deception, through which the rich compelled the poor into submitting to their dominance. For Rousseau therefore, legitimacy, could be achieved only through the democratisation of political authority. Democatisation was to be achieved through the active participation of people, and the recognition of their social and political needs. In Rousseau's scheme, the legitimacy of government, and of the exercise of power, hinged on the active participation of citizens. The importance of this alternative thinking to legitimacy lies in the connection between the self, public commitment and collective goals, all of which were seen necessary for the survival of a republican polity (Paschalis Kitromildes, 1986, pp. 62-64).

15.2.6 Karl Marx's Views

Karl Marx (1818-1883), however, did not share Rousseau's optimism about the relationship between active participatory citizenship and political authority. For Marx, the modern state represented the interests of the bourgeoisie and was not therefore, representative of the common will of the people. The people could at best only 'imagine' themselves as citizens as their participation in 'politics' was dependent upon and constrained by their subordinate position in a class differentiated society. Marx felt that in the framework of general will, one was distracted from the real issues i.e., the evils of society and the inegalitarian structures of capitalism, which produced them. Thus, a capitalist state could never be legitimate and the 'locus of public will'; because it was inherently exploitative. In Marx's framework, therefore, legitimacy of political authority in a capitalist society was a myth. This conception was based as we have seen, on the premise that the capitalist state was inherently exploitative and could never therefore, embody popular will. Legitimacy was also irrelevant to Marx to the extent that he anticipated a future human condition in which people would take control over their own fate and not be dependent on 'mystification's' to sustain themselves (See William Connolly, *Legitimacy and the State*, pp 7-8).

For Marx, thus, the overriding concern was not legitimacy. He focused on capitalist societies as an exploitative economic system, based on conflicting economic interests between the owners of the means of production and the wage earning working class. In Marxist analysis, the problem was one of analysing the conditions under which the working class would organize itself into a collective force to transform the capitalist system. Max Weber's (1864-1920) formulation may be seen as a counter-perspective. Starting from the opposite end, Weber concerned himself with analysing the nature of authority and the problems of securing obedience. It is this concern with authority and the means of securing obedience (legitimacy) for the capitalist state which is reflected in Weber's theoretical formulation on authority systems in the modern world (See James Petras, '*Class Politics, State Power and Legitimacy*', pp. 1955).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   Under what circumstances did the concept of legitimacy become significant for understanding political authority?

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2)   How do Montesquieu and Rousseau modify the liberal individualist understanding of legitimacy?

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3)   How does the liberal individualist position on legitimacy differ from the marxist position?

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15.3 MAX WEBER AND HIS TYPOLOGY OF AUTHORITY SYSTEMS

Our discussion of authority and legitimacy so far has focussed on understanding historical evolution of the concepts. We concerned ourselves, especially, with exploring authority, the grounds on which legitimacy is claimed, and the rightfulness of such claim as tested against the accepted; among others, by political philosophers like Hobbes, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Marx. Sociologists like Max Weber, however, did not concern themselves with claims to power that are made. They concerned themselves with practical questions pertaining to the manner in which legitimacy unfolds, its effectiveness for occupation of positions of power, the conditions under which legitimacy is realised or eroded, and what happens if it fails. Legitimacy as a subject of political sociology, thus, looks at issues such as what are the social agencies through which legitimacy becomes effective, i.e. how do people acknowledge the legitimacy of a political authority, how do they express this acknowledgement, and the medium or resources through which political regimes garner legitimacy (David Beetham, 'Political Legitimacy' in *Blackwell Companion to Political Sociology*, p. 107-108).

15.3.1 Weber and the Belief in Legitimacy

Weber's study of legitimacy is considered useful for understanding the complexities of political rule. Weber considered legitimacy as fundamental to a systematic study of power relations. Weber pointed out, 'custom, personal advantage, purely effectual or ideal motives of solidarity', were not the sufficient basis for its sustenance. In order to sustain a given system of domination, there was normally a further element i.e. 'the belief in legitimacy'. In other words, where there is a general recognition of the legitimacy of authority, its commands were bound to be followed. There would, consequently, be no widespread use of coercion, or the constant fear of subversion or disobedience {Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1978 (1922), p.213}. Weber's study of the systems of domination led him to the conclusion that there are different ideas or principles of legitimacy. Based on the specific kind or principle of legitimacy claimed, there were differences in the type of obedience which was elicited, the kind of administrative machinery developed to guarantee it, and the kind of authority which exercised it.

15.3.2 Weber's Ideal Types

Weber identified different types or 'systems of domination' based on the kind of claims to legitimacy claimed by each (See David Beetham, 'Political Legitimacy', p.109) Accordingly, Weber constructed three 'ideal types' or 'conceptual models', which he hoped would help make sense of the highly complex nature of political rule, viz., traditional authority, charismatic, and legal-rational authority. Each of these models represented a distinct source of political legitimacy and corresponding to these, the different reasons why people obeyed a particular regime.

In the first model i. e. traditional authority, long-standing customs and traditions formed the source of political legitimacy. The sanctity of this legitimacy derived from the fact that such systems of authority had been acknowledged and obeyed by earlier generations. Examples of traditional systems of authority are patriarchy (the rule of father over the family) or gerontocracy (the rule of the 'elders'). Such systems of traditional authority can still be seen in societies where hereditary and dynastic systems of power and privilege have survived e.g., as in Saudi Arabia, Morocco and Kuwait and its constitutional forms such as in England, Netherlands, and Spain.

The second form, i.e., charismatic authority, derived legitimacy from an individual's charismatic or appealing personality. The basis of this appeal did not rest in a person's caste, class or other ascriptive attributes. It depended solely on the personal magnetism of the person making hem/her acceptable as a leader, alluring people into obedience. Examples of charismatic authority are Mussolini, Hitler, and Napoleon, whose leadership and popularity, unlike that of other popular leaders like John F. Kennedy, depended less on the authority they derived from their political office, and more on their personal charm.

Weber's third kind of legitimacy, legal-rational, links authority to precise and legally defined set of rules. Legal-rational form of authority, for Weber, is the typical form of authority found in most modern states. In such authority systems, unlike charismatic and traditional forms, political power is derived from, dependent upon, and limited by formal, legal, constitutional rules. It is these rules, which determine the nature and scope of the office holder's power (Andrew Heywood, *Politics*, pp. 195).

15.3.3 David Beetham's Critique of Max Weber

Weber's categorisation of authority systems is considered a significant contribution to understanding legitimacy of political systems and patterns of rule in modern times, especially the manner in which modern forms of authority are different from the traditional. Political Scientists like David Beetham point out, however, that Weber's three legitimating ideas, while helping us understand what is distinctive about modern as opposed to the pre-modern systems of authority, are inadequate for characterising the different regime types which have existed in the course of the twentieth century (See David Beetham, 'Political Legitimacy', p.110).

Unlike Weber who would try and fit regimes into the three typologies, or alternatively, see regimes as mixtures of two types, Beetham prefers a broad framework for understanding the processes and grounds of obedience. His framework consists of three levels or standards for understanding political authority. Political authority is legitimate, says Beetham, to the extent that: (a) it is acquired and exercised according to established rules (legality); (b) the rules are justified according to socially accepted beliefs about (i) the rightful source of authority, and (ii) the proper ends and standards of government (normative justifiability) and (c) the position of authority is confirmed by express consent or the affirmation of appropriate subordinates, and by recognition from other legitimate authorities (legitimaion).

These three levels are not alternative forms or models, but together they provide the people with moral grounds for compliance or cooperation with authority. Such a framework, feels Beetham, also provides an understanding of the reasons why power may lack legitimacy. If there is a breach of rules, the term 'illegitimacy' is used; if rules are only weekly supported by societal beliefs, or are deeply contested, one can talk of a 'legitimacy deficit' and if consent or recognition is publicly with drawn or withheld, one can speak of 'delegitimation'.

Beetham feels that such a framework fills in another inadequacy of Weber's analysis. It enables us to understand why people resist, or the circumstances in which political change occurs through challenges to political authority by popular protest and unrest. Seeing legitimacy, as Weber did, as nothing more than a 'belief in legitimacy' focuses attention only on the determination of legitimacy from the vantage point of those in power. Beetham's framework on the other hand, highlights the processes through which the ruled give or withhold recognition and obedience.

This brings us to another important contribution towards the understanding of the processes of legitimation in modern political systems; that of Jurgen Habermas which we shall take up in the following section.

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) How does Max Weber understand authority systems? What modifications does David Beetham make in Weber's formulation?

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15.4 HABERMAS AND THE LEGITIMATION CRISIS

Jurgen Habermas has developed an alternative to the Weberian approach to legitimacy. In order to do this, however, Habermas did not adopt an orthodox marxist position which saw legitimacy as nothing more than a bourgeois myth, something which could not be achieved in conditions of inequality and exploitation which existed in modern capitalist societies. Habermas admitted that modern capitalist societies or liberal democracies do have a system of drawing out consent and support of the people. He, therefore, focused not merely on the inequalities, which prevailed in capitalist societies, but concentrated also on the machinery through which legitimacy was maintained viz., the democratic system, the party system, social and welfare reforms etc. At the same time, however, Habermas pointed out the difficulties of legitimation, which would invariably be faced in a political process that produced and sustained unequal class power.

15.4.1 Crisis Tendencies

In his work, *Legitimation Crisis* (1973), Habermas identified these difficulties as 'crisis tendencies' within capitalist societies. These crisis tendencies emerged as a result of a fundamental contradiction between the logic of capitalist accumulation and popular pressures unleashed by democratic politics.

Capitalist societies, based on the pursuit of profit and producing class inequalities, have to sustain political stability by invoking a normal claim to rule. In such a system, legitimacy is secured by democratic processes, which lead to further demands for social welfare provisions, increased popular participation and social equality. This in turn puts pressures on the state to expand its social responsibilities, and raises demands for state intervention for removing inequalities, forcing it to increase expenditure on welfare (non-profit) measures. These pressures lead to increase in taxation and public spending, and constrain capitalist accumulation by restricting profit levels and discouraging enterprise. Forced either to resist popular pressures or risk economic collapse, such societies find it increasingly difficult and eventually impossible, to maintain legitimacy.

Thus, a capitalist society is constantly in the grip of crisis tendencies, which test its ability to sustain itself through the legitimacy that it can elicit through various democratic institutions. While investing in such legitimation measures, the capitalist system has to be also on a constant alert to see that these processes are not stretched to the limit where they dismantle the defining principles of the capitalist system i.e. a class exploitative system geared to the extraction of profit or capital accumulation.

According to Habermas, capitalist democracies cannot permanently satisfy both popular demands for social equality and welfare rights and requirements of a market economy based on private profit. The implication of such 'crises' involves a disturbance of integration or cohesion of society and the regulatory structures of the capitalist system.

15.4.2 State Action during Crisis

In such scenarios of legitimation crisis, the modern state, according to Habermas, takes recourse simultaneously to 'system steering' and ideological measures to legitimize and stabilize the existing structures. This involves an 'uncoupling' or dissociation of the economic (wage labour and capital relations) and the political spheres (institutions of governance). This means that the exploitative relationship between wage labour and capital is no longer part of the political sphere. The political sphere in turn becomes less participatory and more impersonal, bureaucratised, and distanced from the ruled. Such a system would, however, be held together ideologically by legitimizing 'universalist' discourses of rights, justice and citizenship which give the rulers the moral claim to rule.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   In what ways Jurgen Habermas tries to understand the crisis of legitimacy in liberal capitalist societies?

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15.5   LET US SUM UP

Authority refers to a modified form of power in that it is not simply a manifestation of the capacity to change, but also a right to change. The element, which gives authority this distinctive character, is legitimacy. It is legitimacy, which makes obedience to authority willing and binding. Until the advent of modernity, the idea of delegitimate authority had remained marginal to the understanding of political authority. With modernity and the intellectual ferment created by Enlightenment thought, the idea that authority was something divinely ordained came to be questioned.

In the seventeenth century, philosophers like Thomas Hobbes challenged the idea of divine right as the claim to rule. He advocated the view that all human beings were free and equal and had the power and capacity towards self-determination. The idea of the social contract developed by Hobbes and Locke brought about the notion that legitimate authority was dependent ultimately upon a voluntary renunciation by individuals of their right to rule their own selves, in order to create conditions conducive to broader economic freedoms.

Philosophers like Montesquieu counterposed the liberal-individualist notion of legitimacy enunciated by the Contractualists, to locate legitimization of authority in a social context by including elements of social reform and constitutionalism. Rousseau, representing a republican attack on the individualist notion of legitimate authority, proposed that the social contract was in effect, a false contract and represented a deceptive liberal solution to political instability. He advocated the democratisation of polity based on the idea of active citizenship and the realization of collective goals through popular participation.

Karl Marx, however, was skeptical of any such solution to the question of political legitimacy. For him, the idea of legitimacy itself constituted a bourgeois myth, which could not be achieved in a capitalist society founded on the principles of exploitation and domination. Max Weber, a sociologist, looked at the problems of authority and of securing obedience in capitalist societies. Exploring the basis and social agencies through which ligitimacy made itself effective, Weber proposed a three fold typology of authority systems to understand the mechanisms of legitamation.

Jurgen Habermas, while underlining the class-exploitative basis of modern societies, pointed out that liberal democracies possess the means of drawing support from the people through democratic mechanisms. These, however, while aiming at legitimisation, also stir up popular pressures for increased state intervention in social sectors. The contradictory pulls between pressures for democratisation (legitimisation) and capitalist accumulation, make liberal (capitalist) democracies ridden by the legitimisation crisis. Liberal democracies try to overcome these crisis tendencies by taking recourse to 'steering measures' i.e., decoupling the economy from the political sphere, making the political sphere less participatory and more impersonal and bureaucratic, and holding the system together ideologically through 'universalist' discourses of rights, citizenship and justice.

15.6 KEYWORDS

Absolutism	:	Absolutism was a dominant political form in seventeenth and eighteenth century Europe. It was linked to the claim that sovereignty, representing unchallengeable and indivisible legal authority rested with the sovereign. In general use today, one calls a government absolute in the sense that it possesses unfettered power.
Social Contract	:	Philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, who associated with the idea of social contract, see the contract as a voluntary agreement among individuals as a result of which an organised society or political authority is formed. The social contract is not a historical fact. It is an analytical tool for studying social and political organisations.
Descriptive	:	These concepts refer to facts which are supposed to have an objective existence and are seen as illustrations of what is, or what actually exists.

Normative	:	These concepts are often seen as values. They refer to moral principles or ideals, which should, ought, or must be brought about.
Political Obligation	:	An obligation is a requirement or duty to act in a particular way. Political Obligation is the duty of the citizen to acknowledge the authority of the state and obey its laws.
Republication	:	The term republic suggests the absence of a monarch and implies also a distinctively public arena and popular rule. As a school of political theory, it advocates certain institutional structures and moral principles including public participation, civic virtue, public spiritedness, honour and patriotism.

15.7 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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15.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 15.1

2) See sub-section 15.4.1

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Section 15.2

2) See sub-section 15.2.4 and 15.2.5

3) See sub-section 15.2.6

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Section 15.3

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Section 15.4

UNIT 16   POLITICAL OBLIGATION AND REVOLUTION

16.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the concept and the inter-relationship between political obligation and revolution

- Point out the various theories developed to explain the concept of political obligation and revolution

- Examine the advantages and limitations of political obligation and revolution with regard to state authority

16.1 INTRODUCTION

The concern of a political scientist is not only confined to the study of authority, but also extends to the problem of power being acceptable to the people over whom it is exercised. A study of the concept of political obligation necessarily leads to an investigation of related terms—political legitimacy and revolution. While the concept of political obligation constitutes an important touchstone of political philosophy, it finds a significant place in association with the notions of legitimacy and effectiveness. After this, we pass on to the study of the idea of revolution. In this unit, we propose to examine the relationship between a legitimate political order and an enlightened citizenship, which would make clear the concepts of political obligation and revolution.

16.2 POLTICAL OBLIGATION AND REVOLUTION: THE INTER-RELATEDNESS OF THESE COMPLEMENTARY TERMS

Why do people obey the state as authority? Under what circumstances should they register their disobedience? An answer to these questions has been given by a good number of thinkers in different ways and they have sought its solution in the inherently good nature of man to the emphatic affirmation of the Pragmatists. The relation between authority and obligation is inseparable, since one of the essential features of authority is the right to receive obedience. We shall examine whether there exists a right or a duty to resist the state.

It is a well-established fact that people obey only a legitimate authority; otherwise, they may overthrow it. Thus, figures the issue of revolution, which may be a peaceful event like the Glorious Revolution of England of 1688 or a violent outburst like the French Revolution of 1789. A study of the idea of revolution, thus becomes an important subject in the realm of contemporary political theory. This is so because politics is described as a study of the struggle for power, whether by peaceful or violent means, where political obligation and revolution have important ramifications

16.3 ORIGIN AND NATURE OF THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL OBLIGATION

The term 'obligation' originates from a Latin word 'obligate' implying something that binds men to perform what is enjoined upon them. This has various connotations. In the realm of ethics, it informs a man to discharge his duties, which he accepts on the basis of his rational understanding. In the field of jurisprudence, the social life of men is regulated by law. And in the world of politics, man is bound to live under some authority and obey his command. This is based on the maxim of common prudence.

It follows that the case of political obligation rests upon issues relating to the nature of authority that involves within its fold the whole world of existing rights, laws, and political organization generally.

16.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF POLITICAL OBLIGATION

Political obligation is, thus, a frame through which people accept the commands of the "men in authority". This means that it has certain distinct characteristics. They are:

- Management of public affairs

- Political Legitimacy

- Resistance to authority

A study of these characteristics would enable us to understand the nature of political obligation more clearly.

16.4.1 Management of Public Affairs

The art of running any government is not easy. It is a difficult and extensive task and any wrong move or incorrect policy decision would entail serious consequences. On the contrary, a positive and right step taken by the government for the people would bring good results for the development of a nation. Thus, it becomes a duty of every conscientious person to take serious interest in the management of public affairs, government policies and political questions. This interaction would be for the general good. Political obligation, thus, calls for honesty, integrity and public spirit, both on the part of the government and the people.

16.4.2 Political Legitimacy

A study of the concept of political obligation necessarily leads to the investigation of the related theme of political legitimacy and effectiveness. The stability of a democratic political system not only depends upon economic development, but also upon its legitimacy. Legitimacy includes the capacity to produce and maintain a belief that the existing political institutions or forms are the most appropriate for society and is said to rest on the general will. Effectiveness, on the other hand, is judged on how well a system performs the basic functions of government, measured by the reaction of the masses.

16.4.3 Resistance to Authority

The idea of political obligation not only tells people to obey authority, but also desires them to be critical about the way authority is exercised. The people should scrutinize the action of their rulers and resist an invasion on their liberties. Thus, the idea of political obligation also involves the idea of resistance to authority. But of course, the right to protest against the state must be founded on a relation to social well-being in terms intelligible to the masses and the consequences of disobedience should not lead to a total breakdown of the state system.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

  ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Define Political Obligation. What are its distinctive characteristics?

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16.5 DIFFERENT THEORIES OF POLITICAL OBLIGATION

Various theories have been enunciated on political obligation. These theories explain the kind of sanctions behind the concept of political obligation.

16.5.1 Divine Theory: Sanction in Faith

This theory is one of the oldest, explaining the reasons of obedience to a state's ruler. It implied that the ruler has derived his authority directly from God. As such, the people had no right to rebel even against a wicked ruler. In this way, people are bound by religious injunction to obey the authority of the king. This idea of 'divine rights of kings' was prevalent through out the Middle Ages. However, with the advent of new learning in the modern age, it lost its significance.

Criticism of the Divine Theory of Political Obligation

The Divine Theory of political obligation received scathing criticism at the hands of eminent thinkers like Grotius, Hobbes, Locke who rejected its metaphysical premises and traced the source of political obligation in consent of the individuals. When the state and the church got separated due to the growth of secularism, temporal powers became supreme to spiritual powers. However, the growth of democracy doomed this theory. Even the other metaphysical bases of obligation, like Fascism or Communism, based on the historic mission of a leader, class or party, received no support from science. They are of the same religious order as the divine rights theory. Thus, the theory lost all its appeal in the modern age.

16.5.2 Consent/Contract Theory: Sanction in Will of the People

Though the idea of contract or consent as a basis of obligation is quite ancient and is found in ancient Hindu thought too, it was mainly in the 16th and the 17th century in Europe that sophisticated theories of contract were developed to explain political obligation. The explicit expression of this theory is found in the writings of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. They opine, that men who lived in the state of nature entered into a contract whereby political authority came into being, which again was based on the consent of the people. The idea of social contract, however, took a highly philosophical form at the hands of Rousseau, who reposed the fact of political obligation in the "General Will". This meant that man no longer remains a slave to his impulses of appetite after entering into a civil society, but he becomes bound to obey the law of the general good. (Called General Will).

Thus, the social contract theory justifies the conception that the ruling authority, if he has to be legitimate, must rest ultimately on the consent of the governed. If the government violates the terms of the contract, the people have the right to resist. The implications of this theory have been in the direction of safeguarding the rights and liberties of the people and checking the arbitrariness of rulers.

Criticism of the Consent Theory of Political Obligation

Though the consent theory had its field day in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries and even now, has its own significance on account of constituting the moral basis of a democratic order, its suffers from certain weaknesses. The theory makes the state an artificial organization. Also, the element of consent as enshrined in some contract made in a hypothetical state of nature is nothing else than a fiction, not at all legally binding on the existing generation. Thus, the people may go to the extent of staging a rebellion on the plea that they withdraw their consent in as much as the government has committed such an action in violation of the "general will'. The result is that the theory of political obligation is converted into a theory of rebellion.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the limitations of the Divine Theory of political obligation?

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2) What is the key feature of the Social Contract Theory?

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16.5.3 Prescriptive Theory: Sanction in Reverence to the Established Conventions and Traditions

According to this theory, political authority and reverence to it are based on the principle of "customary rights'. Authority is legitimate, if it is sanctioned by long standing custom or tradition. The people obey their rulers because the fact of obedience has become like a well-established convention. The traditionalists view the state as a delicate structure built over the years and which represents a balance of conflicting interest. Institutions like the state evolve gradually and adapt slowly to change; hence, it is a matter of duty to accept state authority and obey it while working only for

gradual peaceful change. This conservative theory of political obligation has its affirmation in the writings of Hegel, who believes that the ideas of morality evolve concretely in the customs and institutions of the state. And since the latest stage in this process is the present established order, it is entitled to receive our obedience. Further, since the state is the embodiment of a long evolved and customary morality, it becomes the duty of everyone to do what the state expects of one.

Burke is one of the best known exponents of conservatism who opines that it is unwise for man to totally disregard custom and tradition. The fact of political obligation is contained in paying unflinching respect to tradition, which is a sacrosanct affair. Thus, he supported the revolt of American colonialists, which was in favour of traditional rights of Englishmen, but opposed the French Revolution because it was inspired by the abstract rights of man "divorced from national traditions".

Prof. M. Oakeshott is a contemporary upholder of the traditionalist view of obligation. According to him, political actions can never be anything but traditional, because political reflection cannot exist in advance of political activity. Politics is a skill, which is learned by practice rather that through theoretical maxims or systems. Hence, even when we attempt to comprehend other people's politics, it is always within our own framework.

Criticism of the Prescriptive Theory of Political Obligation

Like other theories, the prescriptive theory has its own weaknesses. The source of political obligation lies not only in paying reverence to well-established practices, but also in doing away with them. People desire change and in case, their hopes are frustrated, they take to the path of revolution. Oakeshott has been particularly criticised on the ground that he treats even a revolution as an experience connected with the past and thereby, makes it a purely conservative affair. This means that the exponents of this theory would even advise the Negroes of African countries to accept racial discrimination laws as 'legitimate' for they are based on the 'well-established traditions of the realm.' However, this is far from the truth. In-fact, people only observe their traditions, in so far as they have their utility and do away with them when their usefulness does not exist.

16.5.4 Idealistic Theory: Sanction in the Rationality of Man

The Idealists trace the source of political obligation in the innate rationality of man. Man is regarded as a 'political and rational creature' and the state as a 'self - sufficing community' identical with the whole society. As such, there can be no anti-thesis between the individual and the state. As a consequence, an individual can seek his best possible development in society alone by obeying the command of the state.

In other words, the source of political obligation is contained in obedience to the state. Both Plato and Aristotle affirmed that the state and the individuals comprising it 'form an organic whole'. Such an affirmation finds its best manifestation in the hands of Hegel who identifies 'liberty' of the individual with his perfect obedience to state. Green too says, that the idea of political obligation is connected with the case of moral obligation. He suggests that only those actions should be made obligations, which are made to serve a certain moral end.

Criticism of the Idealistic Theory of Political Obligation

The idealistic theories have been criticized on the ground of being too abstract. It places ordinary things in a highly philosophical or metaphysical form that cannot be understood by a man of average understanding. Also, the idea of political obligation is not only concerned with man's obedience to state, but is also integrally connected with his right to resist abuse of political authority. The idealists are reluctant to

accommodate the right to resistance in their doctrine of political obligation. Even if Green and Bosanquet did recognize the right in certain exceptional situations, their treatment is vague and uncertain and failed to shake off the weight of English liberalism. Trietschke even goes to the extent of saying to fall down and worship the state. Thus, the idea of political obligation is converted into the injunction of blind worship of authority.

16.5.5 Marxian Theory: Eventual Conversion of Political Obligation into Social Obligation

The Marxian theory of political obligation is basically different from other theories on the subject. It sanctions the case of political non-obligation in the pre-revolutionary stage, total political obligation in the revolutionary stage and its eventual conversion into social obligation in the post-revolutionary stage. In other words, the case of political obligation is integrally connected with the character of authority. In Marxian theory of politics, state is decried as a 'bourgeois institution' in capitalist society. It means, after a successful revolution, the working class has the instruments of power in their hands to consolidate the socialist order in a way preparing its 'withering away' in the final stage of socialism. According to Marxism, the idea of political obligation cover the cases of 'discredited state' in the era of capitalism, the 'new state' in the period of 'dictatorship of the proletariat', and the 'state proper' when the 'classless' society finds its culmination in the 'stateless' pattern of social existence.

The starting point of Marxian theory of politics and with it of political obligation 'is its categorical rejection of this view of the state as the trustee, instrument, or agent of society as a whole'. The case of political obligation arises when the 'new state' comes into being after the revolution. The noticeable point in this theory is that what is forbidden in capitalist society is ordained in the socialist order. Not merely this, fundamental changes take place that prohibit any opposition to the state at all. The task of the Marxists is to subordinate the idea of political obligation to the dictates of permanent revolution. In other words, the idea of political obligation ceases to exist with the withering away of the state in the last stage of socialism (called communism) and finds its final conversion into the injunction of social obligation. Thus, society will be composed of the associations of free and equal producers, consciously acting upon a common and rational plan.

Criticism of the Marxian Theory of Political Obligation

A critical study of Marxian theory shows that it treats the question of political obligation in a way far away from the real perspective. What is emphatically advocated in the phase of capitalism is firmly denied in the next stage of social development. People who are exhorted to disobey the 'bourgeoisie state' are commanded not to disobey the state at all after the inauguration of the new social system. Thus, Marx is accused of building up a theory of political obligation on the basis of expediency alone, and he ignores the independent individual whose experience only counts in the determination of his obedience to the laws of state.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is the Idealistic Theory of political obligation?

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2)   What are the limitations of the Marxian Theory of political obligation?

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16.6   CONCLUDING APPRAISAL OF POLITICAL OBLIGATION

In a strict sense, the idea of political obligation is not a political, but a moral affair. However, the norm of morality differs from time to time, place to place and people to people. The dimensions of political obligation too vary and similarly, the injunctions of popular resistance also differ. The state is a necessary means to the ends of justice and if it does this on the basis of a broad consensus, then there is a kind of contractual understanding that in return for what the state does to promote justice and good, we undertake to obey it.

16.7   REVOLUTION: NATURE AND IMPLICATION

The idea of revolution covers not only the political, but also the economic, the social and the cultural dimensions of human life. A precise definition of the term involves different ramifications ranging on the implications of change, whether peaceful or violent, total or partial, minor or major. In political theory, it has a typical connotation signifying alteration in government alongwith changes in related associations and structures. In its core meaning, it 'constitutes a challenge to the established political and the eventual establishment of a new order radically different from the preceding one'.

A possible line of difference between a revolt and a revolution may, however, be drawn in the affirmation that while both hint at a sudden, jolting and significant change in the existing system, the former does not imply the idea of 'profound change' as does the latter. The means employed to bring about a sudden, major and profound change may vary from purely constitutional or non-violent to those thoroughly violent and extremist. There also prevails the concept of "counter revolution" when a revolution takes place to undo the results of a revolution; for instance, the Communist Party of China, staged a revolution in 1927 and its suppression by the 'Nationalists' under Chiang Kai-Shek was dubbed as a 'counter revolution'. Thus, a revolution certainly aims to alter the structure of subordination.

16.8   CHARACTERISTICS OF REVOLUTION

It is true that numerous revolutions have taken place in different part of the world, yet it is impossible to establish an objective and general pattern of revolution or even an adequate definition applicable to all periods. We should, thus, confine our attention to the implication and general characteristics of revolution, to gain a better understanding of the concept. They are:

- Beginning of a process
- Implies a change
- Signifies a coherent programme
- Myth to Political leadership

16.8.1 Beginning of a Process

Revolution denotes a process in which political direction taken by a state becomes increasingly discredited in the eyes of either the population as a whole or a certain key section of it. Such a process may culminate in a revolutionary event or other activities like an outburst, upheaval, agitation or a change of government by more peaceful means.

16.8.2 Implies a Change

After the process has begun, revolution implies a change of established order, or government at a clearly defined point in time by the use of armed forces or the credible threat of its use. Moreover, the change should be sudden and not gradual. Here, mere repudiation of authority is not enough. Existing authority on account of being devoid of 'legitimacy' should be replaced by a new one that is 'righteous'. As such, it is different from an activity like disorder, revolt or rebellion.

16.8.3 Signifies a Coherent Programme

Revolution also signifies a more or less coherent programme of change in either political or social instructions of a state or both, induced by the political leadership after a revolutionary event, the transition of power has occurred. In any variety of revolution whether it is liberal, communist, quasi-revolutionary, limited or unlimited, proper or sub- revolution, with negative or positive aspects — all follow a well- knit code of action and program to get desired results to the maximum extent possible.

16.8.4 Mythical Status to Political Leadership

Revolution also hints at giving a mythical status to political leadership resulting from a revolutionary transition, short-term status as legitimate government of the state. For instance, the inauguration of Fascism in Italy in 1922 and Nazism in Germany in 1933 were hailed as revolutions though they entailed the doom of liberal democracy. The heroes of these nations were worshipped as 'prophets' and people opted for a dictatorship without showing enthusiasm for replacing a despotic system with a constitutional government.

16.9   REVOLUTION: A MERE EVENT OR A SERIES OF EVENTS

Revolution is not merely concerned with the overthrow of the established order. It is equally concerned with the establishment of a new one. Thus, it is not merely an event, but a series of events. It begins with a challenge to the existing system and

continues until a new order is installed. What happens in between the two is said to constitute the stages of revolution. The different stages or the series of events are enumerated below:

- A revolution begins when the expectations of the people are very high and the great leaders are engaged in much perfectionist rhetoric. The result is the replacement of the 'old' with the 'new'.

- The second stage begins when power is captured and revolutionary leaders are confronted with the realities of governance. There prevail differences of opinion, which mark the category of moderates and extremists. However, victory rests with the radicals who concentrate power in their hands.

- Desperate efforts are made to realise revolutionary ideals and goals at all costs. This engenders a reaction that entails a period of convalescence.

- Then follows a state of lull. An era of dissensions and resignations comes to prevail that creates a very fertile ground for the coming up of a dictator.

- The last stage is one in which gradually revolutionary symbols lose their hold and dictatorship appears as a naked power. Then, occurs a trend towards restoration with reconciliation between what was overthrown and what was brought about.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

     ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What do you understand by revolution? How is it different from a revolt?

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2) Enumerate and describe the major characteristics of revolution.

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16.10 DIFFERENT THEORIES OF REVOLUTION

Different theories have come up to highlight the meaning, nature and causes of revolution. We could examine four theories that attempt to explain the concept of revolution.

16.10.1 Liberal Theory

The Liberal theory of revolution emphasises preserving the status quo in the process of change. That is to say that the notion of change is made coincidental with the preservation of the existing state of social, economic and political life. Such a notion is well reflected in the political philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. By revolution, Plato meant the establishment of an ideal state. To Aristotle revolution implied a change in the form of government by another or even a change in the type of rulers, which may amount to a revolution.

The trend of approaching revolution with a sense of apprehension and thus, an attempt at making the idea of change in consonance with the existing order, continued. Further, John Milton linked up the case of revolution with the maintenance of freedom and went to the extent of choosing a new government in case the existing rulers deprived the people of their liberty. However, liberal interpretation of the meaning and nature of revolution takes an important turn at the hands of John Locke. The fact remains that the keynote of making change in consonance with the defence of status-quo to any possible extent remains altogether undiscarded. Thus, the English Revolution of 1688 and the French Revolution of 1789 have been accused of being reactionary.

Criticism of the Liberal Theory

This theory has been criticized on the ground that thinkers have sought to justify a return to the past as an act of revolution. As a result, the liberal theory of revolution has been accused of being reactionary, anti-change and even counter-revolutionary. Here, the revolutionaries announced themselves as the protagonists of the 'rights of man'. But any analysis of measures by which they gave effect to their principles, shows clearly that by the 'rights of man', they meant in actual the rights of a limited class of men who owned the instrument's of production in society. Thus, the liberal tradition was an intellectual revolution primarily made in the interest of property owners in the new industrial field.

16.10.2 Marxian Theory

The Marxian theory basically emphasised the idea of 'Permanent Revolution'. The Marxists opined that a social revolution takes place when the existing relations of production begin to act as a fetter on the future development of forces of production. Thus, for Marx, the major political revolutions of the modern age up to this time are to be explained as the result of long-term social and economic developments in which new forms of economic exploitation come up. For him, 'a political revolution is a social revolution when it involves the conflict of social classes.'

Thus, Marx hails the 'bourgeoisie revolution' whereby the 'feudal state is over-thrown by the middle class that has grown up inside it and a new state created as the instrument of the bourgeoisie rule.' He hoped that in a democratically advanced country (like England, Holland, France and America) a socialist revolution might take place through the battle of the ballot box. In the main, however, the burden of Marxian theory is on the use of violent means. Not merely this, it also envisages that the ideas, beliefs, convictions, customs and the ways of life of the people are changed so as to make them in tune with the norms of the socialist system. In this way, a 'Cultural Revolution' is launched to brainwash the people.

The course of revolution does not stop even here. It is a permanent affair, which calls for the final stage of a 'stateless society'. This also implies 'export of revolution', which means establishment of international socialism. The **Communist Manifesto** ends with these words of exhortation: 'Workers of all countries unite. You have nothing to lose but chains. You have a world to win.'

Criticism of the Marxian Theory

A major criticism leveled against this theory is that, it stops after the occurrence of the 'Socialist Revolution.' Revolution basically means a change for the better. But in a socialist state, any change is a taboo. Opposition is suppressed and the people are forced to change themselves, which may not necessarily amount to a change for the better. Thus, Marx's vision can be termed as limited.

Another weakness in this theory is that the precise relationship between revolutionary political action and Marx's general theory of socio-economic development is optimistically vague. It stands on the elaboration of class war. The theory is problematic as we find controversy among the thinkers. While Trotsky desired 'export of revolution', Stalin cried for 'Socialism in One Country'. Khruschev, on the other hand, reiterated the principle of peaceful coexistence with the capitalist state.

16.10.3 Neo-Liberal Theory

According to Neo-liberal thinkers, the meaning of revolution has a different connotation and so its causes may not be discovered in the sphere of economics alone. Several viewpoints have sprung up in this context, all pinpointing that revolutions are violent civil disturbances that cause the displacement of one ruling group by another that has a broader popular basis of support . Historical evidence shows that people having nothing like "class consciousness" rise in revolt to change their destiny. As such, a revolution would seem to be the result of deep-rooted and slowly evolving political and social malformations rather than a sudden outbreak. However, in the last phase, they are sudden and violent.

The cause of revolution has been discussed from the stand point of psychology. David C. Schwartz explained people's apathy as a factor, which is known as 'alienation'. On this basis, he constructs a 'plausible theory', which has its beginning in 'ambivalence'; then moves on to 'conflict', thereon to 'cognitive consistency' and finally to 'adjustment'. Withdrawal from politics is a dangerous symptom, as it cultivates feelings of apathy for the system and the result is an outburst of mass anger.

Criticism of the Neo-Liberal Theory

The new liberal thinkers of the present century have in a way tried to follow Marx in so far as he emphasises the use of force in the capture of power and also rejected him in so far as he confines his attention only to the parameters of class war. This has led to the meaning of revolution, having different connotations.

A revolution is not only an event, as said by the liberal thinkers, in which one class dislodges another and captures power. The fact, however, is that it also relates to a particular phase of history extending over a considerable phase of time, but certainly marked by major 'social and ideological change.'

16.10. 4 Idealistic-Liberal Theory

The idealistic-liberal theory lays emphasis on a moral, spiritual and cultural upheaval through which a group of persons seeks to establish a new basis for existence. If so, a revolution is not merely a political process, but a part of the unfolding of human potentiality. A major event of historical significance directed towards a higher moral end is a revolution, according to this interpretation.

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Such an orientation finds its impressive manifestation at the hands of Hegel. To him, it is the 'reason' that plays a decisive part in evolution. An object is a thesis, an element of contradiction develops within it that may be taken as its 'antithesis.' The struggle between the two leads to the emergence of the 'synthesis', which has a mixture of both thesis and anti-thesis and represents a higher stage of development – a stage which will lead to another higher one and thus, the process of change will continue. A revolution, therefore, takes place on account of the operation of the law of dialectics in which the decisive role is played by the geist (spirit). Thus, it becomes something central to the process in which the ideally rational could become actual.

This idealistic-cum liberal interpretation of the idea of revolution is traceable in the political philosophy of M.N. Roy, who said that revolution means awakening the urge of freedom in man. As such, revolution is based on human nature and nothing like violence is needed. It means reorganizing society on the basis of freedom and equality remains a necessity.

Criticism of the Idealistic Liberal Theory

The theory is criticised on the ground of being too abstract to be understood by a man of average comprehension. The purely philosophical version take the subject of revolution far away from the world of reality. Revolution as a matter of fact, is an important event that changes the pattern of social, economic and political development. This means, it is purely a practical affair. It calls for an empirical study. The value free study of revolution is, however, a logical impossibility.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   On what grounds has the Liberal Theory of revolution been criticised?

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2)   How do the Marxists approach the question of revolution?

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16.11 THEORISING REVOLUTION IN RECENT SOCIAL SCIENCE LITERATURE

Revolution, which has remained one of the key concepts in social science, has naturally attracted intellectual attention of scholars and academics in recent years. A few such explanations are discussed below.

16.11.1 Comparative Approach

The most influential exercise in comparative approach as applied to social revolutions is the work of Theda Skocpol in her book *States and Social Revolutions (1979)*, which was based on a comparative analysis of French, Russian and Chinese Revolutions. By following this approach, she tried to find out the 'generalizable logic' behind the revolutions she studied. Her departure from all previous interpretations of revolution is on her dismissal of any notion of conscious purpose. She concluded that social revolutions are simply the unplanned product of competing forces. Different groups enter the fray and the outcome is determined by which of them ultimately wins. Neither individuals, nor groups, nor even classes act throughout revolutions with the logic and consistency which traditional views would demand. Skocpol has, however, been criticised by people like Michael Taylor, Mancur Olson and others who challenge Skocpol's argument that revolution is irrational and seek to demonstrate through their writings that rational-choice theory can be applied to revolutionary coalition-building.

16.11.2 Psychological Approach

Ever since the French Revolution, people have sought psychological explanations of why revolutionaries act as they do. All the earlier explanations of revolutions following the psychological approach like that of Le Bon (1960), Dean Martin (1920) revolve around the apparently amoral behaviour of crowds, who act in strange and unusual ways, which in turn, lead to rapid and far-reaching changes in a way that in normal conditions would be impossible. All these explanations, however assume that in a revolutionary situation everyone acts in the same way and that there is a psychological cause of revolution.

But modern psychological theories of revolution under the influence of Freud focused attention on the interaction of the individual with others. There have been some landmark publications like *The Authoritarian Personality* (Adorno et. al. 1964), *The Revolutionary Personality* (Wolfensteur, 1967), or *Why Men Rebel* (Ted Gurr, 1970). Ted Gurr's work, in particular, is a highly formal exercise in psychological approach, although, it principally deals with the notion of political violence. The impulse towards the use of violence is found by Gurr in a social-psychological concept called 'relative deprivation', which is used to denote the tension that develops from a discrepancy between the "ought" and the "is" of collective value satisfaction. The psychological approach has certain inherent limitations, for which perhaps, Gurr moves away from the psychological toward the sociological while trying to explain the outcomes of revolution.

16.11.3 Sociological Approach

The most popular sociological explanations of revolutions are functionalist explanations. The basic premise of this approach is as follows: The stability of society depends on social order continuing to fulfil the requirements of its citizens. If it fails to do so, the underlying consensus on the values of society, which enables the government to function is lost, and with the failure of consensus the way is open for a mass rejection of the existing order. There have been notable works following this approach like *Revolution and the Social System* (C. Johnson, 1964), *The Natural History of*

Revolution (L.P. Edwards, 1970) etc. The problem with these types of explanation is that they do not explain why revolutions occur in certain situations, and more importantly, why they do not, inspite of a congenial situation.

16.11.4 Political Approach

The political approach to the study of revolution is basically interpreting revolution by trying to find out the factors behind revolution, interpreting the course of revolution and analysing the consequences of revolution. The best known work in this category is perhaps *From Mobilisation to Revolution* (Charles Tilly, 1978). Tilly's principal focus is on the process of alienation and regrouping that precedes a revolution, the causes of a revolutionary situation and on revolutionary outcomes.

16.11.5 Philosophical Approach

Modern philosophical explanations of revolution are dominated by Hannah Arendt's *On Revolution* (1963). For Arendt, revolution is one of the most recent of political phenomena. Revolution is the search for freedom and revolutionaries are those who fight for freedom in the face of tyranny. Freedom, according to Arendt, is a distinctive quality; a good in itself which is the highest achievement of human society to attain. The problem of revolution is that its spirit has failed to find appropriate institutions in which to express itself. She, therefore, concludes with the practical consequences for trying to realise this objective: not party government which she believes to be a government by an elite chose by the people, but self-government by deputies of elementary republics.

16.12 CONCLUDING APPRAISAL OF REVOLUTION

After discussing the meaning nature and various theories on the subject, the subject of revolution becomes clear. That is, in a revolution the old established sense of rights fades away and a new state of affair comes into being. It involves extreme ideas of violence and bloodshed for bringing in the element of 'change'. They contain the potential of self-renewal. It may bring in the change of failure or success, which may signalise the passing away of a political order. Thus, revolution means a combination of rather far-reaching change intended to erase the real illness of a society that has reached an impasse.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

　　　 ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are Theda Skocpol's views on revolution?

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2)   Discuss the psychological approach to revolution.

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16.13 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have dealt at length with the complementary terms of political obligation and revolution and its importance and relevance in political philosophy. At the outset, every conscientious person obeys the laws of the state, because of legal, religious, traditional, moral and consent basis. That is to say, the concept of political obligation leads to the investigation of related themes of political legitimacy and revolution. We have already discussed that people obey the state if authority is legitimate, otherwise they may over throw it. Thus, follows the issue of revolution. If a revolution succeeds, it introduces a new principle of legitimacy that supercedes the 'rightness' of the former system. Thus, the concepts of obligation and revolution are important touchstones of political philosophy.

16.14 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Amal Ray and Mohit Bhattacharya, *Political Theory: Ideas and Institutions* – Calcutta: World Press, 1968 [See the new edition].

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E.Barker, *Principles of Social and Political theory,* London: Oxford University Press, 1967

John Dunn, *Modern Revolution: An Introduction to the Analysis of a Political Phenomenon*, London; Cambridge University Press, 1972

Peter Calvert, *Revolution and Couter-Revolution*, London: Open University Press, 1990

Randhir Singh , *Reason, Revolution and Political Theory*, Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1976.

16.15 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Sections 16.1 - 16.4

Check Your Progress 2

1) See sub-section 16.5.1

2) See sub-section 16.5.2

Check Your Progress 3

1) See sub-section 16.5.4

2) See sub-section 16.5.5

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Sections 16.7 - 168

2) See Section 16.8

Check Your Progress 5

1) See sub-section 16.10.1

2) See sub-section 16.10.2

Check Your Progress 6

1) See sub-section 16.11.1

2) See sub-section 16.11.2

UNIT 17 RIGHTS AND CITIZENSHIP

Structure

17.0 OBJECTIVES

In the present unit, we shall study the idea(s) of rights and citizenship in terms of (a) their historical development and (b) as a terrain where various contesting views are presented regarding their form and substance. We shall also focus on criticisms of dominant understandings of rights and citizenship and the alternative understandings provided by such criticisms. As the structure of the unit laid out in the beginning shows, each section explains a specific theme and follows it with questions to facilitate understanding. Certain keywords are explained at the end of the unit.

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Citizenship is commonly understood as referring to the relationship between the individual/collective and the state. This relationship is understood as being made up of reciprocal rights and responsibilities. The most commonly accepted definition of citizenship comes from the English sociologist T.H. Marshall who describes it as 'full and equal membership in a political community'. Citizenship, according to this definition, denotes membership in a political community, which in our present context is the nation-state. Citizenship would, thus, signify a specific aspect of the relationship among people who live together in a nation. It emphasises political allegiances and civic loyalties within the community rather than any cultural/emotional identity.

17.1.1 Origin of the Idea of Citizenship

The origins of the idea of citizenship are generally traced to the ancient Greek and Roman republics. The word itself is derived from the Latin word 'civis' and its Greek equivalent 'polities', which means member of the polis or city. However, the manner in which citizenship is understood today as a system of equal rights as opposed to ascriptive privileges deriving from conditions of birth, took roots in the French Revolution (1789). With the development of capitalism and liberalism, the idea of the citizen as an individual bearing rights irrespective of her/his caste, class, race, gender, ethnicity, etc., became entrenched. Since the nineteen eighties however, globalisation and multiculturalism have provided the contexts within which this notion of citizenship has been challenged. Thus, the nation is no longer being seen as the sole unit of membership and the ideas of world citizenship and human rights are being earnestly talked about. Similarly, the individual has been displaced as the core of citizenship theory and rights of cultural communities and groups have started gaining ground. Thus, it may be said that the idea of citizenship has developed over several historical periods. Its form and substance have not remained the same, but changed according to specific historical contexts. The various forms which citizenship took historically have not, however, disappeared entirely. They have not only influenced the modern meanings of citizenship, they also exist as different strands within the bundle of meanings surrounding citizenship.

17.1.2 Development of the Ideas on Citizenship: Four Historical Periods

The development of the ideas which surround citizenship can be attributed to four broad historical periods: (a) classical Graeco-Roman periods (fourth century B.C. onwards), (b) late medieval and early modern periods including the period of the French and American Revolutions, (c) the developments in the nineteenth century corresponding to the growing influence of liberalism and capitalism and, (d) the contests over the form and substance of citizenship in the late twentieth century with increasing preoccupation with multiculturalism and community rights. Two dominant strands or traditions of rights and citizenship can be seen to have developed over these periods: (a) civic republicanism characterised by the ideas of common good, public spirit, political participation and civic virtue and, (b) liberal citizenship with an emphasis on individual rights and private interests. The Marxists and the Feminists have criticised both these traditions and have suggested radical ways of rethinking citizenship. The criticism of liberal/imperial citizenship by Gandhi and his vision of citizenship based on notions of duties rather than rights constitute another way of thinking about citizenship.

In the following sections, we will discuss the historical development of the ideas of rights and citizenship, the modifications which the changing contexts of the late twentieth century have necessitated, the divisions among theories on the nature and substance of citizenship and rights, and finally, the alternatives which have been offered to the dominant framework of rights and citizenship.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What do you understand by citizenship?

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2)   What are the main strands/traditions in the development of the idea of citizenship?

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17.2 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS: CITIZENSHIP FROM CLASSICAL TO MODERN TIMES

In this section, we shall see how the idea of citizenship has evolved at different historical stages.

17.2.1 Ancient Greece

Greek republics like Athens and Sparta were closely knit, self-governing political communities characterised by small populations, minimum social differentiation and simple political organisations, based on notions of familiarity and trust. The idea of citizenship in Greek republics or city-states was based on the principle of active political participation. The political and public aspects of a person's life were seen as more important than the private and familial. Citizenship, therefore, required active participation in political and public affairs. It may be pointed out, however, that not everybody could participate in the process of governance and not everybody, therefore, was a citizen. Aristotle described the Greek citizens as 'all who share in the civic life of ruling and being ruled in turn'. This sharing was confined only to those having the capacity to participate in the process of governance, i.e. only the 'free native-born men'. Thus, women, children, slaves, and resident aliens were excluded from citizenship. In the ultimate analysis, therefore, the citizens constituted only a small part of the population.

17.2.2 Ancient Rome

In the Roman tradition, the Greek idea of citizenship as active participation was modified by the needs of holding together the Roman Empire. The need to incorporate the conquered peoples into the empire led to the idea of citizenship as a legal status. Thus, a larger and more heterogeneous population was integrated into the Roman Empire by subjecting them to the protection of a uniform set of laws. Women and the lowest classes (chiefly rural) were, however, denied the status of citizens. Thus, citizenship could now be imagined not primarily as participation in the making and

implementing of laws (as was the case in the Greek tradition), but as a legal status involving certain rights and equal protection of the law. It may, however, be pointed out that these new elements of citizenship while making possible a degree of inclusiveness (i.e., including non-Romans within the Roman citizenship), added also a hierarchy of status by introducing the second-class category of 'civitas sine suffragio' (citizenship without franchise, i.e. legal but not political rights).

The increase in the scale of administration (city-state as different from the empire) also meant that it was not possible for all who had the status of citizens to participate in the affairs of governance. The characteristics of a citizen, however, continued to be marked in a way so that citizenship denoted activity. The citizens were required, thus, to develop qualities of 'civic virtue', a term derived from the Latin word 'virtus' which meant 'manliness' in the sense of performing military duty, patriotism, and devotion to duty and the law.

17.2.3 The Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods

The sixteenth century absolutist states were also concerned with imposing their authority over heterogeneous populations. In this context, a citizen came to be defined by Jean Bodin as 'one who enjoys the common liberty and protection of authority'. The citizen in this view was unlike the Greek citizen, not himself an authority, but following the Roman tradition, someone who was under the protection of the state. Unlike the Greek and Roman traditions, however, citizenship was a passive idea. Citizenship in this period did not stand for common (shared) public responsibilities and civic virtues. Instead, the notion of 'common (shared) liberty' became the primary concern of citizenship. This concern embodied a 'passive' or 'negative' notion of citizenship. It indicated claims for 'security' or protection, which was to be provided by the authorities. What needed to be protected was one's physical life (as in Hobbes), the family and home (as in Bodin and Montesquieu) or conscience and property (as in Locke). This principle of a 'common shared liberty', thus, established the primacy of the individual and his private/ familial world. The protection of authority was needed primarily to preserve this private world/domain. Citizens were, thus, not political people, the political community was not the predominant core of their lives but rather the other framework, in which each citizen enjoyed the liberty of private pleasures and pursuit of happiness and, as mentioned earlier, the protection and security of the private/familial domain in which these pleasures were realised.

Thus, the principle of imperial inclusiveness can be seen to have brought about in this period a passive notion of citizenship as a legal status. Alongside, however, there remained nostalgia or a longing for the classical notion of citizenship as activity, with an emphasis on civil virtue and public duty.

The French Revolution (1789) can be seen as a revolt against the passive citizenship of the late medieval and early modern times. The revolution attempted to resurrect the ideals of active participation against the claims of the monarchical/ imperial state. Apart from attempting to change the apolitical/ passive lives of citizens, the French revolutionary tradition introduced an important element to citizenship, which changed the way in which rights were incorporated into the notion of citizenship. *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens* which followed in the wake of the revolution, brought in the notion of the citizen as a 'free and autonomous individual' who enjoyed rights equally with others and participated in making decisions which all had agreed to obey. The manner in which citizenship is understood today as a system of horizontal (equal) rights as against the hierarchical (unequal) privileges which accrued to a person by reason of higher birth, has its roots in the doctrines of the French Revolution. The Declaration was influenced by the ideas of Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-78) who in his famous work '*The Social Contract*' (1762) wrote not only about the 'free and autonomous' citizen and the right of the citizen to

participate equally with others in decision making, but also established the primacy of the common good over private interests. Thus, the conception of the citizen established by the French Revolution, combined strands of modern liberal individualism with the classical connotation of citizenship as civic participation.

17.2.4 Modern Notions of Citizenship: The Nineteenth and the Twentieth Century Developments

The growing influence of liberalism in the nineteenth century and the development of capitalist market relations, however, saw the classical republican understanding of citizenship slip to the background. The liberal notion of citizens as individuals bearing/enjoying certain rights in order to protect and promote private interests gained precedence. Citizenship as a legal status, which gave the citizen certain rights assuring protection from state interference, was integral to the liberal understanding of state and politics.

It would be appropriate to discuss here T.H. Marshall's account of the development of citizenship in Britain as outlined in his influential work '*Citizenship and Social Class*', published in 1950. In this work, Marshall studies the growth of citizenship alongside capitalism and the peculiar relationship of conflict and collusion which citizenship shares with it. He describes the development of citizenship over a period of 250 years as a process of expanding equality against the inequality of social class, which is an aspect of capitalist society. Marshall distinguishes three strands or bundles of rights, which constitute citizenship: civil, political and social. Each of these three strands has, according to Marshall, a distinct history and the history of each strand is confined to a particular century. Civil rights which developed in the eighteenth century have been defined by Marshall as 'rights necessary for individual freedom'. These were 'negative' rights in the sense that they limited or checked the exercise of government power and included freedoms of speech, movement, conscience, the right to equality before the law and the right to own property. Political rights viz., the right to vote, the right to stand for elections and the right to hold public office, developed by and large in the nineteenth century and provided the individual with the opportunity to participate in the political life of the community. Social rights, which were largely a twentieth century development, guaranteed the individual a minimum economic/social status and provided the basis for the exercise of both civil and political rights. Social rights, says Marshall are 'positive' rights 'to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in society'. These standards of life and the social heritage of society are released through active intervention by the state in the form of social services (the welfare state) and educational system.

Marshall's scheme of historical development of rights in England since the eighteenth century cannot, however, be held true for other societies. Civil rights for example, were not fully established in most European countries until the early nineteenth century. Even where they were generally achieved, some groups were omitted. Thus, although the constitution granted such rights to Americans well before most European states had them, the Blacks were excluded. Even after the Civil War, when the Blacks were formally given these rights, they were not able to exercise them. Rights were also denied to the colonised peoples of Latin America, Africa and Asia. Women did not have the right to vote in most countries, including England, till the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The modern notion of citizenship as pointed out earlier, seeks to constitute free and equal citizens. This freedom and equality, which underlies modern citizenship, is sought to be achieved by eliminating ascriptive inequalities and differences (of culture, caste, gender, race etc.). Thus, citizens are conceived as bearing rights and exercising their rights equally with other citizens. Conditions of equality i.e., conditions in which

citizens are able to exercise their rights equally are ensured by making circumstances of inequality i.e. race, ethnicity, gender, caste etc., irrelevant for the exercise of the rights of citizenship. The citizen, thus, is the right bearing individual whose caste, race, gender, ethnicity etc. are seen as unrelated to the status of citizenship. Seen in this manner, citizenship constitutes an overarching identity concealing all other identities to produce what are called masked/unmarked (and therefore) 'equal' citizens of the nation. In much of liberal theory till most of the twentieth century, the bias in favour of the individual rights bearing citizen pursuing private interests, persisted. The idea of citizenship as outlined in this (liberal) framework, has a distinctive significance as well as some obvious limitations.

17.2.5 Significance and Limitation of the Liberal Framework

The generalisation of modern citizenship across the social structure means that all persons are equal before the law and no group is legally privileged. Understood in this manner, citizenship is an inclusive category. It regards all differences (of race, class, caste, gender, religion etc.) as irrelevant in order to create free and equal citizens.

Limitation

The provision of citizenship across social structures without regard to differences may in effect, mean overlooking actually existing inequalities. Thus, whereas formal legal equality may be assured by the liberal framework, this equality is unlikely to translate itself into substantive equality, unless the practical ability to exercise rights or legal capacities imparted by citizenship, are actually available to all. In other words, the liberal framework disregards the fact that those disadvantaged by the existing structures of inequality viz., class, caste, race, gender etc., are unable to participate in the community of citizens, on an equal basis, despite the fact that as citizens they are (equal) legal members of the community.

17.2.6 New Contexts and Changing Concerns: Multiculturalism

Till most of the twentieth century, the dominant understanding of citizenship continued to place the individual at its core, and citizenship was seen as a legal status indicating the possession of rights which an individual held equally with others. This dominant liberal model of citizenship has, as seen above, some practical limitations. Contemporary debates on citizenship and rights have, therefore, questioned the idea that the (individual) citizen can enjoy rights independent of the contexts/circumstances to which s/he belongs i.e., class, race, ethnicity, gender etc. Since the nineteen eighties multiculturalism, plurality, diversity and difference have become significant terms of reference in thinking about citizenship. Given that modern societies are increasingly being recognised as multicultural, the dominant liberal understanding of the idea of citizenship has been opened up for debate. The specific contexts, cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic etc. of citizens are now seen as determining citizenship in significant ways. This ongoing contest aims to make visible those differences which liberal theory saw as irrelevant for understanding citizenship. In most western societies ethnic, religious and racial communities have pressed for rights which would look at their special cultural contexts and substantiate the formal equality of citizenship. A notion of differentiated citizenship has, therefore, gained currency within citizenship theory to accommodate the needs of specific cultural groups. The term 'Differentiated Citizenship' was first used by Iris Marion Young in 1989. It advocates the incorporation of members of certain (cultural) groups not only as individuals, but also as members of groups, their rights depending in part on this group membership catering to their special needs. (Iris Marion Young, '*Polity and Group Difference: A Critique of the Ideal of Universal Citizenship', Ethics,* 99, 1989.)

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What are the broad historical periods over which the idea of citizenship can be seen to have developed?

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2) What are the significant features of the modern notion of citizenship? What are its limitations?

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17.3   CITIZENSHIP THEORY TODAY: DIVIDING LINES

Since the nineteen eighties, as we saw in the previous section, attempts have been made to dislodge the rights-bearing individual from the core of citizenship theory. The notion of individual rights has been counterbalanced by the claims of cultural communities to special rights catering to their distinctive needs. The centrality of rights in citizenship theory has also been questioned in some quarters and there appears to be a revival of interest in the republican tradition of citizenship with its emphasis on the primacy of common good and civic duties over individual/private interests. We shall take up these two contests over the nature of citizenship in this section.

17.3.1 Civic Republicanism and the Liberal Tradition

Before that, however, let us recollect here what we learnt in the earlier sections about the two main strands in the theory of citizenship as they emerged in its historical evolution viz., the classical tradition or civic republicanism, and the modern liberal tradition. The dividing lines in citizenship theory today, in effect, emerge from these two traditions of citizenship, each of which signifies two different understandings of what it means to be a citizen.

The first i.e. the republican tradition, describes citizenship as an office, a responsibility, a burden proudly assumed; the second i.e. the liberal tradition, describes it as a status and entitlement, a set of rights passively enjoyed. The first makes citizenship the core of human life, the second makes it its outer frame. The first assumes a closely knit body of citizens, its members committed to one another: the second assumes a diverse and loosely connected body, its members (mostly) committed elsewhere. According to the first, the citizen is the primary political actor, for the second, law-making and administration is someone else's business, the citizen's business is private. In the remainder of this section, we shall see that contests among citizenship theorists today emanate from these two basic differences in the conceptualisation of the form and substance of citizenship. (See Michael Walzer, '*Citizenship*' in Terence Ball, James Farr and Russell L.Hanson ed., *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989).

17.3.2 Dividing Lines: Individual Vs the Community

One set of division among citizenship theorists today can be seen along the lines of the question, who or what forms the core of citizenship- the individual or the wider context of which s/he is a part i.e., the cultural (ethnic, religious etc.) community. We have seen that the liberal (individualist) notion of citizenship emerged as a strand in the French revolutionary tradition and strengthened with the growth of capitalism. The citizen in liberal theory is the free floating individual and citizenship is a legal status which enables citizens to enjoy rights equally with other citizens each of whom, however, pursues distinct personal interests. In this view, the conditions for an equal enjoyment of rights is laid out by making irrelevant the particular contexts of individuals i.e., their special circumstances defined by factors of birth viz., race, caste, culture, ethnicity, gender etc.

This view is counterpoised by the Communitarians who, in the civic republican tradition, assert the importance of the contexts of individuals in determining the extent to which rights can be enjoyed equally with others. These theorists emphasise that instead of masking these differences in the allocation of rights, effort must be made to take account of the specificity of the different circumstances of citizens. An increasing number of theorists referred to as 'Cultural Pluralists' argue that a large number of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups feel excluded from the 'common' rights to citizenship. These groups can be accommodated into common citizenship only by adopting what Iris Marion Young calls 'differentiated citizenship' which means that members of certain groups should be accommodated not only as individuals, but also through the group and their rights would depend in part upon their group membership. Young, among the most influential theorists of cultural pluralism, asserts that the attempt to create a universal conception of citizenship which transcends group differences is fundamentally unjust to historically oppressed groups: 'In a society where some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, insisting that as citizens persons should leave behind their particular affiliations and experiences and adopt a general point of view serves only to reinforce the privileged for the perspective and interests of the privileged will tend to dominate this unified public, marginalising or silencing those of other groups'. (Young, 1989, p. 257)

17.3.3 Dividing Lines: Duties Vs Rights

The second set of divisions follows the same lines as the first. The contest here is in terms of what are the defining premises of citizenship viz., the primacy of the public/political and civic life or the primacy of individual interests and differences. The concept of 'civic virtue' and 'good' citizenship which emerged in the classical Graeco-Roman world forming part of the republican tradition and revived later in Renaissance Italy and eighteenth century America and France, forms an integral part of the notion of the citizenship which affords primacy to civic and public life. Those

who subscribe to these ideas give importance to the notion of active citizenship. Citizenship in such a formulation becomes constitutive of civic duties, civic activity, public spiritedness and active political participation. Where civic republicanism stresses a stern adherence to the citizens' duties towards civic life, the liberal notion gives priority to individual interests and differences and stresses the citizens' entitlement to justice and rights. For them, the richness of private life is of primary importance and citizenship is constitutive primarily of some fundamental rights. Rights are primary in this formulation and their purpose is to protect the inner personal world and to provide the freedom for private pursuits and individual creativity without encroachment from conflicting interests. It may be noted here that in the civic republican tradition, rights would be regarded as conditions which follow the exercise of a citizen's duty to participate in the political process rather than being the prior condition. Since the nineteen eighties, this issue has been taken up in the growing debate between liberalism and communitarianism. Communitarian theorists such as Alisdair MacIntyre (1981) and Michael Sandel (1982) for example, dismiss the idea of the 'unencumbered self' or the de-contextualised individual of liberal theory. They argue that the 'politics of rights' should be replaced by the 'politics of common good' by an 'embedded self'. In this view liberal individualism, by focussing on individual rights and entitlements, weakens the bonds that give cohesion to society.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What are the main lines of division in citizenship theory and how do they follow from the historical divide between civic republican and liberal traditions?

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17.4   CRITIQUES AND ALTERNATIVES: MARXIST, FEMINIST AND GANDHIAN

While discussing the modern liberal notion of citizenship in an earlier section (17.2), we also talked of its limitation. We mentioned primarily that the ability to exercise rights or legal capacities, which constitute citizenship, are not available equally to all. In other words, even when all individuals are formally invested with equal rights by virtue of being citizens, these rights cannot in effect be enjoyed equally by all. The specific contexts of individuals, their class, gender, their religious, ethnic and racial identities, influence the extent to which rights are actually available. It is this inability of liberal citizenship to take into account the contexts, which condition the exercise of rights, which has been the focus of Marxist and Feminist critiques of citizenship. In the following paragraphs, we shall see the flaws which Marxists and Feminists see in the basic premises of citizenship. These flaws, according to them, make citizenship a system, which mitigates some inequalities while perpetuating others.

17.4.1 Redefining Citizenship: Marxist Critique of Liberal Citizenship

Citizenship was clearly outlined in the 1840s by Karl Marx in his study of the Constitutions of the American and French Revolutions, from which modern citizenship emerged. Marx's objection to modern democratic or bourgeois citizenship can be seen in his words, which follow:

'The state in its own way abolishes distinctions based on birth, rank, education and occupation when it declares birth, rank, education and occupation to be non-political distinctions, when it proclaims that every number of people is an equal participant in popular sovereignty regardless of these distinctions, when it treats all those elements which make up the actual life of the people from the point of view of the state. Nevertheless, the state allows private property, education and occupation to act and assert their particular nature in their own way, i.e., as private property, education and occupation. Far from abolishing these factual distinctions, the state presupposes them in order to exist'. ('*On the Jewish Question*' in his *Early Writings*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1975, p.219)

Marxist criticism of bourgeois citizenship has focussed, thus, on its failure to address itself to inequalities in modern capitalist societies. In an inherently unequal system, which thrives on producing and perpetuating class inequalities, rights, asserts the Marxist critique, can only be 'superficial trappings' of equality. Civil and political rights were the products of bourgeois revolutions, and developed, as shown by Marshall in his historical study, alongside capitalism. While these rights alleviated some ill-effects of capitalism, they did not intend to, and could not therefore, dismantle the structures of inequality, which constitute capitalist societies.

Attacks in recent decades by a strand of liberal opinion on social rights, citizenship rights which Marshall shows to have developed in the twentieth century catering to the claims of marginalised sections of the population to welfare benefits from the state, prompted some writers on the left to defend rights. Scholars like Amy Bartholomew have put forward a case to show that the notion of 'rich individuality' and 'self development' in Marx's notion of 'human emancipation', shows Marx's commitment to rights. Bartholomew argues that Marx's criticism of rights is basically directed towards the understanding of rights which identifies it with the 'right of man'- the so-called natural rights- which act as 'boundary markers' separating man from man and the larger community of which he is a part. Rights for Marx contribute to 'rich individuality' i.e., to the making of the creative individual whose potential is realised most fully within and in harmony with the community.

17.4.2 Feminists redefine Citizenship

Feminists of all strands have criticised the gender neutrality and gender blindness of citizenship theory i.e., its failure to take into account, (a) the patriarchal character of modern societies and, (b) the manner in which gender determines access to citizenship rights.

Feminists have pointed out that most historical conceptualisations of citizenship have been inimical to women, either excluding them from citizenship altogether as in the classical tradition, or integrating them, as in the French Revolutionary tradition, indirectly and unequally as citizen consorts or companions of citizens (i.e., men). Carole Pateman suggests that modern liberal citizenship while not entirely excluding women, incorporates them on the basis of their socially useful/biologically determined (determined that is, by their biological constitution and corresponding roles viz., child bearing and rearing). (See Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, The Polity Press, Cambridge, 1988; Carole Pateman, '*Equality, Difference, Subordination: The Politics of Motherhood and Women's Citizenship*' in Gisela Book and Susan James ed., *Beyond Equality and Difference*, Routledge, London, 1992) Incorporation in this manner slots women

into dependent roles as mothers and wives, placing them outside the sphere of politics, and distancing them from resources like education, property, job opportunities etc., which, equip individuals for political participation.

The gender blindness of citizenship theory has been so pervasive, feminists argue, that any account of the evolution of citizenship, can retain is coherence only by moving women to the margins as aberrations in the general trend. Ursula Vogel illustrates this with reference to Marshall's study of citizenship. Marshall's 'main story' of the unfolding of citizenship as the gradual generalisation/universalisation of rights, Vogel points out, can remain intact only by 'including' women as historical anomalies i.e., as individuals whose position was ' peculiar' and not relevant to the main story. (See Ursula Vogel, '*Is Citizenship Gender Specific*' in Ursula Vogel and Michael Moran eds., *The Frontiers of Citizenship*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1991, pp.58-85).

Feminists have not only criticised the gendered conceptualization of citizenship, they have also appealed for a broadening of the concept so as to include activities which are seen as belonging to the private sphere. The idea is not only to focus on the power relations which permeate the domain of private (marriage, family, sexuality), but also to question the devaluation of the activities of the private realm. Maternalists like Sara Ruddick and Jean Elshtain would, thus, like to see citizenship based on male personalities and characteristics dismantled. They advocate the development in its place of a new moral and ethical notion of citizenship based on 'feminist ethics of care' i.e., feminine characteristics of love and compassion, dissolving in the process, the distinction between male (public) and female (private) facets of life.

17.4.3 A Gandhian Notion of Citizenship

A Gandhian notion of citizenship can be seen as consisting of elements of civic republicanism, identified as a commitment to the 'common good', civic duty and active citizenship. The commitment in Gandhi to a community of interests is interspersed, however, with an equally strong faith in individual autonomy and distrust of the oppressive potential of state power. Distrust of the oppressive structures of the modern state, much of which emanated from Gandhi's experiences with the colonial state in South Africa and India, shaped his commitment to a moral right of the individual to rebel. Resisting an unjust government was an important element of Gandhi's 'duties of citizenship'. This is brought out clearly in his enunciation of the rules of 'civil disobedience' which obliged the civil resister to follow certain codes of conduct while voluntarily breaking law and when imprisoned.

The rational (individual) citizen is at the core of Gandhi's notion of active citizenship. This citizen is, however, constrained by the commitment to 'common good'. The main elements of Gandhi's notion of the 'common good' are: (a) societal interests are above individual interests; (b) spiritualism is above materialism; (c) duties towards society are prior to individual rights against the state or individual interests against other members of society; (d) trusteeship of common possession of production; (e) sarvodaya or the uplift of all abolishing distinctions of class, caste, religion, gender etc., (f) faith in 'shram' or bread labour so that no one is dependent on another for the fulfillment of their basic needs; and (g) a moral duty to create a just society catering to human dignity.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) How have the Marxists and Feminists redefined the frontiers of citizenship?

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2) How does the Gandhian notion of citizenship combine individual autonomy with the ideal of collective good?

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17.5 LET US SUM UP

Citizenship, in its modern understanding, refers to full and equal membership in the political community, which refers in the present global context to the nation-state. Citizenship, however, also provides a terrain where a number of views contest each other over its form and substance. Historically, civic republicanism formed the most influential understanding of citizenship. The dominant understanding of citizenship today comes from the liberal tradition, which sees it as constituting a set of individual rights. Cultural pluralists and communitarians, however, regard these rights as meaningless, unless they also take into account the specific contexts of the rights bearing individuals. The Marxists and Feminists would rather like to see citizenship emerge from structures, which dismantle repressive social, economic and political relationships of class and gender respectively. Another strand of thinking, following the civic republican tradition, would like to see citizenship as a measure of activity, as a manifestation of civic virtue and duties, which in turn would create an egalitarian society/community. These diverse understandings of citizenship make it an important concept and significant for understanding modern democratic societies.

17.6 KEY WORDS

Active citizenship   :   The notion of citizenship as a function of 'responsible' participation transcending its passive connotation to become also a measure of activity. The basis of a citizen's sense of belonging to the national community would come, then, from the attitudes and qualities of responsibility and virtues, which distinguish her/him as a 'good' citizen.

Ascriptive hierarchies	:	A hierarchy denotes a pyramidal system of inequality- a vertically organised structure- where those at the top dominate the rest. Ascriptive hierarchies would refer to systems where conditions of birth would determine the hierarchical organisation of people. Caste system is an example of ascriptive hierarchy.
Citizens	:	Citizens are full and equal members of a political community, which in the present global political structure takes the form of the nation-state.
Citizenship	:	A relationship between the individual/ collectives and the state based on reciprocal rights, duties and responsibilities.
Common Good	:	The idea of common good is based on the premise that there may be numerous differences in individual interests. But beyond these, lies also an agreement over some basic issues, which are generally seen as promoting the interests and welfare of all. Thus, it may be said that there exists beyond individual interests, a substantive interest which caters to all and where all the private interests are seen to meet. This meeting point is the idea of common good.
Community	:	A collection of people or social groups distinguished by a strong collective identity based on bonds of comradeship, loyalty, duty as well as by ties of emotion and kinship.
Differentiated Citizenship	:	The concept advocates the incorporation of members of certain (cultural) groups not only as individuals, but also as members of groups, their rights depending in part on this group membership catering to their special needs.
Gender	:	Unlike sex, which points at biological difference, gender refers to social and cultural distinction between men and women. According to feminists, gender discriminations take place when biological differences become the basis for different, dependent and subservient social roles and positions for women.
Globalisation	:	It refers to the web of interconnections/ interdependence between the local, regional, national and international events, processes and decisions which conditions the lives of individuals worldwide.
Passive Citizenship	:	A political community's emphasis on political allegiances and civic loyalties within the community rather than cultural/ emotional identity. Citizenship has frequently been seen as a manifestation of this allegiance, which holds people together in a shared identity as citizens.

Race	:	A scientifically and politically controversial category, race refers to biological (genetic) differences which supposedly distinguish one group of people from another. For long, race has been used to explain cultural differences among people, and the attribution of civilisational inferiority and backwardness to some and superiority to others.

17.7 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Carole Pateman, 'Equality, Difference, Subordination: The Politics of Motherhood and Women's Citizenship' in Gisela Book and Susan James ed., *Beyond Equality and Difference,* Routledge, London, 1992

Dawn Oliver and Derek Heater, *The Foundation of Citizenship,* Harvester Wheatsheaf, New York. 1994.

J.M. Barbalet, *Citizenship,* Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1988.

17.8 ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 17.1

2) See Section 17.1 and especially, sub-section 17.1.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) See sub-section 17.1.2 and Section 17.2

2) See sub-sections 17.2.4 – 17.2.6

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Section 17.3

Check Your Progress 4

1) See sub-sections 17.4.1 and 17.4.2

2) See sub-section 17.4.3

UNIT 18   EQUALITY

Structure

18.0   OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to understand the meaning of equality and address some of the important theoretical issues connected with this concept. As you go through this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the concept of equality;

- Discuss some of the basic principles of equality;

- Explain formal equality, equality of opportunity and equality of outcomes;

- Examine some of the anti-egalitarian positions;

- Discuss the liberal justification of inequality; and finally

- Evaluate the relationship between equality and liberty.

18.1   INTRODUCTION

The idea of equality seems to be the central concern of modern politics and political thought. Hierarchy in society based on birth was accepted as natural. This is no longer the case, infact modern political thinking starts from the assumption that all human beings are equal. The French Revolution in 1789 and the American Civil War remain two very historically significant landmarks in the articulation of the idea of democracy, equality and freedom. Medieval hierarchies were challenged by one, and the other drew attention to inequalities based on race. However, the acceptance of the idea of equality was not easy. Writing in 1931, R.H. Tawney lamented what he described as the 'Religion of Inequality' in British society. What seems to have bothered him was not just the existence of inequalities in society, but its acceptance as natural and inevitable. In the post-second world war period, many changes have taken place and the idea of equality has gained a much wider currency. The upsurge in the colonized world added another significant dimension to the debate on equality, as has the women's movement.

In today's context, we could say that equality has been accepted as a very important principle of organizing human life; however, intense battles rage about where and how should equality be applied? A much more contentious field is the application of the principle of equality to the distribution of wealth and income in society. In this context, it would be useful to mention that in recent years there has been a serious resurgence of anti-egalitarian thinking reinforced by the growing popularity of that school of political economy which argues that egalitarian measures stifle market efficiency and in the long run, make everyone worse off.

Egalitarians are, thus, required to sharpen their arguments in response to a new set of challenges; they usually set to do this by establishing clearly the fact that they are not demanding absolute equality and hence, uniformity is not a part of their scheme at all. On the contrary, what they seek to preserve, is variety.

18.2 DIFFERENT TYPES OF EQUALITY

18.2.1 Formal Equality

John Locke, the English philosopher remains one of the most eloquent defenders of the idea of equality based on the natural equality of men. (Needless to add that in Locke's scheme of affairs, women did not feature at all!) Kant reinforced this position further by talking about universality and equality as a consequence of this universal humanity. Thus, formal equality came to imply that by virtue of their common humanity, all individuals should be treated equally.

The most important expression of this idea is the principle of legal equality or equality before the law. All individuals should be treated equally by the law irrespective of their caste, race, colour, gender, religion, social background and so on. While this was a welcome step in the fight against special privileges based on race, gender, social background and other similar criterion, it remained a very limited notion on its own. This principle ignores the fact that handicaps imposed by caste, gender or social background could be so overwhelming that individuals would not be able to benefit from the formal equality that the law bestows upon all individuals.

In this context, it would be appropriate to note that it was this inadequacy that led Marx to examine this question in his essay 'On the Jewish Question'. He contended that formal equality while being a significant step forward could not bring about human emancipation. While the market did free people from the barriers imposed by social rank and other similar categories, it did nevertheless create differences based on class that were upheld by the existence of private property. This implied that individuals had starkly different market values and hence, Marxists describe formal equality in this context as market equality, which is little more than a façade to disguise the deeply unequal nature of society.

Today, egalitarians have moved away from the notion that all human beings are created equally and hence, must have equal rights; this is so because of the fact that in most of the important aspects, human beings are not equal. Therefore, today, the word equality is used more in a prescriptive rather than a descriptive sense; those policies would be backed that promote the ideal of equality without having to depend upon some descriptive properties of human beings.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

     ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What was it that disturbed R.H. Tawney about the British society?

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2)   What is the basic philosophy guiding the principle of formal equality?

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18.2.2 Equality of Opportunity

Understood very simply, equality of opportunity means the removal of all obstacles that prevent personal self-development. It means that careers should be open to talent and promotions should be based on abilities. Status, family connections, social background and other similar factors must not be allowed to intervene.

Equality of opportunity is an extremely attractive idea that is concerned with what is described as the starting point in life. The implication is that equality requires that all individuals begin from a level playing field. However, the consequences of this need not be egalitarian at all. Precisely because everyone started equally, unequal outcomes are acceptable and legitimized. This inequality would then be explained in terms of differing natural talents, ability to work hard or even luck.

Constructed like this, it seems that equality of opportunity provides the equal opportunity to compete in a system that remains hierarchical. If so, then it does not appear to be a substantially egalitarian principle. Equality of opportunity, thus, points to an inegalitarian society, albeit based on the exalted ideal of merit. This idea rests itself on the distinction between nature and convention, the argument being that distinctions that emerge on the basis of different natural qualities like talents, skills, hard work and so on are morally defensible. However, differences that emerge out of conventions or socially created differences like poverty, homelessness are not. The fact, however, is that it is a specific societal predilection that makes a natural distinction like beauty or intelligence a relevant ground for making distinctions in society. Thus, we see that the distinction between nature and convention is not as clear-cut as egalitarians imply.

Equality of opportunity is institutionalized through the acceptance of keeping careers open to talents, providing fair equal opportunity, and the many variations on the principle of positive discrimination. All of these work to make the system of inequality

seem reasonable and acceptable. The underlying assumption is that so long as the competition has been fair, advantage itself is beyond criticism. There is no doubt that a system such as this would create people, who concentrate only on their talents and individual attributes. This robs them of any feeling of community with their people, because they can only think in terms of competing. Perhaps, the only community this can create is a community of the successful on the one hand, and a community of the unsuccessful on the other which blames itself for its supposed failure. Yet another problem with equality of opportunity is that it seeks to create an artificial disjunction between the successes and failures of one generation and the next.

Thus, it is seen that the liberal position on equality is based on equality of opportunity. This advocacy is contrary to any substantive idea of equality because these are opportunities which lead to unequal outcomes. This principle is, thus, unconcerned with the outcomes and is interested only in the procedure. This is entirely in keeping with the liberal idea that individuals are the basic unit of society and society must make it possible for individuals to satisfy their own interests.

Does this mean that egalitarians would ignore equality of opportunity? The answer is clearly no. However, they would work with a wider definition of equality of opportunity that would give everyone the means to develop their capacities in a satisfying and fulfilling way. An egalitarian society would not deny to some people the genuine opportunity to develop their capacities. The genuine egalitarian use of this opportunity would be to lead a worthwhile life. Since it is not possible to ensure that each individual leads a worthwhile life, what egalitarians would try for would be the creation of social conditions that give the opportunity to all individuals to lead worthwhile lives.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

   ii) Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1) What is the basic liberal idea about individuals, which makes them defend equality of opportunities in a largely unequal context?

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2) Explain the egalitarian position on equality of opportunity.

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18.2.3 Equality of Outcomes

Yet another articulation of the idea of equality would be in terms of the equality of outcomes, moving away from the starting point in life to look at the outcome. Marx, for instance, was of the opinion that any right to equality circumscribed by a bourgeois economy can only be partial. He, thus, argued for absolute social equality, possible only if private property was abolished. Defenders of equality of outcome believe that the guarantee of all other equalities would be inadequate so long as equality of outcome is not ensured.

Critics of equality of outcome point out that such a pursuit would only lead to stagnation, injustice and worse of all tyranny. Hayek, for instance, has argued people being very different have different aspirations and goals and any system that treats them equally actually results in inequality. The drive for equality, it is argued, is at the cost of individual liberty. The imposition of socialist egalitarian measures, it is argued, undermine the dignity and self-respect of the individual and the inherent paternalism accompanying such measures denies the ability of the individual to be a rational chooser.

18.3 SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY

Egalitarians do not believe that everybody is same or should be the same. It is not a simple mathematical idea. It would help us to put down some of the core principles that egalitarians would be committed to. The first commitment is to the idea that every individual has a right to the satisfaction of his or her basic needs and a society characterised by wide disparities in the standard of living is not acceptable to them. They are committed to a society where living conditions are not just bearable, but are capable of providing a satisfying and fulfilling life to all.

Another significant principle is that of equal respect, which implies opposition to any form of degrading treatment or circumstances; ideally, a society based on fellow feeling. An egalitarian position would oppose huge differences in income and wealth not only between individuals, but even between nations. It would also involve democratic control of the economy and the workplace, apart from the possibility of dignified, interesting and safe work for everyone. Political equality, needless to add, is not just the right to vote or to stand for any public office, but a wide network of civil rights and a democratic participation in all aspects of life so that individuals are enabled to control and shape their lives in a more significant way.

Sexual, racial, ethnic and religious equality are some of the other components of the complex idea of equality. Needless to add that one cannot aim at a totally exhaustive list of equalities, and in that lies the reforming potential of the concept of equality.

18.4 SOME ARGUMENTS AGAINST EQUALITY

Equality, it is argued, is a concept that is untenable in reality because society and social processes are likened to a competition in which not everyone can end up being a winner. We have already noted such objections earlier in the context of our discussion or equality of outcomes. What one could say in response is that this objection emerges out of a specific construction of the nature of society and the individual.

In recent times, the names of Hayek, Friedman and Nozick are associated with the position that holds egalitarianism as a threat to freedom. Nozick is particularly critical of liberals like John Rawls and Dworkin for their commitment to welfare provisions in order to enlarge equality of opportunity. In response to those who say that inequality in society undermines self-respect, libertarians like Nozick argue that on the contrary,

it is egalitarianism that robs people of their self-respect. Nozick claims that inegalitarian societies show more respect for individuals by acknowledging the distinctiveness of each individual and the difference between individuals. Since an egalitarian society would be bereft of any differences based on power, rank, income or social status, there would be no basis for self-esteem, because self-esteem is based on criteria that differentiate people.

A very strong objection comes from those who believe that any attempt to establish equality results in the strengthening of the state and thereby, weakens individual freedom. This is at the heart of the well known question in western political theory of the relationship between equality and liberty which we will address a little later.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

      ii)   Check your answer with that given at the end of the unit.

1)   Explain how according to Nozick an egalitarian society robs people of their self-respect.

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18.5   LIBERAL JUSTIFICATION OF INEQUALITY

Liberals reject sex, race, or class as the relevant criteria for treating people differently, but they do believe that it is just and fair if inequalities are earned and deserved by virtue of their different desert or merit. Thus, liberal theory holds stubbornly that so long as inequality can be justified on the basis of rewards or desert for special qualities and abilities or special contribution to society, it is acceptable. One cannot help note here that what is meritorious, special or a contribution to the society are all circumscribed by the specificities of the society in question. Moreover, it is very difficult to isolate the worth of an individual's contribution, and if one takes back after contributing, then is one really contributing anything at all? This whole position seems to contradict the basic liberal position that all individuals have equal worth and respect and reduces people to a bundle of talents and abilities.

In recent times, however, modern liberals such as Rawls and Dworkin have rejected merit and desert as a criteria for justifying inequality. Instead, they advocate an equality of consideration based on the equal moral worth of all individuals, irrespective of their differing individual talents or skills. They base this equality on the idea that all human beings are equally endowed with the ability to make choices and formulate life plans. Rawls, for instance, rejects as morally arbitrary the distribution of rewards according to ability or effort, for differences in abilities and skills he contends, are simply facts of nature and no one is to gain or suffer because of the presence or an absence of these skills or abilities. Hence, he advocates the treatment of these natural abilities as a social asset so that the 'basic structure of society can be arranged so that these contingencies work to the good of the least fortunate'.

The so called 'Difference Principle' that Rawls enunciates, is to his mind, the best principle for ensuring that natural assets do not lead to unfair advantages. The

principle requires that social and economic inequalities should be so arranged that they are both a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged and b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. This, thus, unlike the traditional liberal rights is a much wider understanding of equality. Unequal rewards are justified not on the basis of differing abilities, but as incentives so that they benefit the least advantaged. Dworkin also expresses displeasure with the traditional liberal ideas on equality and accepts the need for some redistribution and welfare polices.

Macpherson has criticised Rawlsian equality on the grounds that it assumes the inevitability of institutionalized inequalities between classes. In doing this, Rawls ignores the fact that class based inequalities create unequal power relationships among individuals of different classes and would thus, impinge on other aspects of equality.

18.6 EQUALITY AND FEMINISM

Feminists try to look at the issue of equality through the gender lens. An important book in this respect is Susan Okin's *Justice, Gender and the Family* (1980). It has been argued that equal opportunities legislation or redistributive justice through the extension of equality principles to different areas, in essence, cannot create equality as these rules and principles operate in an environment which is already contaminated by the inequality between the sexes: an inequality brought about by social practices. Many of these practices are not directly discriminatory toward women, but their overall effect is to reinforce inequality and give it a veneer of legitimacy. Thus, although the law may not formally differentiate between the sexes, it is the case that women tend to get segregated into particular occupations and married women who have careers are especially disadvantaged in a gender-biased society.

Feminists point out that the position of women's substantive inequality – their weak voice in familial decision making, their duty of child rearing and the subsequent withdrawal from the labour market – has nothing to do with *natural* and spontaneous operation of choices, but because roles are socially *constructed*.

However, at the same time, it would perhaps be resented even by the feminists, if the state is involved, especially in family life, for eradicating gender differentiation. It is, perhaps, easier, to be aware of gender inequality and to locate into the social practices and the socially structured roles, but it is difficult to go for a remedial measure. Unless the women themselves become aware of their inequality, of their subordinate role in family, and come forward to re-orient the social constructions, nothing concrete with respect to gender equality can be achieved.

18.7 EQUALITY AND LIBERTY

It is often claimed that liberty and equality are anti-thetical, and that this conflict therefore is irreconciliable. De Tocqueville saw equality as posing a likely danger to liberty, fearing as he did mass conformity and the tyranny of the majority. Friedman, Nozick and Hayek are some of the more recent names associated with this position. What such a position does is to deliberately pose a contradiction between liberty and equality by suggesting that attempts to establish equality immediately imply coercion and loss of liberty. They imply that since individuals are different in terms of their skills and abilities, differences in their lives are bound to exist, and thus there is bound to be a natural tendency towards inequality. Any attempt to correct this will have to be accompanied by authoritarian suppression and hence, loss of liberty.

There is here a deliberate attempt to equate equality with uniformity; an egalitarian society is not a uniform society. It would be a society where every individual given

her or his individual and differing talents could enjoy an equally worthwhile and satisfying life.

Those who argue that equality and liberty are irreconcilable begin with a specific understanding of liberty; what has been described as the 'negative conception' of liberty. Infact, they contend that positive concept of liberty is not liberty at all, but something masquerading as liberty. The negative picture of liberty sees liberty as the absence of deliberate interference in an individual's life.

On the contrary, they see freedom as the availability and the ability to make choices that are meaningful and effective. Such an understanding of liberty would immediately link it to the issues of access to structures of social and institutional power, fulfillment of material and economic requirements, and of course, the possession of education and knowledge. Therefore, egalitarians hold that equality in terms of social power, economic wealth and education is essential to ensure that everyone has an equally worthwhile and satisfying life. In doing this, egalitarians are pursuing equality stifled by social and institutional structures of power. Liberty is seriously hampered by the wide disparities of wealth. Education, by opening our minds and educating us with various skills is undoubtedly a liberating factor. Therefore, any inequality in access to any of these elements would, it can be argued, limit the individual's ability to lead a meaningful and satisfying life, which to the egalitarians is the essence of the idea of liberty.

Egalitarians are arguing that human beings do not become free simply by being left alone. They argue that power, wealth and education are the basic sources of liberty and a society that cannot ensure equality in these aspects cannot be a free society. Thus, we see that liberty and equality far from being anti-thetical are actually not just compatible, but dependent on one other.

Most of the twentieth century was a time when equality barely stood in need of justification. It was seen as the central principle around which nations and societies were to organise themselves. However towards the close of this century, there is a serious intellectual as well as a political attempt to present equality as morally undesirable. The inviolable nature of the right to property and the essentially plural nature of society, the anti-egalitarians claim, would be severely threatened by a pursuit of equality.

18.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we tried to examine what the concept of equality means. It is particularly significant given the fact that we live in a society that is battling against various kinds of inequalities. Equality in its most restricted sense is formal equality, which subscribes to the notion of universal humanity of all human beings. Equality of opportunity, which we saw, can be used to ultimately justify inequality. Equality of outcomes stretches the meaning of the term equality. We also took stock of the modern liberal defense of equality and how it justifies inequality, only if it works to the maximum advantage of the worst off in society. We also took note of the feminist critique of equality. Finally, we examined the debate about the relationship between equality and liberty, and saw that a negative conception of liberty makes the two concepts appear conflictual.

18.9 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

David Held, *Political Theory Today*

N. P. Barry, Norman, *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, Macmillan, London, 2000

Robert M. Stewart, *Readings in Social and Political Philosophy*

18.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1) Tawney was disturbed not just by the existence of inequality, but the acceptance of this inequality as natural and inevitable.

2) The basic philosophy guiding formal equality is that since all human beings have been created equally, they should be treated as equals.

Check Your Progress 2

1) It is the liberal idea that individuals are the basic unit of society and society must make it possible for individuals to satisfy their own interests.

2) An egalitarian society would not deny to some people the genuine opportunity to develop their capacities. The genuine egalitarian use of this opportunity would be to lead a worthwhile life. Since it is possible to ensure that each individual leads a worthwhile life, what egalitarians would try for would be the creation of social conditions that give the opportunity to all individuals to lead worthwhile lives.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Nozick claims that inegalitarian societies show more respect for individuals by acknowledging distinctiveness of and difference between individuals. Since an egalitarian society would be bereft of any differences based on power, rank, income or social status, there would be no basis for self-esteem, because self-esteem is based on criteria that differentiate people.

UNIT 19 LIBERTY

Structure

19.0   OBJECTIVES

Liberty is considered a core concept and a fundamental democratic value in modern political and social theory. The notion of liberty emerged in the context of the formation of modern civil society and political authority. While the concept is intimately associated with liberal thought, liberals have looked at the notion in different ways. Marxists are critical of liberal notions of liberty and would refashion the concept on entirely different assumptions of individual and society. In this unit, we shall look at different perspectives on liberty, and try to understand the meanings, justifications and limits of the notion. The unit has been divided into different sections, each dealing with a specific aspect of the notion. There are a set of questions at the end of the unit for self-assessment, and a list of readings to help enhance your understanding.

19.1   INTRODUCTION

The idea of liberty as a core principle of liberal thought, is most commonly understood as 'absence of restraints'. The notion of liberty emerged in the context of the establishment of new socio-economic and political relationships in modern Europe. At the basis of the notion was the idea of a rational individual, capable of taking reasoned decisions. The rational individual, it was thought, was capable of self-determination; in other words, capable of taking decisions which concerned his or her self. In order to develop his capacities, the individual required freedom from all kinds of social, political and economic constraints. Thus, the idea of liberty as absence of restraints, or a sphere of autonomy of the individual, developed. At the same time, however, the fact that within a social organization the individual is not alone and exists in relation with other individuals, required that an equal claim of other individuals to their spheres of autonomy should be recognized. In order that the respective claims of all individuals to autonomy can be realized with minimum conflict, it was imperative that a system of restraints and regulation was worked out and adhered to by everyone. The theories of social contract put forward by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau put forth the idea of liberty as absence of constraints. At the same time, they also proposed the framework within which individual freedom was to unfold. Thus, the idea of political community was based on a simultaneous recognition of the capacities and autonomy of individuals and the imperatives that all should be subjected to a common set of constraints on their liberty.

Thus, it must be understood that liberty, which in common understanding means freedom, or absence of constraints and obstacles to individual action, and is considered a democratic ideal, has always been conceived as occurring within a set of specific constraints in social relationships. There are always limits to what is seen as acceptable forms of liberty in modern democratic societies. In the section which follows, we shall look at the meaning of liberty, focussing on its elements and the justifications for constraints on liberty.

19.2 THE MEANING OF LIBERTY

As mentioned in the introduction, liberty means freedom from, or absence of restraints. A person may be considered free or at liberty to do something when his or her actions and choices are not hindered or constrained by those of another. It is important to understand that constraints refer to impediments imposed by political and other authorities. Thus, imprisonment, bondage or slavery, subjection to laws, etc., may be seen as referring to conditions of unfreedom or absence of liberty. While states of unfreedom like imprisonment or subjection to laws may appear as constraints on liberty, we know that modern democratic social and political organisations are founded on legal and institutional structures, which aim at ensuring equal consideration of each individual's liberty. No society will, therefore, have an unlimited 'right to liberty'. Each society will have a set of restrictions on liberty, which are justified by the fact that people accept those restrictions as the best possible conditions in which liberty could be maximised.

The understanding of liberty as 'absence of restraints' or 'absence of external constraints' is generally described as 'negative'. The 'negative' nature of liberty appears in two different senses:

a) In the first, law is seen as the main obstacle to freedom. Hobbes, for instance, described freedom as the 'silence of the laws'. Such a view sees freedom as limited only by what others deliberately prevent individuals from doing. This understanding would, therefore, appear to imply a definite limit upon both law and government. Philosophers like John Locke have, however, pointed out that a commitment to liberty does not mean that the law should be abolished. Rather, it means that law should be restricted to the protection of one's liberty from encroachment by others. Locke suggested therefore, that law does not restrict liberty, it rather enlarges and defends it.

b) The second view sees liberty as 'freedom of choice'. Milton Friedman for example in his work, *Capitalism and Freedom* (1962) proposes that 'economic freedom' consists of freedom of choice in the marketplace – the freedom of consumer to choose what to buy, the freedom of the worker to choose his job or profession and the freedom of the producer to choose what to produce and whom to employ. 'To choose' implies that the individual can make unhindered and voluntary selection from a range of different options (See Andrew Heywood, *Political Theory*, pp.259-261).

While talking about liberty, a distinction is often made between negative and positive notions of liberty i.e., between the idea of 'absence of external constraints' and 'the existence of conditions which enable or facilitate'. In other words, the distinction between '*freedom to do*' something and actually *being able to do it*. To be free or at liberty to do something is not to be restrained or prevented from doing it. While to be able to do is to have the capacity, financial or otherwise, to do something. For example, one may be free or unrestrained to take up any job, yet, one may not have the qualifications or the economic resources which may make one's candidature worthwhile. Political theorists often make this distinction between liberty as an absence

of restraints and the conditions which make liberty worthwhile. A starving person who is legally free (not prevented from) to eat in an expensive restaurant, may in fact, enjoy no liberty on the basis of the legal freedom. The freedom to eat in this case will require some positive action by the state. It is this reasoning that has been used to justify social legislation designed to increase opportunities for individuals. By such positive action, the state is said to be not only decreasing inequality, but increasing liberty (Norman Barry, *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, Macmillan, London, 2000, p.194)

The negative conception of liberty is a characteristic of a strand of English political thought represented by Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, Herbert Spencer and the classical and neo-classical economists who supported the claims of individuals to break free from unnecessary restraints of arbitrary government. The main political axiom of negative liberty was that 'everyone knows his own interest best' and that the state should not decide the individual's ends and purposes. Essential to the doctrine was the sanctity of the contract. Implicit in this assumption of sanctity was the understanding that the act of entering into a contract, even if the terms of the contract were restrictive of individual freedom, was an expression of liberty, of the exercise of individual choice. Thus, to this strand of thinkers, a person's liberty was a function of that area in which he was left alone and not related to the *quality* of action. The concept of negative liberty is best understood as a doctrine about the *meaning* of liberty. Although negative liberty is often condemned as the 'freedom to starve', this understanding is somewhat misleading. It does not necessarily put a prohibition on state intervention, but merely holds that this cannot be justified on the ground that it increases freedom, although arguments from the arena of inequality may be called into force for justification. However, the historical connection between negative liberty and the lasseiz-faire economics cannot be denied, and most of its advocates favoured a minimal state. The concept is neutral in the sense that it is compatible with a wide range of politics, and describes a condition of liberty without indicating whether it is good or not.

Criticisms of the negative notion of liberty have come from modern liberals, social democrats and socialists. The liberals in the nineteenth century, primarily T.H.Green and to some extent J.S.Mill, developed some of the earliest critiques of negative freedom. They felt that capitalism had done away with feudal hierarchies and legal restrictions (especially of economic pursuits), but it had also subjected large masses of people to poverty, unemployment and disease. Such circumstances were seen as hindering liberty as much as legal restraints and social controls. One of the first liberals to embrace the positive notion of liberty was T.H.Green (1836-82), who defined freedom as the ability of people 'to make the most and best of themselves'. This freedom consisting not merely of being left alone, but in having the power to act, shifting attention thereby to the opportunities available to each individual. (Andrew Heywood, *Political Theory*, p.262) The concept of positive liberty has been at the basis of the Welfare State. The idea has acted as the moving force behind social welfare provisions taken up by states, combining thereby freedom with equality.

In the section, which follows, Mill's notion of liberty will be taken up for study. Mill appears to endorse a negative conception of freedom, or the individual's sovereign control over his/her body and mind. In the ultimate analysis, however, Mill's notion of 'individuality' brought him closer to a positive notion of liberty.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Trace the development of the idea of liberty.

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2)   Distinguish between positive and negative conceptions of liberty.

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19.3   J.S. MILL'S NOTION OF LIBERTY

J.S.Mill's *On Liberty* was influential in the academic debates in the 1960s. Mill's work is seen as an exposition of the negative concept of liberty. At the basis of Mill's arguments for individual freedom lay a strong sense of contempt for custom, and for legal rules and norms which could not be rationally justified. It is also sometimes argued that for Mill any free action, no matter how immoral, had some element of virtue in it, by the fact that it was freely performed. While Mill considered restraint on individual's actions evil, he did not consider restraints to be entirely unjustifiable. He felt, however, that within the society there was always a presumption in favour of liberty. Any constraints on liberty, therefore, had to be justified by those who applied them.

For, Mill, the purpose of liberty was to encourage the attainment of 'individuality'. Individuality refers to the distinctive and unique character of each human individual, and freedom means the realisation of this individuality, i.e., personal growth or self-determination. It was the property of individuality in human beings that made them active rather than passive, and critical of existing modes of social behaviour, enabling them to refuse to accept conventions unless they were found reasonable. Freedom in Mill's framework, therefore, appears not simply as the absence of restraints but the deliberate cultivation of certain desirable attitudes. It is because of this that Mill is often seen as gravitating towards a positive conception of liberty. Mill's conception of freedom is also rooted in the notion of choice. This is evident from his belief that a person who lets others 'choose his plan of life for him' does not display the faculty of 'individuality' or self-determination. The only faculty he or she seemed to possess was the 'apelike' faculty of 'imitation'. On the other hand, a person 'who chooses to plan for himself, employs all his faculties' (1974, p, 123). In order to realise one's individuality, and attain thereby the condition of freedom, it was essential that individuals resist forces or norms and customs which hindered self-determination. Mill, however, was also of the view that very few individuals possessed the capacity to resist and make free choices. The rest were content to submit to 'apelike imitation', existing thereby in a state of unfreedom. Mill's conception of liberty can be seen for this reason as elitist, since individuality could be enjoyed only by a minority and not the masses at large.

Mill as other liberals, emphasised a demarcation of the boundaries between the individual and society. While talking about reasonable or justifiable restrictions on individual liberty, Mill distinguished between self-regarding and other-regarding actions, i.e., actions, which affected the individual only, and actions which affected the society at large. Any restriction or interference with an individual could be justified only to prevent harm to others. Over actions that affected only himself, the individual was sovereign. Such an understanding of legal and societal constraints conveys the idea of a society in which the relationship between individual and society is not 'paternal', i.e., the individual being the best judge of his interests, law and society could not intervene to promote a person's 'best interests'. Similarly, the idea that an act can be constrained only if it harmed others, rules out the idea that some acts are intrinsically immoral and therefore, must be punished irrespective of whether they affect anyone else. Further, Mill's framework rules out 'utilitarianism', as enunciated by Bentham, which would justify interference if it maximized the general interest. Yet, the demarcation between the individual and the society is not strict in Mill in the sense that all acts do affect others in some way, and Mill believed that his principle did not preach a moral indifference towards the self-regarding behaviour of others, and felt that it was permissible to use persuasion to discourage immoral behaviour. Also, Mill strongly believed in the instrumental value of liberty in the promotion of social goods. This is especially true of his arguments for the complete liberty of thought, discussion and expression and the right to assembly and association. Mill felt that all restrictions on free discussion should be removed because truth would emerge from the free competition of ideas. It may be pointed out that in today's catalogue of liberties, freedom of expression is valued perhaps more than economic liberty as a democratic ideal. Free exchange between individuals is undoubtedly an important exercise of liberty and a society, which forbade all kinds of liberty and allowed this would still be relatively free. (See Norman Barry, *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, Chapter: *Liberty*)

19.4 ISAIAH BERLIN AND THE *TWO CONCEPTS OF LIBERTY*

In his now classic *Two Concepts of Liberty* (first published in 1958) Isaiah Berlin tries to reconcile the negative and positive notions of liberty, i.e., the notion of liberty as the absence of restraints with the various views pertaining to its operation within the social context. For Berlin, the 'negative' notion of liberty can be understood by addressing the following question: 'What is the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons - is or should be left to do or be what he is able to be, without interference by other persons?' (1969, p.121). On the other hand, the positive sense is concerned with the answer to the question: 'what, or who, is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that?' (1969, p.122).

Positive liberty, on the other hand, does not interpret freedom as simply being left alone but as 'self-mastery'. The theory involves a special theory of the self. The personality is divided into a higher and a lower self. The higher self is the source of an individual's genuine and rational long-term goals, while the lower self caters to his irrational desires which are short-lived and of transient nature. A person is free to the extent that his higher self, is in command of his lower self. Thus, a person might be free in the sense of not being restrained by external forces, but remains a slave to irrational appetites; as a drug addict, an alcoholic or a compulsive gambler might be said to be unfree. The main feature of this concept is its openly evaluative nature, its use is specifically tied to ways of life held to be desirable. The idea of positive liberty involves a special interpretation of the self and assumes not just that there is a realm of activity towards which the individual ought to direct herself/himself.

The notion suggests that the individual is being liberated when he or she is directed towards it. Critics of Berlin's notion of positive liberty feel that a belief in positive liberty may involve the idea that all other values, equality, rights, justice etc., are subordinate to the supreme value of higher liberty. Also, the idea that the higher purposes of the individual are equivalent to those of collectivities such as classes, nations and race, may lead to the espousal of totalitarian ideologies.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips on your answer.

1)   Critically examine either J.S. Mill's or Isaiah Berlin's views on liberty.

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19.5   MARXIST CRITIQUE AND THE IDEA OF FREEDOM

The Marxist concept of freedom is different from the liberal views, which have been discussed above. The main points of difference emerge from the Marxist understanding of the individual and society, the relationship between the individual and society, and the Marxist critique of capitalist society. While the liberal view is based on the centrality of the individual and his freedom of choice, the Marxists would see the notion of liberty based on the liberal notion of individual and society as conditions of unfreedom. For Marxists, the individual is not separated from other individuals in society by boundaries of autonomous spaces for the free exercise of choice. They are rather bound together in mutual dependence. The notion of individuality is likewise transformed into a notion of rich individuality, which emphasises the social embeddedness of the individual, the idea that individuals can reach a state of creative excellence and develop their capacities only in a society which seeks the development of all its members. For the Marxists, therefore, freedom lies in the development of creative individuality, and cannot be achieved in a capitalist society where individuals are separated by boundaries of self-interest and where they can only imagine themselves to be free when in reality they are bound by structures of exploitation. It is only in a society, which is free from the selfish promotion of private interests that a state of freedom can exist. Freedom, thus, cannot be achieved in a capitalist society.

These views have been articulated in Friedrich Engel's *Anti-Duhring* and Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*. Engels discusses the notion of freedom as a state of transition from necessity to freedom. The state of necessity is defined by a situation in which the individual is subjected to another's will. Engels points out that man has the capacity to identify and understand the forces, which condition and determine his life. Man has, thus, obtained scientific

knowledge about the laws of nature, which determine his existence and also learnt how to live with these laws in the best possible way. Ironically, man has not been able to break free from the bondage of the forces of production, which have historically kept him under subjection, or in other words, confined him to the realm of necessity. In order to reach a state of freedom, man not only has to have knowledge of human history, but also the capacity to change it. It is only with the help of scientific socialism that man can hope to leave the realm of necessity and enter the realm of freedom. Freedom is a significant component of the idea of the communist society laid down by Marx and Engels in *Communist Manifesto*. It was only in a communist society where there will be no class exploitation that freedom will be achieved.

In his work *Manuscripts*, Karl Marx avers that the capitalist society is dehumanizing. It not only alienates the individual from his true self, it separates him from the creative influences of society. Marx proposes that it is only by transforming those conditions in which alienation takes place, can freedom be restored. Thus, it was only in a communist society where the means of production were socially owned, and each member of society worked in cooperation with the other for the development of all, that true freedom could be achieved. Thus, in Marx's framework, freedom is seen in a positive sense, denoting self-fulfillment and self-realsation, or the realisation of one's true nature. Marx described the true realm of freedom as 'the development of freedom for its own sake'. This potential could be realised, Marx believed, only by the experience of creative labour, working together with others to satisfy our needs. Under this framework, Robinson Crusoe, who enjoyed the greatest possible measure of negative freedom, since no one else on his island could check or constrain him, was a stunted and therefore unfree individual, deprived of the social relationships through which human beings achieve fulfilment. This notion of freedom is clearly reflected in Marx's conception of 'alienation'. Under capitalism, labour is reduced to a mere commodity controlled and shaped by de-personalised market forces. In Marx's view, capitalist workers suffer from alienation in that they are separated from their own true nature: they are alienated from the product of their labour, alienated from the process of labour itself, alienated from their fellow human beings, and, finally alienated from their 'true' selves. Freedom is, therefore, linked to the personal fulfilment which only unalienated labour can bring about (Andrew Heywood, *Political Theory*, p.263).

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Critically examine the Marxist critique of liberty.

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19.6 OTHER CONTEMPORARY IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Apart from Berlin whose work is perhaps the most significant among the contemporary works on liberty, there are other thinkers who have discussed the idea of liberty elaborating upon the ideas expressed by thinkers on both sides of the ideological divide. Milton Friedman, like Mill and Berlin was a liberal who in his work *Capitalism and Freedom* developed a notion of liberty as a significant aspect of capitalist society. The freedom of exchange was an essential aspect of liberty. To promote this freedom, Friedman required the state to give up its concern for welfare and social security and devote itself to maintaining law and order, protecting property rights, implementing contracts etc. For Friedman, not only was liberty essential for free and voluntary exchange among individuals, it was only within a capitalist society that this freedom could be achieved. Moreover, it was economic freedom that provided the opportune and essential condition for political liberty.

In his work *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), F.A.Hayek has propounded a theory of liberty, which emphasises the negative role of the state. For Hayek, a state of liberty is achieved when the individual is not subject to the arbitrary will of another individual. Hayek calls this individual freedom and distinguishes it from other forms of freedom, establishing at the same time the primacy and independence of individual liberty from other forms of freedom, including political freedom. Hayek recommends that the original meaning of liberty as the 'absence of restraints' should be preserved. The enlargement of state intervention in the name of freedom would mean the demise of real liberty which consists in the freedom of individual from restraints.

Another group of thinkers evidently influenced by the Marxist notion of freedom, emphasised that liberty as practiced in modern capitalist societies breeds loneliness. Eric Fromm (1900-1980) explained that in modern societies aloofness was brought about owing to the separation of the individual from his creative capacities and social relations. This separation generated physical and moral aloofness in the individual affecting his mental well-being. It was only through creative and collective work that the individual could restore himself to society. Herbert Marcuse in his work *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1968), also explored the nature of alienation in capitalist societies. Marcuse asserts that the creative multidimensional capacities of the individual get thwarted in capitalist societies. Man is able to express himself only as a consumer constantly engaged in the satisfaction of his physical needs.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) Discuss some of the other contemporary ideas on liberty.

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19.7   LET US SUM UP

The idea of liberty is at the core of liberal thought, which places the rational individual at its center and draws a boundary between the individual and his/her sphere of autonomy, the state and the society. Liberty in its common understanding means an 'absence of constraints'. In other words, it signifies a condition in which an individual who is capable of taking reasoned decisions pertaining to his/her own affairs is free to take any action without and restraints from outside, including state and society. At the same time, however, the notion of liberty, evolved at the same time as the idea of a political community and political authority. This simultaneous evolution has meant an equal recognition of the liberties of all individuals and the understanding that reasonable restrictions on individual liberty could be justified on the grounds that they provided the conditions in which individual liberty could be enjoyed without conflict. The idea of liberty as the absence of restraints is associated with a 'negative' notion of liberty. A 'positive' notion of liberty was articulated by thinkers like T.H.Green who took into account the conditions, which enabled an individual to actually be free. Thus, liberty as a positive notion consisted in having the power to act, and the opportunities which enabled action. The idea of the welfare state was premised on this idea which required the state to take positive steps to provide the conditions within which individuals could actually be free to act and develop themselves. While philosophers like J.S.Mill and Isaiah Berlin attempted to reconcile the two notions, Marxists felt that freedom could not be experienced in a capitalist society. A capitalist society, they emphasized separates an individual from his/her social contexts and from his/her own nature. Liberty as can be seen, has been understood differently by different strands of thought. It remains, however, a fundamental concept in democratic thought.

19.8   KEYWORDS

Autonomy : literally means self-rule or self-government. Institutions or groups are said to be autonomous, if they enjoy freedom to manage their own affairs. In the case of individuals, autonomy is linked closely with 'freedom', suggesting not only the idea of being 'left alone', but also the existence of a capacity to take decisions concerning one's own affairs.

Social Democrats : endorse a 'humanised' capitalist system. Seeking to strike a balance between the market and the state, they accept capitalism as the most reliable system for making profit and at the same time, see the state as a devise to distribute social rewards in accordance with moral rather than market principles.

19.9   SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

Barry, Norman, *An Introduction to Modern Political Theory*, Macmillan, London, 2000 (Chapter 8: Liberty).

Gauba, O.P., *Samkalin Rajneeti Siddhant (Contemporary Political Theory)*, Mayur Paperbacks, Noida, 1997 (Chapter11: Concept of Liberty)

Heywood, Andrew, *Political Theory*, Macmillan, London, 1999 (Chapter 9: Freedom, Toleration and Liberation)

19.10   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1)   See Section 19.1

2)   See Section 19.2

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Sections 19.3 and 19.4

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 19.5

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See Section 19.6

UNIT 20 JUSTICE

Structure

20.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit discusses one of the most basic and important concepts in political science in general, and political theory in particular. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Define the meaning of the concept of justice;

- Distinguish between the various aspects of justice;

- Identify and describe the different theories of the nature of justice;

- Describe the relationship between liberty, equality, law and justice.

20.1   INTRODUCTION

By now, you all must be knowing about the concepts like law, rights, liberty and equality. A prior study of these concepts will help in understanding the concept of justice. The element of justice, in fact, connects the above mentioned themes.

In this unit, we shall first try to understand the meaning of the concept in its different aspects. Then, we shall study the different theories of justice. We shall also try to bring out the relationship between justice on one hand and law, liberty and equality on the other.

Justice is one of the important aims of the state. One of the earliest treaties on politics, Plato's 'Republic' was an attempt to construct a just state. Justice was its

central concept. Therefore, a correct understanding of this concept will help in evaluating different political systems, their policies and the ideologies on which they are based. Thus, justice is the reconciler and synthesizer of political values and as said by Aristotle it is 'what answers to the whole of goodness'.

20.2 MEANING OF JUSTICE

Any discussion of the concept of justice has to take into account its multi dimensional character. The answer to 'what is justice' can only be given by indicating guidelines (values) along which men have thought of justice and will continue to do so. It changes with the passage of time. Thus, what was justice in the past, may be injustice in the present and vice-versa. Thus, there have been the 'egalitarian' perception of justice where the highest place is accorded to the value of equality; the 'libertarian' perception in which liberty is the ultimate value; the Divine view in which justice is the execution of God's will, the 'hedonist' makes 'the greatest good of the greatest number' the criterion of justice; to the 'harmonizer' justice is the harmonizing of different elements and values to produce a satisfactory balance. Some identify justice with 'duty' or with maintenance of peace and order; others view it as an elitist function. Thus, justice concerns the right of the individual as well as the social ordering of society. It is legal and moral at the same time. In short, it is an ethical concept.

20.2.1 Justice and Law

The Roman lawyers integrated the ideas of 'natural justice' with the positive law of the state. As such, the civil law and the law of nations are in conformity with the law of nature. This, however, is an abstract phase of jurisprudence. Infact, justice lies in the enforcement of the positive law. Both law and justice seek to sustain social order. John Austin is the main advocate, who tells that the law has to function as an instrument of justice, on the one hand, and function as an instrument to suppress mischief, on the other.

Legally, the administration of justice can be criticised as unjust if it fails to meet the standard of fairness required by the procedures of the legal system, viz. the accused should be informed of the charges leveled against him; he should be given a reasonable opportunity to defend himself etc; while morally, a law can be called unjust for if it fails to meet the moral ideas of justice. Morality however goes beyond justice.

The symbol of justice is often portrayed as blindfolded because it is supposed to be impartial. That there should be no discrimination between the two extremes – rich or poor, high or low. Therefore, impartiality, becomes a precondition to justice. Does it mean then that justice does not require discrimination at all?

20.2.2 Justice and Discrimination

Plato and Aristotle argued for a different interpretation of justice, "proportionate equality" with the idea of "righteousness". The philosophical interpretation of justice takes an empirical direction at the hands of Aristotle who says: "Injustices arises when equals are treated unequally". This means that if in a democracy there is discrimination on the basis of sex, it would mean treating the equals, unequally. Also, it would be unfair to pit a heavy-weight wrestler against a lightweight one. Thus, justice requires discrimination on the basis of differences, which is relevant to the functions performed. Plato's theory of justice too implied that the life of people should conform to the rule of functional specialization. Here, justice becomes another name for the principal of 'proper stations' i.e. a man should practice one thing only to which his nature is best adapted. This has both individual and social aspects. The highest good of both the individual and the society is conserved, if we take it for granted that

there is nothing better for a man than to do a work that he is best fitted to do, there is equally nothing better for the society than to see that each should be filling the station to which he is best entitled by virtue of the special element of his personality. For this the three elements of reason, sprit and appetite have been highlighted for the individual and the state, to keep their proper bounds.

Also, normally the law does not interfere in instances of discriminatory treatment in private life. But if it causes social harm, the state would be justified in interfering in it, like in instances of untouchability, where some groups are denied human rights. Therefore, a law against it would be just. Also, the separate facilities accorded cannot be truly equal. It is because of this that Dr. Ambedkar demanded the right of entry to temples for Scheduled Castes and opposed separate temples, schools or hostels for them.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is justice?

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2)   How does discrimination fit in the concept of justice?

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20.3   DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

The idea of Aristotle came to lay down the foundation of what is called the doctrine of distributive justice. The essential implication of Aristotle's explanation is that justice is either 'distributive' or 'corrective'; the former requires equal distribution among the equals and the latter applying wherein remedy for a wrong is provided.

The principle that Marx puts forward for distributive justice in the post- revolutionary socialist society is 'from each according to his ability to each according to his work. The idea of distributive justice is reflected in the work of some recent political economists. In this context, reference to the work of J.W. Chapmen deserves merit, who seeks to integrate the idea of justice with his principles of 'economic rationality of man' and 'consumer's sovereignty' coupled with the individual claim of 'moral freedom'. To him, the first principle of justice appears to be the distribution of

benefits, which maximise benefits in accordance with the principle of consumer's sovereignty. The second principle is that a system is unjust, if the material well being of a few is purchased at the expense of many. It implies that justice requires that no one shall gain at the expense of another.

20.3.1 Distributive Justice and Economic Justice

Distributive justice subjects to the condition of general welfare. It demands that the state of national economy be reshaped in a way that the benefits are made available to the common man. In this way, the idea of economic justice comes to imply a socialistic pattern of society.

The first task of economic justice is to provide employment, food, shelter and clothing to every able-bodied citizen. In regard to this area of satisfying the primary and basic needs of all, it has been correctly said that freedom is meaningless if it prevents the achievement of economic justice. Thus, the liberals believe that economic justice can be attained in society if the state provides welfare services and there is progressive system of taxation; a fair return for work provision of social security like old age pension, gratuity and provident fund.

However, the Marxist view of justice has its origins in the area of economics. According to Marx, the positive law of the state is imposed on its members by the authority of the class, which controls the means of production. Law is determined by the economic interest of the ruling class. When private property is abolished and the working class controls the means of production, then the laws are bound to reflect the interest of the working class. Therefore, the content of justice depends upon the class controlling the means of production. When the state withers away, as contemplated by the communists, there will be justice without an economic origin.

Modern liberals have since long given up the doctrine of economic laissez-faire. Redistributive justice (of which Aristotle spoke) is an integral part of 'revisionist liberalism' as advocated by J.W. Chapmen, John Rawls and Arthur Okun. These writers advocate "redistributive justice" with its implication of state intervention in the economy in the interest of justice and freedom for all.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answer.

ii) See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1) What do you understand by distributive justice? How is it related to economic justice?

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20.4 SOCIAL JUSTICE

Social justice relates to the balance between an individual's rights and social control ensuring the fulfillment of the legitimate expectations of the individual under the existing laws and to ensure him benefits and protection against any encroachment on his rights. Let us examine the term, 'social justice' in terms of the following aspects of justice, viz. one, the notion of the predominance of the interest of the community and two, the notion of 'reform', or social change.

20.4.1 Predominance of the Interest of the Community

With the decline of the laissez-faire doctrine, a new awareness has developed that the rights of an individual should be reasonably restricted in the interests of the community because the ends of social justice require the reconciliation of individual rights with that of community interest. It also presumes that in the event of a conflict between the two, the community interest must prevail over individual concerns. Social justice is, thus, closely linked with the idea of what constitutes public good or community interest. Today with the penetration of democracy into the social and economic spheres, community interest has come to encompass not only the political (fair treatment in political matters) but also the social (non- discrimination in social areas) and economic (fair distribution of income and wealth) spheres. Thus, social justice ranges from the protection of minority political rights to the abolition of untouchability and the eradication of poverty. As such, in the backward countries of the world, the idea of social justice enjoins upon the state to make concerted efforts for the improvement of the downtrodden and weaker sections of the community.

20.4.2 Reforms or Social Change

Social justice is used to denote organization of society on the basis of ideas of fairness and equality current at the time. It seeks a revision of social order so as to have a more equitable society. Men through the ages, have sought changes in social order, just as much as they have also sought to preserve a given social order. Social justice stands for reformative justice, for revision of the social order and a redistribution of rights to suit current ideas of fairness. When Aristotle spoke of 'distributive justice' he had reformative or what Raphael calls "prosthetic" justice in mind, because its aims was to modify the status quo.

A hundred years ago, justice did not require governments to take care of the unemployed. Charity was supposed to do that. Due to the operation of notions of "reformative" or "prosthetic" justice, today, it is considered the state's duty to take care of the unemployed and provide them employment.

20.4.3 Pound's Illustration of Social Justice

The affirmation of the idea of social justice is very well contained in the interpretation of Dean Roscoe Pound who presents a six-fold illustration of social interest and lays down eight jural postulates to ensure social justice. Thus, the idea of social justice envisages to promote the welfare of the people by securing a just social order.

Social Justice

Social Interest   **Jural Postulates**
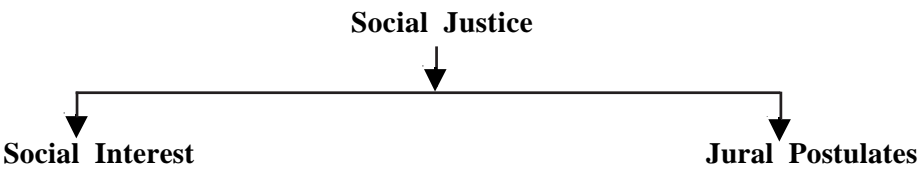
1) In general security, e.g., peace, public health, security of acquisitions, etc.;

2) In security and social institutions, e.g., marriage, religious institutions, etc.;

3) In general morals, e.g., gambling, drinking, immoral traffic, etc.;

4) In conservation of social resources, e.g., food minerals, etc.;

5) In general progress, e.g., freedom of trade, encouragement of research, etc.;

6) In individual rights, e.g., wages conditions of work, etc.

1) That no wanton aggression is made by others;

2) That parties with whom transactions are entered into will act in good faith;

3) That there will be no hindrance in the enjoyment of one's acquisitions and creations;

4) That the person will not be exposed to undue risks and that others will act with due care and caution;

5) That dangerous things kept by others shall be cautiously and carefully kept within its bounds;

6) That an employee has a right to employment;

7) That society will share the misfortunes which befall on the individual; and

8) That proper compensation will be paid to workers for necessary human wear and tear in an industrial society.

20.4.4 Criticism of Social Justice

Theories of social justice are criticised on three grounds. Firstly, demands for social justice, by implication, enlarge the activities of the state. The state, then, will have to decide, "who gets, what, when and how." Where the officers of the state develop vested interests, such subjective determination is not likely to serve the ends of social justice. Secondly, policies of social justice and their implementation require curtailment of liberty. How much of liberty should be sacrificed for how great/small social justice becomes a problem difficult to solve. Lastly, it is difficult to assess which are the basic needs that have to be satisfied to fulfill the criteria of social justice and which justify departure from equality.

However, when the Indian Constitution announces reservation of seats in legislature, educational institutions and public employment, it entails departure from equality. Various justifications are offered for these policies in terms of justice. Firstly, that such treatment compensates for the hundred years of deprivations. Secondly, that these measures are necessary for realising ultimate equality to bring them on an equal footing with society and thirdly, that justice can be done only if the state comes forward with preferential policies to help them gain social respect, economic viability and political status.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   What is social justice? On what grounds has it been criticised?

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20.5   PROCEDURAL JUSTICE

A more narrow view of justice is what is known as procedural justice. In this sense, the term is used not so much to prescribe redistribution of wealth or values as to the rules and procedures applied to individual actions. Essentially, it seeks to eliminate arbitrariness in human actions and supports the rule of law. This conception deals with individuals and not collectivities. In this view, not sticking to rules and procedures, jumping the queue or giving unfair advantage to some in competition would be unjust. The procedural theorists (for example Hayek) believe that imposing criteria for redistribution of wealth would lead to totalitarianism and an unjustified sacrifice of liberty. It involves constant intervention by the state to maintain the pattern required by equality. They feel that even if the state follows a policy of welfare, this has little to do with justice.

Critics of procedural theory of justice argue that mere following of rules does not ensure a just result. The rules farmed in a social context are weighed in favour of some groups. Therefore, a free competition may not always be a fair competition. Secondly, a free market relationship can be equally coercive for individuals who lack economic power; for them the liberty of a free market would be meaningless.

20.6   JOHN RAWLS'S THEORY OF JUSTICE

Different political theories offer different pictures of what would be a really just social order. Two of these theories are, the utilitarian theory, and John Rawls's theory of justice as fairness. Utilitarian theory asserts that the social order in which the largest number of people can have the highest satisfaction of their utility is just. But from its very early days, critics have found great difficulties with utilitarianism. In this backdrop, Rawls's theory has offered, an alternative to utilitarianism. Rawls's book, *Theory of Justice* gives a final interpretation of the concept.

To discuss Rawls's theory of justice, his method of approaching moral problems must be mentioned first, which is in the contractarian tradition of social philosophy. But at the same time, Rawls's method entails that the conclusions of moral reasoning be always checked and readjusted against intuitive moral notions and this contrasts with others in the contractarian tradition, who maintain that the rules of justice are those that would be agreed to in a hypothetical setting.

Rawls places men behind the 'veil of ignorance' in a hypothetical original position where individuals are deprived of the basic knowledge of their wants, interests, skills, abilities and of the things that generate conflicts in actual societies. But they will have what Rawls calls 'a sense of justice'.

Under these circumstances, Rawls argue, people will agree to accept two principles of justice in the lexical order. First, is the equality principle where each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive liberty compatible with a similar liberty to others. Here, equal liberties can be concretised as the familiar rights of liberal democratic regimes. They include the equal right to political participation, freedom of

expression, religious liberty, equality before the law and so on. The second principle is called the difference principle where Rawls argues that inequalities can only be justified, if it benefits the least advantaged.

John Rawls's concept of justice has two aspects to it. Firstly, it postulates a "constitutional democracy", that is, government of laws and one, which is restrained, responsible and accountable. Secondly, it believes in the regulation of the free economy "in a certain way". "If law and government", writes Rawls's, "act effectively to keep market competitive, resources fully employed, property and wealth widely distributed over time, and to maintain the appropriate social minimum, then if there is equality of opportunity underwritten by education for all, the resulting distribution will be just".

The "redistributionists" have their critics too. Thus, Mare F. Plattner makes two arguments against the view of justice. Firstly, he believes that although equality is a cherished value, it may not be possible to have it at the expense of efficiency. According to Plattner, this problem of equality versus increased wealth lands Rawls into an inconsistency. Thus, on the one hand, Rawls "absolutely refuses to allow that those who make a greater economic contribution deserve greater economic rewards". Yet his "difference principle" (which specifies that "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged") nonetheless affirms that it is just to grant them greater economic rewards insofar as these serve as incentives to increase their contribution in ways that ultimately benefit the disadvantaged.

The second argument Plattner makes is that the redistributionist wants to refuse to the individual the reward of his "honest industry "and instead, considers all produce as the "common asset" of society as a whole. And this Plattner wants us to believe, undermines the "moral foundations of private property and therewith of liberal society".

Check Your Progress 4

Note: i)   Use the space given below for your answer.

     ii)   See the end of the unit for tips for your answer.

1)   Discuss John Rawls's theory of justice.

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20.7   JUSTICE: A TERM OF SYNTHESIS

Perhaps, the best approach to justice is to view it as a term of synthesis. The problem of justice is one of conciliation. The function of justice is the conciliation of different

liberties (political, social and economic) with each other; the different equalities (political, social and economic) with each other as well as the task of conciliating liberty in general, in all its forms, with equality in general, in all its forms. In brief, justice means the synthesis of conflicting values and holding these together in some state of equilibrium.

Many eminent writers have chosen to take sides in the liberty versus equality tussle. Lord Acton had, many years ago, made the memorable pronouncement that "the passion for equality made vain the hope of freedom" (he was speaking in the context of the French revolution). The champions of "liberty alone" like W. E. Lecky in his book *Democracy and Liberty* claim that, "Equality is only attained by a stringent repression of natural development".

Actually, liberty and equality both matter; as Carritt puts it, they involve one another. Freedom has a better content if there is equality. And, at the same time it is freedom that enables men to demand equality. Give men liberty and they are sooner, rather than later, going to ask for equality. The interlinking between liberty and equality can be brought out in many ways. Take the case of freedom of speech and vote, both of which can be vitiated by a grossly uneven distribution of wealth. The wealthy are in a better position not only to contest but also to propagate. The wealthy have easier access to the propaganda apparatus. Harold Laski's words still ring true: "Every attempt of an individual to assert his liberty in a society of unequal will be challenged by the powerful". In short, we find that political liberty and economic democracy have to go hand in hand. And if we examine several political values, we find though apparently they may appear mutually contradictory, on closer examination, they will be found to be complementary and interlinked. In any case, it is the function of justice to synthesize or reconcile the various and often-conflicting values. Justice is the final principle, which controls the distribution of various rights, political, social and economic in the interests of liberty as well as equality.

Such a concept of justice grows historically as a process of development of social thought. In this sense, it is a growing concept reflecting social reality and aspiration.

20.8   LET US SUM UP

What we have seen so far leaves an impression that justice is essentially a normative concept having its place in various spheres like religion, ethics and law though its ramifications cover social, political and economic spheres.

Impartiality is a necessary condition of justice. Impartiality does not mean treating everyone equally without discrimination. One interpretation is to treat equals equally and unequals unequally. But chiefly discrimination has to be on relevant criteria.

Justice requires discrimination of values on a just basis. Different theories support or the order of these. Social justice emphasises the needs of the people. It also calls for preferential policies in the Indian social context. As against this, procedural justice requires the rule of law and elimination of arbitrariness.

In Rawls's theory of justice, individuals have to make a choice of social order. They would naturally prefer an egalitarian society. His theory grants equal basic liberties for all. Inequalities should be attached to offices open to all. They should benefit the disadvantaged section the most.

In the end, however, instead of delving deep into the debate over the perplexing connotations of justice, it shall be worthwhile to say that it is the connecting bond of all-important political values. For instance, there can be no liberty if the norm of equality is violated and there can be no equality if there is no justice. Obviously, justice is integrally connected with the norms of liberty and equality. Likewise, we

may say that there can be no liberty if there is no right, and there is no protection of rights, if there is no well organized system of law to ensure the administration of justice. Obviously, once again, the idea of justice is essentially bound up with the concepts of rights and law. The most important point to be taken note of at this stage is that not only the idea of justice is integrally connected with the norms of law, liberty, equality and rights, but that it constitutes the essential link. Justice in this sense is the reconciler and synthesizer of political values. Daniel Webster was perfectly right when he said that justice "is the chiefest interest of man".

20.9 SOME USEFUL REFERENCES

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20.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1.   See Section 20.2

2)   See sub-section 20.2.2

Check Your Progress 2

1)   See Section 20.3

Check Your Progress 3

1)   See Section 20.4 and sub-section 20.4.4

Check Your Progress 4

1)   See Section 20.6