

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

What is Politics?

The word 'Politics' as common men, appears before in the form of practical politics or art of administration. It includes working of political parties, use of fair or foul means in election, use of bureaucracy for selfish ends through corrupt means etc. Now – a – days there is more distorted form of politics, like politics of the family, locality, college, village etc. Thus, to achieve aims by telling lies, cheating and dishonesty is called politics. Conferences, processions, slogans, strikes and riots are being accepted as parts of politics.

Politics as study is a very broad discipline, a broad physical activity and discipline. Soltau says, "Politics is the concern of everybody with any sense of responsibility," because it is concerned with everybody. Therefore, nobody can avoid it, inspite of the fact whether a person has any interest in it or not. Politics exists in every association, organization – national and international.

According to Herbert J. Spiro, "Politics is the process by which communities of human beings deal with their problems". Many human problems are being solved out of a state and association concerned there-with, such as political parties, pressure groups, elections etc. are such fields, the study of which is an important part of politics. Thus, politics is a fundamental political activity with the help of which man solves his problems by using limited means.

Nature of Politics:

The nature of politics can be discussed in light of following four views:

- 1) Ancient Greek View
- 2) Traditional View
- 3) Modern View
- 4) Behavioural View

1) **Ancient Greek View:** The credit for initiating and providing a systematic study to the subject 'Politics' goes to early Greek Philosophers. Plato and Aristotle provided politics a definite basis. In Greek city states right to citizenship was for ten to fifteen percent persons only, who conducted the administration of city-states. In such conditions, the Greek Philosophers put forth their ideas for politics as under;

a) Greek philosophers did not make any distinction between state and society. There seemed to be no difference in the social, political, ethical and individual life. Aristotle says, the state has an independent identity and is natural, not created by human beings.

b) State is a moral institution and individual can realize the ideal of moral life only in the state. The aim of the state is to develop moral qualities in citizens and to promote their welfare.

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c) Greek philosophers wanted to establish an ideal state. An ideal state that will replace the existing Greek city states.

d) Aristotle adopted scientific method. He laid down that first we need to understand environment around us and then solve the problems. For this matter, study of politics scientifically is important.

2) **Traditional View**: Traditional view refers to that view, which the political thinkers adopted upto few decades in the beginning of twentieth century. During this period, efforts were made to define politics with reference to various institutions of political life that is why thinkers of this period, kept their study limited to the state, government and other political institutions. So, their view became narrow, formal and institutional, and thus called as traditional view. Traditional thinkers limited their study to following three institutions and named politics as political science;

a) **Relation of political science with State**: With rise of nation – states, the writers of politics studied various aspects of state in scope of political science. Garner says, “Political Science begins and ends with the state”.

b) **Political Science Deals with Government**: Some traditional thinkers limit scope of political science to the study of government. Leacock says, “Political Science deals with the government”.

c) **Political Science deals with both State and Government**: Some traditional thinkers defined political science as study of both state and Government. Government is studied as an agent of the state, and type of Government defines the form of state.

3) **Modern View**: In twentieth century, emphasis was laid on modern point of view of politics, which was study of many basic activities, that are beyond the scope of state. The Modern view of politics may be discussed as under:

a) ***Allocation of Scarce Resources is Politics***: Resources include material, human and spiritual resources. According to David Easton, “Politics is the process by which scarce resources are allocated with in a social unit for the purpose of providing for human needs and desires”. The process of allocation of the limited resources is called politics.

b) ***The Study of Politics is wider than the study of State and Government***: Modern View says that the politics is concerned with everything which is related with political life of the individual, and, which may not be directly related with state or government. Therefore, associations, society, labour organizations, political parties, pressure and interest groups are also included in the subject matter of politics.

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c) ***Political is the art and practice of Government of human Societies*** : Politics is an art and the behavior of the individual is studied in it. The study of political activities of man is Politics Government in politics means the organized power, where the activities are concerned with issuing orders and establishing control. Politics is concerned with whole human society and not state only.

d) ***Politics is the study of power***: There is an agreement about the study of state as power. According to Lass-well, politics is the study of the influence. Politics is the study of shaping and sharing of political power.

e) ***Politics is an Effort to bring about the Rule of order and Justice***: Politics is normally viewed as a conflict and struggle. Politics is at struggle in which those who have power, try to maintain it and make use of this and those who are out of power try to get it by controlling the government. The other aspect of politics is that it is an effort to establish law and order and justice in the society, where balance is maintained between the interests of society and individual, and common interest is secured. Politics protects the privileges of minority as well as teaches about the organized unity of individuals as society.

4) **Behavioural View**: This view was developed by American writers after Second World War. These thinkers study the attitudes, motivations and perceptions of man through political behavior with the help of which political process may be studied in a scientific manner. The emphasis were on scientific methods, because of failure of traditional methods. Thus, behaviouralism is study of individual behavior, instead of political institutions. Behaviouralism can be studied in relation to other social-sciences and for analysis scientific method is adopted.

Major Tenets of Behavioural View

a) **Politics is capable of predicting**: Behaviouralists agree that if a student of politics adopts analytical method for proper development of political knowledge, then politics is capable of making predictions.

b) **Politics should concern itself primarily with observable behaviour**: in politics major focus should be observable behaviour of an individual or group that is to be studied.

c) **Data should be quantified**: Data pertaining to every behavior should be collected in such a statistical measure, which could be measured and conclusions should be drawn.

d) **Values of Politics are beyond measurements**: Politics must be studied in relation to other Social Sciences. There should be inter-disciplinary method of investigation.

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Is Politics In Seemingly Non-Political Domain?

Every body acknowledges the fact that politics is influencing every aspect of human life. Whatever the nature of administration is, political activities seem to be going around us. Whether we participate in political activities or not, but we cannot get rid of politics.

In democratic countries, people are considered to be rulers and have right to choose their representatives to rule over them. Therefore, citizens in democratic setup are more vigilant about politics. They not only choose their representatives, but also go on evaluating their work daily.

Present State is considered as welfare institution. Therefore, it is always busy in making the daily life of the citizens happy and consequently, fulfils every type of their need. This work is done by elected representatives of people. They run administration, according to the will of their voters. Thus, there is close relationship between ruler and ruled. Rulers, for remaining in power try to secure the support of their voters, and on other hand, ruled with help of their limited wisdom hand over the reins of administrator in hands of those who work in public interest. Election of rulers by ruled and efforts to solve the problems of the citizens by rulers is most significant problem, and the solution of this problem gives birth to politics. It is because of this relation of common man's life with politics, Aristotle called man, a political being. Politics is involved in the mutual relations of men, relations of citizens and rulers, and, in the efforts of satisfying the unlimited needs of man with limited means.

Can Political Arguments Resolved Through Reasoning?

Politics has been termed as the means of establishing conciliation and co-ordination among different interests. People living in society have different desires and aspirations, and in order to fulfill them numerous, organizations, communities and institutions are formed. There are countless institutions in economic, social, religious and cultural sphere. State is also a political institution, and, because of its prime importance, it is powerful among all institutions. Man goes on continually trying to fulfill his desires, aspirations and wants. In the course of fulfilling, he has to face opposition, confrontation and struggle. Thus, there remains always a struggle and confrontation between man and institutions. Here politics is means of establishing rapport, co-ordination and conciliation between individuals, communities and groups. Thus, where there are problems, struggles and confrontation, politics is bound to be there.

Political arguments are ground given to provide legitimacy to political ideas. Political Arguments can be resolved through reasoning in following cases:

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a) **Controversy should be within state limits:** it includes disputes which come under scope of state limits. If there is dispute between husband and wife over the division of property, its solution is possible through politics or state only. Such disputes are part of politics.

b) **Existence of established laws about controversy:** It is necessary to have a established law to settle disputes or controversies. Both the parties should be made confident that through laws framed by state, we are capable of settling disputes and controversies.

c) **The State and Politics will bring about unity and agreement in the society which otherwise is full of conflicts and disagreements:** Man being a rational animal always bases his behaviour on the criteria of good and bad, useful and useless. Man is vigilant about his interests and is always busy in the fulfillments of his various types of interests. In society, there is clash of interests of he individuals, and, because of clash, conflicts and struggles among them are natural. A society full of disorders is a big hindrance in development, and satisfaction of individual interests. In such situation, the state and politics will bring about unity and agreement in society for proper development.

d) **Politics is process through which peaceful social change is possible:** Liberalists hold that politics is proper field for peaceful social change. State is supposed to play a positive role, and create such circumstances in which on one hand, man's basic necessities may be easily fulfilled and, on the other, his talent may be developed.

e) **Politics is the means to govern Democracies:** Democracy is such an administrative machinery in which there is great scope for settling disputes and struggles amicably. These situation are:

i) **There is freedom of speech in the Democracy:** Through this man is able to express his point of view fearlessly and without any hurdle. Due to freedom of speech, ways and means can be found for the settlement of various disputes.

ii) **Freedom to form Political parties:** Due to this freedom various political parties are formed. These political parties provide opportunities to the common people to express their view point on the basis of open competition.

iii) **Law formulation by the Executive of the country:** In democracy the people's representative make laws and the executive implements these laws in order to settle the disputes and struggles. If executive works arbitrarily, the judiciary comes in between and settles the disputes between people and government, and protects the interests of people.

iv) **Debate in Parliament:** In democracy, Government's find solutions to different problems through debate. Through discussion there is every possibility

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to find solutions to problems, and such a solution which is acceptable to all. There is a check on the power of the government and the essence of common good comes to the fore.

v) Important Role of Pressure and Interest Groups: Different interest groups on basis of different interests work in form of pressure groups to further their interests. These interests groups try to get administrative decisions their own favour. These pressure groups help in decision making, and also in finding solutions through middle way without any confrontation.

In democracy, ways and means exist to solve Problems through peaceful means. In democratic government, administration is run through politics. Politics is politics, when there is no violence, where violence begins, politics ends.

Meaning of Political Theory:

In order to resolve various problems related with politics, political scholars from time to time, scientifically and philosophically examined the problems and gave prescription to overcome those problems. In this process, political scholars collected data related with the problem under investigation, critically examined the data and then evolved a solution to initiate the problems. Thus, entire process resulted in theory building, where political scholars perform two fold functions, i.e., of scientist as well as philosopher.

In ancient times, political theory was defined as sum-total of 'Politics' and 'Theory'. In modern times, politics is defined as study of:

- ❖ State, Government, administrator and administration, their inter-relationship. Constitution, law, rule of law, human rights, duties, ideals and values etc.
- ❖ Informal political institutions like political parties, pressure groups, trade union. Youth league, public opinion etc.
- ❖ Leadership, charismatic personality, voting behavior, political criminalization, environment, pollution, nation building etc.

For developing a theory over a subject, one needs to have complete historical knowledge of that subject, collects all the relevant material pertaining to it and after evaluating presents the conclusion. Thus, when a scholar analyses political problems and while he presents his critical appraisal of present disputed political conceptions and also authenticity to his own views, then he is making a political theory. Political theory is generally based upon the following factors:

- i) Detailed Description.
- ii) Explanation.

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iii) Value Judgment and Prescription.

i) **Detailed Description**: When a political scholar is dissatisfied with prevailing happenings, he collects all the necessary data in a detailed manner for reconstruction and regeneration of society. Thus, description includes collection of facts in the most detailed historical form.

ii) **Explanation**: Extensive explanation and in depth examination is done for complete understanding of facts and events. After collecting data the system analyst indulges in treating the available data in an elaborate manner.

iii) **Value Judgement and Prescription**: The Political analyst is not satisfied with only description and explanation. Therefore he adds his ideas or values to it. That is why in political theory, we find influence of thinkers' taste and temperament. Thus, value judgement and prescription have an important role in making of political theory.

Scope of Political Theory:

The subject matter of political theory is politics and in politics, we study the public life of human beings. Politics is related to authority and authority in turn influences all aspects of people. The scope of political theory can be described as under:

i) **Study of State and Government**: Political theory examines state, its origin, nature, evolution, expansion, jurisdiction, historical importance, present position, its future and necessity for its improvement. It examines the nature of state as to what are monarchy, aristocracy, polity etc., different forms of government, on what human faith and culture a state is based etc.

ii) **Study of Universal Values**: Political theory defines some universal values like idealists—utopian solution, liberalist liberty, Marxists equality, Gandhi's decentralization and Internationalists humanity.

iii) **Study of Pluralist Society**: In a pluralist society, many associations work with state to fulfill the requirements of human beings. Political theory studies, that whether these groups and associations should be given liberty and to what extent the state authority should be limited.

iv) **Study of Democracy**: Political theory studies democracy, political parties, representative system, franchise, public opinion etc. In study of political parties, political Theory studies their nature, kinds, its evils and ways and means to curb the evils etc. On what method representation should be based, and, what should be the base of franchise.

v) **Study of human behaviour**: Man in today's society desires for such a change in theories and policies, which is based upon the fulfillment of his

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desires. Political theory lay stress on examining all activities and expectation of human being.

vi) **Study of Political Power:** Political theory defines political power and investigates in depth its nature, kinds, forms, manifestations and limitations.

vii) **Study of Feminism and Subalterns:** Political theory is study of status of women, down-trodden, backwards and tribes, disabled, labour etc. today political theory aims at such a society where every men and women get equal participation in political, economic and social fields of the society.

viii) **Study of Internationalization and Globalization:** As no state is self-sufficient, so they are dependent on each other. All states need to work together to solve the problems, as problems are no more national but they are international. Thus, political theory is in search for establishing institutions like international government, world economy, international order etc.

ix) **Study of Development, Nation Building and Environment:** Political theory includes study of development of international peace and of entire human race. Besides, to search problems regarding nation-building and environment, to find out the root cause for the genesis of problems, to search for prescriptions for these problems etc is an important components of the study of political theory.

Relevance of Political Theory:

The relevance of political theory can be explained in following points:

a) **Future Planning is Possible:** Political theory is based upon such generalizations which are made possible to politics through the labour of political scholars. Political theory helps in presenting new solutions to problems, that born out of changing conditions and environments. These theories also help to make future conditions thus, by keeping the interest of the country and society in view, it becomes easy to make planning for the future.

b) **Conceptualization becomes Possible:** Political theory motivates the system analyst to collect data and research upon new fields of investigation. In every period, the demand and support of the society is different and by feeding them in the society in the form of input, one can understand the pulse of society in form of output. Thus, it provides inspiration to the writing of new theories in the changed environment, based upon new facts and figures.

c) **Provides Knowledge of Political Reality:** Political theory provides real knowledge regarding politics. It studies existing social, economic and political conditions and also the desires, aspirations, tendencies of the society and exposes them. By this survey, one can have detailed information of society, on which a theory capable of providing discipline, and, sentimental unity to the society.

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d) **Useful in Solving Problems:** Theory is used to solve different kinds of problems, related to economy, society, politics, law and order, development, freedom from scarcity etc. with the help of political theory poor and exploited class could have a foot – hold in the processes of decision making.

e) **Provides Legitimacy to Government:** As all governments are based upon one or other theory, were a ruler tries to change the nature of the political system then in order to prove his rationality seeks the help of some theory. For the establishment of democracy, secularism, nationalism etc. only theories provide justification to them. Thus, political theory helps in legitimizing the political structures, as it is only within legitimate limits that a government can govern peacefully and without any challenge to their authority.

f) **In a political system,** Political theory provides clear meaning and content to the concepts through complete analytical study, so that its abuse could be checked.

g) **Political Theories Inspire Political Movements:** Political theory can arouse great political movements. For example, Indian freedom struggle based on ideology of truth and non-violence.

h) **Historical Understanding Makes Comparative Study Clear:** Political theory provides complete historical background of the subject under investigating. In light of historical background of each state, it becomes easy to compare then and arrive at conclusions.

i) **Helpful In Establishing Universal Peace:** After two dreadful world wars of the 20th century, peace in world was necessary, so that to avoid third world war, by which entire humanity will be wiped out. It is political theory, that helped in establishing universal peace.

