

PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post-Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post-Graduate course in Subject introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post-Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analyses.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of a proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in invisible teaching. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great deal of these efforts is still experimental—in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these do admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

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MODULE – I

Unit III □ Rawl's Theory of Justice

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1.1 Introduction

John Rawls (1921-2002), the most eminent political philosopher in the second half of the twentieth century, has given new meaning and resonance to the theory of Liberalism and the concept of Justice. His watershed publication, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), came out at a time when serious questions were raised about the future of liberal political theory, especially in his own country United States in the context of the on-going furious debate over the Vietnam War, the raging racial inequality and large-scale unemployment. In fact, he began his philosophical inquiry into the nature of the problem of realising a just social order and political system in the late 1950s when many people had predicted the end of the political theory of liberalism and, for that matter, of political philosophy itself. Rawls, an academic philosopher, broke from the main current of modern philosophical thinking in terms of logical and linguistic analysis. His theoretical work helped stimulate a revival of interest in moral theory and political philosophy. His great theoretical contribution has been his sophisticated arguments for a new concept of Justice.

John Bordley Rawls born in Baltimore, Maryland in the United States on 21 February, 1921. His father William Rawls, without attending law school, learned enough to become a lawyer qualified to argue cases before the Supreme Court. His mother Anna Rawls was a participant in the woman's movement for advocating voting rights for women.

John attended the Kent school in western Connecticut and thereafter entered Princeton University in 1939. There he was introduced to political philosophy by Norman Malcolm, a student of Wittgenstein. He graduated in 1943 and joined the US Army as a private. After initial training he was sent to fight in the war in the Pacific, in New Guinea, in the Philippines and eventually in Japan.

His military service as a combat infantryman came to an end after the termination of the Second World War. He began his graduate studies in philosophy at Princeton in 1946. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the moral knowledge and judgements on the moral worth of character. It was here that his interest in developing a theory of justice first developed. After teaching for two years in Princeton, he went to Oxford University on a Fulbright Scholarship for the academic year 1952-53 and joined Christ Church College. This one year in Oxford was one of the most formative periods of his long career. He was especially influenced by lectures of H.L.A. Hart on the philosophy of law as well as by seminars held by Isaiah Berlin and Stuart Hampshire.¹

Returning to the United States in 1953, Rawls went to Cornell University as assistant professor of philosophy. Here he found his former teacher Norman Malcolm on the faculty and his former Princeton class mates Rogers Albritton and David Sachs. He stayed at Cornell till 1959, was in Harvard University during 1959-60, and thereafter joined the Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he continued till 1962. Finally, he took a teaching position in the standing faculty at Harvard where he held, since 1976, the John Cowles chair in philosophy until 1979, when he succeeded Kenneth Arrow as James Bryant Conant university professor. In this post he continued till his retirement in 1991 (though he continued teaching until 1995). By nature a quiet, witty and modest man, Rawls turned down hundreds of honorary degrees and accepted them only from Oxford, Princeton and Harvard, with which he was associated. He was awarded in 1999 the National Humanities Medal by the President of the US with the citation noting his success in helping women enter the ranks of a male-dominated world.² Rawls died of heart failure on 24 November, 2002 at his residence in Lexington, Massachusetts, ending his suffering of a stroke in 1995.

1.2 The Guiding Theme

From the outset of his intellectual career Rawls's work was guided by the question 'What is the most appropriate moral conception of justice for a democratic society?' In his *A Theory of Justice* (1971) this question was pursued as part of a general investigation into the nature of social justice. This book was a sort of a wake-up call to the contemporary liberal theory of social and political justice and dazed the world of philosophy till then dominated by utilitarianism, logical positivism, empiricism and linguistic analysis. By reviving the concept of social contract in defiance of the prevailing philosophical sensibility of theory Rawls attempted to answer a single ethical question of how to construct a just society. *A theory of Justice* (1971) was a stupendous success, which immediately sold two million copies and inspired over five thousand books and articles on related issues. This book has been translated into 27 languages (Rajan 2002).

Rawls turned to the liberal and democratic "social contract" tradition built up by Locke, Rousseau and Kant. According to the doctrine of social contract, laws can be called 'just' when they could be agreed to by free persons from a position of equal right. This argument had the consequence that, to be just, laws must benefit not simply a majority but everyone, thereby promoting the common good.

In the 1960s Rawls had to confront the socialist propaganda that socialism alone can cater to a just distribution of resources in society. So, in formulating his own theory of justice, Rawls

elaborated the argument that the principles of liberalism and socialist egalitarianism can coexist. This attempt of critical moral philosophy to harmonize the principles of liberty and equality in his theory of justice is his greatest contribution of liberal political philosophy in the second half of the 20th century.

1.3 Problematique and Methodology

Rawls aimed to redress the predominance of utilitarianism in modern moral and political philosophy. Utilitarianism, which had grown out of the work of the British empiricists, starting with David Hume (1711-76), was best developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and has been the most influential moral conception for more than 250 years. Utilitarianism says laws are 'just' when they promote the greatest over-all happiness of the majority members of society. But issues of just distribution have long been seen as problematic for utilitarianism, which seems to condone sacrifices of individual and minority welfare for the sake of the majority. Yet a compelling alternative conception of justice seemed to be lacking in moral philosophy.

To develop such an alternative, Rawls turned to the liberal and democratic "social contract" traditions of Locke, Rousseau and Kant. According to social contract doctrine, laws are just when they could be agreed to by free persons from a position of equal right. This has the consequence that, to be just, laws must benefit not just a majority, but everyone, thereby promoting the common good. Utilitarianism, which was also extremely influential outside the academic world, seemed to provide a straightforward and rigorous method by which public officials could solve hard political problems. The utilitarian method is, for every policy alternative, to add up the social benefits, subtract the social costs, and implement the alternative that maximizes net benefits.

Alongside the dominance of utilitarianism there was, however, the common intuition that the rights of individuals should not be sacrificed for the sake of social welfare. But the advocates for rights of individuals lacked systematic philosophical arguments against the Benthamite notion that rights are nothing more than "nonsense on stilts". There was also the Marxist critique of rights as the common sense of capitalists, confusing the class interests of the bourgeoisie with the universal interest of humanity. Rawls used the method of "social contract" to overcome these intellectual challenges. Rawls followed the liberal tradition of thinking to defend a politics more explicitly egalitarian than Lockeanism and explicitly more libertarian than Marxism, and he constructed a theory of justice that proved to be the most systematic and coherent integration of liberal and socialist ideals.

Rawls adopted the hypothesis of "social contract" also to counter the defects of Intuitionism which is a sort of incoherent jumble of ideas and principles. Intuitionist theories consist of a number of first principles which may conflict with one another; they include explicit method, no priority rules for weighing these principles against one another. Intuitionism has two defects. First, it is unable to explain as to why its principles should be followed. Rawls deals with this defect by proposing a contractual hypothesis as a method of arriving at principles of justice without relying simply on intuition. Secondly, intuitionism gives no guidance for decision when

two or more of its principles point to conflicting courses of action in a particular situation. Here also contract resolves the disagreement on the substance of the principles of justice whether distribution should be according to merit or need. The contractual hypothesis would lead to the criterion of need. Rawls asserts that when intuitional approaches conflict with one another necessary guidance comes from political theory. His theory of justice is meant to provide a political theory for finding out the principles of justice and a framework of a just society.

Rawls adopts the method of 'reflective equilibrium' for breaking the intuitional-utilitarian deadlock and constructing his theory of justice. As a method of thinking, reflective equilibrium goes back to Aristotle and was later used by Sidgwick. It is the intellectual technique which ensures coincidence of reasonable philosophical conditions on *principles* with considered *judgments*. It is an equilibrium because principles and judgments coincide; and it is reflective because people think about the principles conforming to people's judgments and the premises of their derivation. According to reflective equilibrium, if a practice derived from the principles conflicts with a conviction, then either the principle has to be reformulated or the conviction has to be changed. To decide which course to take, practical judgment has to be used to weigh a variety of considerations such as firmness and consistency of conviction, the certainty of the principles and of the evidence underlying the practice, and so forth. When philosophers sidestep this process of approaching reflective equilibrium, they act on faith rather than reason. This equilibrium is not necessarily stable. It is liable to be upset by further examination of the conditions which should be imposed on the contractual situation and by particular cases. The method of reflective equilibrium, as used by Rawls, challenges every critic to offer constructive revisions of justice as fairness.

The technique of reflective equilibrium is employed by Rawls as a method of testing rival moral theories and gauging which one is to be preferred. Rawls's defence of "reflective equilibrium" as a method of justification is his distinctive contribution to the tradition of grand theory built up by Plato, Hobbes and J.S. Mill. In doing this, he is the wisest and most modest of grand philosophers.

1.4 Assumptions

Pursuing his "social contract" idea, Rawls makes some assumptions to put forward a logical presentation of his theory of justice. First of all, he assumes an "original position" with which he begins his discourse, and on which he focuses while developing his theory of justice. Rawls's "original position" plays a role analogous to the "state of nature" in earlier social contract tradition. He treats this as a hypothetical rather than an historical condition. In the original position persons live in a "veil of ignorance. They are bound by incomplete knowledge and limited judgment. In this "original position" "no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength and the like the parties [to the contract] do not know the particular circumstances of their own society" (Rawls 1971). They do not have their conception of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a "veil of ignorance."

The concept of ‘veil of ignorance’ was not used by Rawls in his version of justice written first in 1957-58 (Rawls 1957, 1958). It is used in *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1971) to negate and nullify the influence of genetic endowment, superior talents and characteristics and social contingencies which may tempt the individual to exploit and tailor the principles according his own advantage.

Secondly, it is assumed that parties to the contract are persons who, like ‘negotiators’ are ‘rational agents’ and want to achieve common good in a just society and, at the same time, protect their individual liberty. Rawls has thus in an excellent manner combined the traditions of Locke (individual liberty), Rousseau (common good) and Kant (humans as more personality). The contract is hypothetical but it is made to serve a logical purpose of establishing a well-ordered and just society which protects the values of liberal democracy. Rawls’s logical presentation serves the purpose of reconciling the liberal ideal of political obligation with a redistributionalist conception of social justice. In his scheme of justice (distribution) both the individual and society benefit simultaneously. His theory of justice secures a place for normative theory in the face of behaviouralist theory in political discourse.

Thirdly, Rawls assumes that persons, while entering into a social contract, want to achieve benefits of “primary social goods”. This category of “Primary social goods includes”, in Rawls’s thinking, “liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect”. These primary social goods are directly distributed by social institutions like powers, rights and liberties. They are distinguished from another kind of primary goods called primary natural goods which include health intelligence, vigour, imagination and natural talents. These are affected by social institutions, but are not directly distributed by them.

While persons in the “original position” enter into contract to obtain the maximum of these primary social goods, they as negotiators have general wisdom but particular ignorance. They are wise enough to feel that they need these primary social goods as much as possible but living in a “veil of ignorance” they are unable to distinguish their own interests from the interests of others insofar as they do not know what special qualities and talents they have. In denying the people in the “original position” knowledge about their social location and their natural endowments, Rawls tries to ensure that the principles to which they agree are not distorted by those chance inequalities that in the real world might be thought to bias distributive outcomes. Justice requires a bargain made under fair conditions, and that is why knowledge of inequalities is ruled out.

The parties to the social contract in Rawls’s “original position” do not know their conception of the good. This means that they do not know what their beliefs are about how they should lead their lives. Just as justice requires that no attention be paid to the different talents of different members of society, so it requires that no attention be paid to the particular conceptions of the good held by them. Rawls says: “The idea of the original position is to set up a fair procedure so that any principles agreed to will be just. The aim is to use the notion of pure procedural justice as a basis of theory” (Rawls 1971 : Chapter II, section 24).

Fourthly, it is assumed that deliberations or negotiations leading to the contract are conducted through the technique of reflective equilibrium. The principle of just distribution is thus the result of moral deliberations in the sense that the parties to the social contract rise above the

considerations of personal interests, biases and prejudices. Rawls has explained the process in an ingenious manner. He says that when at a birthday party the members are asked to cut the cake into pieces and if they do not know which particular pieces they individually would get, then the invariable tendency would be to cut the cake in as *fair* a way as possible. Rawls's assumption is that if people do not know who they are going to be, then it will make sense for them to choose *fair* (i.e. Just) principles for distributing the primary social goods and regulate the social order accordingly. The principles of justice arrived at in the "original position" by people living in a "veil of ignorance" have, therefore, to be the outcome of a fair agreement. Hence Rawls defines "justice as fairness."

There is a link between ignorance of conceptions of the good and freedom. The parties to the social contract in the "original position" are taken to be motivated above all by an interest in protecting their capacity to "frame, revise and rationally to pursue" conceptions of good. Of fundamental importance in the Rawlsian scheme are not the conceptions of the good but something that lies behind such conceptions viz. people's freedom to decide upon their own conceptions of the good, to act upon, and to change those decisions. Thus Rawls builds up the substantive moral claim that, when thinking about justice, what matters is people's freedom to make their own choices and to change their mind, not whatever they choose.

The "original position" conceived by Rawls is Kantian in essence. In the "original position" people are assumed to be noumenal selves in Kantian sense. This means that people are free, moral, equal, rational beings and hence autonomous. Such autonomous personalities do not have particular ends but they desire certain primary social goods, which are derived from their rationality and flow from their noumenal selves.

The idea of "original position" is to set up a *fair* procedure so that any principles agreed upon would be *just*. The purpose is to nullify the effects of specific contingencies which put humans at odds and tempt them to exploit social and natural circumstances to their own advantages. Hence the assumption that parties to the "social contract" in the "original position" are situated in a "veil of ignorance".

1.5 Rawlsian Justice

Rawls's general conception of "justice as fairness" consists of one central idea : "All social values — liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the bases of self-respect — are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage" (Rawls 1971 : Chapter II, section 11).

The general conception, Rawls admits, is extremely vague and requires interpretation. It is not yet a full theory of justice, because the various primary social goods being distributed according to that principle may conflict among themselves. For example, income increase for some may be accompanied by loss of liberty for others; or unequal income may benefit everyone but may create inequality of opportunity, thereby disadvantaging those with less 'income.

Rawls suggests a solution of this problem by enunciating two principles of justice and two priority rules. He argues that the conception of "justice as fairness," that is, finally accepted by

the contracting parties (i.e., people in the initial situation) consists of two principles and two priority rules.

Rawls's *First Principle* is about equal basic liberty for all. To quote him : "Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others" (Rawls 1971: Chapter II, section 11). The First Principle is the liberal core of Rawls theory. It implies that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with similar liberty for others. The basic liberties of citizens, according to Rawls, include political theory like right to vote and eligibility for public office, together with freedom of speech and assembly, liberty of conscience, freedom of thought right to personal property, freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure (that is, rule of law). Rawls maintains that justice should be understood in the light of an individual's liberty, and the individual's liberty should be understood in the light of general or common good. On this point, there seems to be a touch of Rousseauist concept of common good combined with Kantian concept of autonomy of the individual.

The *Second Principle* is about fair equality of opportunity for all³ (Rawls 1971 : Chapter II, section 11). This principle has two parts. First : the "difference principle" —"Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantages and, in particular, to the advantage of the least well off persons."

This principle is called 'maximin' principle, that is, maximum benefit to the minimum advantaged. Rawls has not used the term in the mathematician's sense of the *maximum minimorum*. He uses the term "maximin" as a shortened way to describe the "difference principle". He argues that principles of justice require the establishment of a social minimum. The "maximin rule" is single strategy that people in the initial situation would pursue in selecting one of the many possible institutional designs for society. It is introduced as a heuristic device to clarify the structure of the choice problem in the "original position". The "maximin" rule means maximisation (or, at least, increase) of the incomes and advantages of the least advantaged group. As a strategy, it would always yield justice because it would always be just to impose any loss, however big, upon a better-off group in order to bring a gain, however small, to the least advantaged group. These two principles of justice are intended to serve as guidelines for how basic institutions are to realise the values of liberty and equality. In realising these principles, it is necessary to conceive society, as Rawls does, "as a fair system of cooperation".

Second : social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are attached to positions and offices open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity. That is, people with similar abilities and skills should have similar life chances... irrespective of the income class to which they are born. Thus Rawlsian liberalism goes far beyond the classical liberal ideal of careers open to talents. The Second Principle constitutes the socialist core of Rawls's theory.

These two principles are accompanied by two priority rules. The first Priority Rule asserts priority of liberty over equality of opportunity. Accordingly, the first Principle, according to Rawls, has lexical priority over the Second Principle (The correct term is 'lexicographical' but it is too cumbersome, hence Rawls uses the term 'lexical'). That is to say, liberty can be restricted

only for the sake of liberty, and equal enjoyment of liberty must be pushed prior to the distribution of social and economic resources. Rawls rejects equalisation at the expense of the basic liberties of any citizen.

The Second Priority Rule asserts priority of fair equality of opportunity over efficient distribution for realizing the “maximin” principle. Accordingly, the principle of fair equality of opportunity would have lexical priority over the principle of efficient distribution and welfare and that of maximizing the sum of advantages.

The priority problem is not that of how to cope with the complexity of already given moral facts which cannot be altered. Instead, it is the problem of formulating reasonable and generally acceptable proposals for bringing about the desired agreement in judgements. In general, a lexical order cannot be strictly correct, but it may be an illuminating approximation under certain special, though significant, conditions. It may indicate the larger structure of conceptions of justice.

Rawls, as we find him in *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1971), had to confront a situation which saw the culmination of various movements of the United States, for example, Civil Rights movement, Black liberation movement, movement for equal rights for the minorities, Great Society programme for alleviation of poverty, anti-Vietnam war movement, all of which raised questions about individual and minority rights, just and unjust wars, issues of social justice in policy formulation and execution. Rawls in his theory of justice seeks to unite the libertarian ideal of liberalism with the economic egalitarianism into a single theoretical structure. In the process he has brought back liberalism into the centre of political debates and discussions. He seeks to redefine the relationship between liberty, equality and fraternity. He rejects meritocracy and advocates *fair* equality of opportunity in order to correct morally arbitrary inequalities in society. He is uncompromising on the primacy of liberty but wants that society endeavours to equalize economic wealth, social status and political power.

1.6 Constitutional Form

Rawls admits that some sort of basic structure of framework is needed to simplify the application of the two principles of justice. The main institutions of the basic structure are those of a constitutional democracy. The principles of justice define a workable political conception.

Rawls sets out a four-stage sequence that clarifies how the principles for institutions are to be applied. First, a constitutional convention is to be held; second, this convention is to choose the effective and just constitution; third, at the legislative stage the provisions of the constitution are to be translated into laws; and at the fourth stage, laws and rules are to be applied to particular cases. He insists that at this fourth stage everyone should have a complete access to all the facts and information. It seems that Rawls prefers the ‘welfare state’ which can be defined simply as one in which the Government undertakes the responsibility for providing the essential social services, free or at subsidized rates, to all or, at least, to lower-income groups.

Rawls did not straightway conceptualise any theory of the state. However, his theory of justice subscribes to a particular kind of liberal democratic state with certain egalitarian principles. According to Rawls, the function of the state is not only to maintain law and order but also to

achieve distributive justice by putting the highest social value on the requirements of the disadvantaged. His notion of the state is that of a voluntary organization of rational individuals established for achieving general social welfare. He seeks to correlate the tradition of Lockean (personal liberties) and Rousseauist (common good) democratic thought, taking the Kantian idea of individual autonomy as the guiding thread. Since he wants his state to help the disadvantaged section of society, his political theory can be called the theory of liberal democratic socialism, putting emphasis on structuring of basic liberties which cannot be bargained with social-economic gains. His political theory is informed by the ethics of humanism and the concept of Man as moral personality who needs freedom as much as material goods.

Rawls's liberalism is not a patched-up compromise between conservatism and socialism : it is a distinctive creed with solid moral foundation. His liberal democratic socialist state is not directed towards achieving an equitable social policy. Rawls, like Max Weber, accepts social stratification and hierarchy as functionally necessary and inevitable. But Rawls insists on the state and society to secure "the most extensive system" of equal basic liberty for all. He does not believe in steam-rolled equality and wants to protect the creative individuality through *fair* equality of opportunity. His concept of "justice as fairness" is basically a concept of political culture and not a metaphysical one. Hence one of the most striking characteristics of Rawlsian liberalism is that the 'right' of the individual is prior to the aggregate social 'good'.

Rawls clarifies that his conception of "justice as fairness" is a *political* conception of justice for a constitutional democracy. This conception avoids certain philosophical and metaphysical claims. He maintains that in a constitutional democracy the public conception of justice should be, as far as possible, independent of controversial philosophical and religious doctrines; hence the public conception of justice is to be political, not metaphysical (Rawls 1985). He holds the view that the justification of a conception of justice is a *practical* social task rather than an epistemological or metaphysical problem. That is, this conception of justice can serve "as a basis of informed and willing political agreement between citizens viewed as free and equal persons" (Rawls 1985). Rawls avoids a metaphysical conception of "justice as fairness", because he thinks that "philosophy as the search for truth about an independent metaphysical and moral order cannot...provide a workable and shared basis for a political conception of justice in a democratic society" (Rawls 1985). He insists that, to secure agreement disputed moral and religious questions are to be avoided not because they are unimportant but because there is no way to resolve them politically, and the only alternative to a principle of toleration is the autocratic use of state power.

1.7 Rawls's Liberalism

Since the publication of his *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, Rawls was criticized by a variety of liberal thinkers. One general area of agreement among liberals is that the government should be committed to tolerating the views and cultures of its people and, in general, committed to staying out of decisions by individuals regarding the best way to lead their lives. But they have differed, sometimes dramatically, in how they defend this commitment to toleration and limited role of the

government. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s Rawls wrote a few articles to meet the points of his liberal critics, thereby restating his position wherever needed.

In his second important book *Political Liberalism* (Rawls 1993) Rawls accepted that in any free society, reasonable and fair-minded people are inevitably going to have different and conflicting religious and moral views. This poses a problem, since ideally a liberal constitutional democracy requires that the laws be justifiable to everyone if people are to be free and accorded due respect. This is not possible unless citizens do not share a common moral or religious view. Rawls no longer takes issue directly with utilitarianism or other moral conceptions instead he tries to show how democratic citizens with diverse moral and religious views can all affirm the same “freestanding” liberal conception of justice on the basis of “public reason”. He defends a form of political liberalism which is so thoroughly committed to toleration that lives chews any kind of metaphysical, moral or religious foundation for basic liberal principles.

Rawls recognizes the great importance of autonomy and of the moral doctrines of Kant, J.S.Mill, Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, but he does not accept liberalism as a comprehensive moral doctrine because he wants to specify the value of full autonomy by a *political* conception of justice and not by a comprehensive moral doctrine. Rather he prefers to present his account of “justice as fairness” as a conception of political justice rooted in “the public culture of a constitutional democracy”. The Rawlsian conception of justice as fairness seeks to identify the kernel of an “overlapping consensus”, that is, the shared intuitive ideas sufficient to underwrite a just constitutional regime. Rawls firmly believes that the priority of the right over the good is characteristic of liberalism as a political doctrine, and this belief is essential to any conception of justice reasonable for a democratic state.

Rawls accepts that liberty and equality are the two ruling concepts in a liberal political regime. Nonetheless, in his *Political Liberalism* (1993) he affirms them merely as “political” values and avoids endorsing them as part of some kind of metaphysical, moral or religious theory or “comprehensive” view. Liberty and equality are supposed to be “freestanding” values that are implicit in the political culture of the liberal society.

Most important is Rawls’s view that a liberal society’s commitment to these values should not depend on the society’s belief in the truth of moral or religious arguments. These values are supported by what Rawls terms “public reason” in a liberal society. This reason does not disclose universal moral truth or is not the vehicle to get access to moral values animating the liberal society. Instead, “public reason” is something to all members of the society, because it is constructed out of commonly accepted values.

“Public reason” involves appeal to reasons that are used by all citizens in their political arguments and that are concerned with the good of the public. The implication of Rawls’s contention is that such “public reason”s are commonly accepted because no matter how they differ, all reasonable members of the liberal state accept that these reasons count in their society. To put it in Rawlsian terms, the members of the state have constructed “an overlapping consensus” on them. “Public reason”s are supposed to be at the intersection of their differing comprehensive views.

Rawls says that reasons to which people appeal in a liberal society come from “a conception

of justice that may be shared by citizens as a basis of a reasoned, informed and willing political agreement.” He argues that his own two principles of Justice turn out to be the conception that is shared, at least in the United States, by all reasonable people. In any case, Rawls insists that such a conception, once constructed, expresses their shared and public political reason.

In Rawls’s view, liberals are supposed to work together as reasonable people to develop an overlapping consensus. This democratic consensus yields plural results and look for political values and policies that all reasonable people, despite their different starting points and moral views, can accept. Moreover, even though “public reason” is constructed out of the beliefs of citizens, it is supposed to be vigorously non-partisan. Rawls admits :

To attain such a shared reason, the conception of justice should be, as far as possible, independent of the opposing and conflicting philosophical and religious doctrines that citizens affirm. In formulating such a conception, political liberalism applies the principle of toleration to philosophy itself. The religious doctrines have gradually given way to principles of constitutional government that all citizens, whatever their religious view, can endorse (Rawls 1993).

Such non-partisanship makes a liberal state governed by this “public reason” tolerant and respectful of the competing moral views of all its citizens. Rawls’s liberal state attempts to bind together people of disparate views via shared political conceptions and public reasoning.

It is just a matter of interest to note that Rawls published his third book *The Law of Peoples* in 1999, where he developed an account of international justice. Just and decent nations, he argues, have a right to intervene to protect the persecuted peoples of “outlaw states”. Moreover, he maintains that all nations have a duty to assist impoverished nations so that they may become self-sufficient. Rawls also condemned the Allied bombing of German cities and American bombing of Japanese cities during the Second World War and, especially, the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as these attacks amounted to violations of human rights of civilians.

In 1999 Rawls’s *Collected Papers* were published. His lectures at Harvard on Kant, Leibnitz, Hume and Hegel, and those on his own work, were issued as *Justice As Fairness : A Restatement* in 2001.

1.8 Liberal and non-Liberal Critiques

What is intended in this section is to indicate briefly the main critiques, both liberal and non-liberal, of Rawls’s theory of justice.

Rawls’s concept of “original position”, constituting a strategic part of his theory of justice, has been the subject of enormous discussion. While many have supported Rawls’s position, many others have criticized his arguments as well as conclusions. Some critics attack his arguments, paying less attention to his conception of justice, whereas some others simply attack his conclusions. There are some logical inconsistencies in Rawls’s argument. First, there is the issue whether Rawls’s theory of justice is really ‘contractarian’ at all. It seems reasonable to argue that it is the idea of “veil of ignorance”, and not the prospect of having to agree with any other person in the original position, that leads to the choice of the Two Principles of Rawlsian

theory of justice. Since every person in the original position, insofar as he is subject to the "veil of ignorance", is defined in exactly the same way, Rawls has no basis upon which to ground any kind of bargaining among these identically defined parties. The reason of the Two Principles being elected by each person in the original position seems to have nothing to do with such a contract. If the choice of the Two Principles is not a function of any contract in Rawls's hypothetical contract situation, Rawls's argument cannot be taken as contractarian (Hampton 1998 : 141-143).

Secondly Rawls advances some arguments to defend his "difference principle" or the "maximin" rule, but all of them are problematic. Rawls argues that the "maximin" rule is appropriate in the "original position" because- each person cares very little for what he might gain above the minimum. This argument contradicts Rawls's own earlier stipulation that in the bargaining process each person wants as many and as much primary social goods as possible. If a person is ignorant of his status and needs, it is not logically possible for him to bargain for as much primary social goods like liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and bases of self-respect (Hampton 1998 : 141-143).

Thirdly, some critics point out that Rawls's "original position" argument for the 'Two Principles' is fatally flawed. Rawls has used the assumption of the "veil of ignorance" in order to kill off the possibility of having persons with genuinely different interests and nature, but this same assumption also kills off the possibility of having a 'real' contract argument providing a proper defence of his 'Two Principles' (Hampton 1998 : 141-143).

So far as Rawls's conclusions are concerned, a plethora of criticisms of his theory of redistribution (justice) and of the nature of his liberal state have followed. These criticisms have been made by both the right-wing and the left-wing camps of contemporary liberalism.

Robert Nozick, a conservative liberal attracted to Lockean ideas criticizes Rawls precisely because the Rawlsian conception of justice in his view, fails to protect individuals as ends. Individuals need liberty to determine what they should do with what belongs to them. Nozick argues that individuals and their talents must not be made for and supposed to serve, collective purposes. He prefers minimal state and creative individual, and is opposed to parentalism of the state (Nozick 1974).

Ronald Dworkin, a conservative egalitarian, advocates away to distribute resources whereby everyone will not have exactly the same amount, yet each person would be left content with his lot and be able to take responsibility for satisfying his tastes and securing his welfare. He advocates a thought experiment similar to a contractarian approach to defining justice (Dworkin 1978, 2000).

Bhabatosh Dutta, an economist of leftist persuasion, points out that the Rawlsian "maximin" (maximization of the minimum) argument can be used by some to justify the enrichment of the rich so that they may spend something for the poorest. But raising the minimum does not necessarily mean a reduction of inequality. Rawls has not considered the possibility of income distribution in such a way that after redistribution of incomes and advantages, the gap between the rich and the disadvantaged may be reduced yet both sections may gain simultaneously. A variant of the Rawlsian position is the 'filtration theory which has been empirically disproved practically everywhere (Datta 1989).

Amartya Sen, the welfare economist with egalitarian slant has argued the equalizing 'welfare' will be impossible or extraordinarily expensive and difficult if there are some people in the society who suffer from natural disadvantages like ill health and diseases, mood disorders and disabilities negatively affecting their well-being, and from social disadvantages like illiteracy, environmental degradation, and gender bias (Sen 1992).

A major critique of Rawlsian position has been made by the communitarian liberals like Charles Taylor, Alasdair McIntyre, Michael Walzer, Michael Sandel, and others. They have argued against different targets, some specifically criticizing Rawls and others being concerned with the contemporary moral culture of the liberals in general. The communitarian debate has covered a range of complex philosophical issues, for example, conception of the self (person), possibility or desirability of state neutrality vis-a-vis the individual, universal or culture specific applicability of the principles of justice. The thrust of the communitarian attack on the Rawlsian position is that Rawls's view of "unencumbered self" does not correspond with self-perception of humans; it ignores the embeddedness of the self in communitarian practices in particular time, place and culture. Sandel asserts that a sense of deep communality is created through "shared self-understanding and affection", which is constitutive of a just society. Rawls has been charged for having completely missed this point.

The communitarians have questioned Rawls's unrelenting emphasis on the "empty" individual and his ignoring the "community" which ought to be the locus of concern for distributive justice. They argue that the community shapes the individual's sense of identity, talents and pursuits in life and hence the appropriate locus of concern for a political society must be what is good for the community, not what any particular individual should get (McIntyre 1981; Sandel 1982; Walzer 1983; Taylor 1990).

Rawls's theory of justice has also been attacked by many feminists who consider liberalism as a political approach totally inadequate to the needs and aims of women and, in some way, profoundly subversive of their aims. Some feminists believe that social or political systems of domination, such as that of males over females, distort society so severely that none of the theories of justice would prove acceptable unless these systems of oppression are overturned (Jagger 1983; Benhabib and Cornell 1987; Tong 1989; Young 1990). However, it needs to be noted that Rawls's theory of justice might be able to address at least some feminist concerns.

Marxists critics. Rawls and, for that matter, any theory of justice. They do not emphasize justice and, indeed, object to the idea that communism is based on a principle of justice. Marx was averse not only to the idea of justice but also to the concept of moral equality underlying it. Marxists see critical moral philosophy of the Rawlsian kind as totally irrelevant to the ideological framework of historical materialism and class struggle (Buchanan 1982).

In fact, Marxism has no theory of justice, because it believes in a law of social development and considers class struggle as the motif force of history. Marxism as well as Marxism-Leninism advocates complete socialization of the means of production and the channels of distribution. They do not bother about the kind of arguments indulged in by Rawls in order to build a "just" society. Marxists like C.B. Macpherson viewed the Rawlsian system as a defence of private capitalist enterprise. Marxists generally charge that Rawls's 'difference principle' is merely another version of the open market-oriented trickle-down effect.

1.9 Assessment

Before the publication of Rawls's *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls 1971), academic political philosophy was either the history of political thought or quasi-technical linguistic analysis of the meaning of political concepts. Since Rawls, there has been *systematic* and *substantive* argument about what society we live in ought actually to be like. His theory of justice invokes and incorporates ideas like liberty, equality and community, which are all interrelated among themselves and with the quest for building a "just" society.

Philosophically Rawls's theory espouses and defends a case for a constitutional and democratic order with a social market economy that would be humane and compassionate. It advances a case for greater equality without sacrificing individual liberty. It revives the optimism of constant and uninterrupted growth, a faith of the early liberals. It hopes to ensure that its beneficial effects would not merely trickle down to the worse-off sections of the society but would continually and procedurally elevate them. It is a liberal theory with a humane face.

The publication of a *A Theory of Justice* provides, for the first time in the twentieth century, a direct link between a fairly abstract, philosophical theory and particular policy recommendations in both the areas of right and distribution. Rawls unites the libertarian ideal of liberalism with economic egalitarianism of democratic socialism into a single theoretical frame, and thereby brings back liberalism into the centre of political debates and discussions. He is seen as an integral part of a new movement [in the United States] called New . Egalitarianism.

Rawls's theory dominates the field of liberal political philosophy, not in the sense of commanding agreement but in the sense that later liberal neorists have defined themselves in opposition to Rawls. Very few people agree with all of what Rawls says. But his theory of "justice as fairness" established the terrian upon which subsequent theorists and policy-makers have fought with one another. The libertarian and communitarian theorists, his toughest critics, have formulated their position in terms that make explicit reference to Rawlsian arguments. In man ways Rawls simply did define the agenda and still continues to do so. Even Rawls's most severe critics have acknowledged their debt to him. Right-wing libertarians like Nozick claim that political philosophers now must either work within Rawls's theory or explain why they cannot. Nozick has hailed *A Theory of Justice* as "a powerful, deep, subtle, wide-ranging, systematic work in political and moral philosophy which has not seen its like since the writings of John Stuart Mill" and considers Rawlsian thought "a fountain of illuminating ideas". Leftists admit that Rawls is profoundly wrong but almost perfectly relevant. Rawls successfully compels attention to the point that theories of socialism without a critical moral philosophy are as undersirable as they are impossible.

Social and moral philosophers have since been following Rawls's methodological suggestion of searching for reflective equilibrium by considering theoretical alternatives to one's own considered judgements. Even in moving away from Rawls, contemporary scholars are fully

engaged with him. Amartya Sen has admitted his greatest intellectual debt to Rawls. When Sen goes in a quite different direction in focusing more on the *extents* of freedom rather than on the *means* of freedom, that is Rawls's primary goods, he has done so on an explicit critique of Rawls. This is the enduring significance of Rawls's theoretical contribution.

From the mid-1980s Rawls began using the political and pragmatic concept of "overlapping consensus" which has found widespread acceptance. Rawls in the 1990s repositioned liberalism on one of its oldest and most controversial concerns, viz. peaceful coexistence. To some extent, this position taken by Rawls has led him to tie up his conception of justice more to order than to autonomy or individuality. Rawlsian "overlapping consensus" today serves a very practical purpose in the context of identity politics and the contemporary dichotomy of secularism versus religious revivalism. In this sense, Rawls has become quite relevant to the modernizing and turbulent societies like India. To Rawls, it is reasonable to disagree about comprehensive doctrines like Catholicism, Islam, utilitarianism and so on. That is partly why it matters that people be free to choose which of them to pursue. But it is not reasonable to disagree about the political values of autonomy, freedom and equality. Someone who denies these political values is, indeed, outside the overlapping consensus. The consensus that counts is the consensus of reasonable comprehensive doctrines. But the tragedy of the Rawlsian legacy is that his famous conceptualisation of the "difference principle" having profound implications for social welfare policies has been virtually ignored in the developing countries like India since the 1990s thanks to the overpowering influence of neo-liberalism and economic globalisation.

However, the impact of Rawls's theorisation is distinctly felt. He is recognized as the most important English-speaking philosopher of the twentieth century. Through a mixture of bold experiment in metaphysical thinking, conceptual rigour, historical imagination and a sense of pragmatism, Rawls has, more or less, invented analytic political thought. In the later years of his life Rawls was increasingly interested in the history of the western world and American history. He became interested in Abraham Lincoln, whom he especially admired as a great statesman who refused to compromise with evil. These interests are evident in his later works on justice between nations.

1.10 Exercise

Short Questions

1. Define the terms 'social contract'.
2. What do you understand by the concept "Justice as fairness" as propounded by John Rawls.
3. Discuss John Rawls's 'maximin' principle.
4. What do you understand by Rawls idea of primary goods?
5. Write a short note on 'veil of ignorance'.

Long Questions :

1. Discuss John Rawls's two principles of justice.
2. Why John Rawls admitted that some sort of a basic structure of framework is needed to simplify the application of the two principles of justice?
3. Critically discuss Rawls's theory of justice.

1.11 Selected Reading

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Unit IV □ Communitarianism

- 1.1 □ Introduction
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- 1.8 □ Evaluation
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1.1 Introduction

Those who are familiar with Robert Putnam's thought-provoking works on democracy (Putnam 1993; 1994; 1995 and 1997) know that 'community' is a running theme in his theory of democracy'. The concept of 'social capital' that forms the central theoretical tool in his works is also taken to be essentially a community resource: mutual trust, networks, obligation, cooperation, fellow-feeling and so on. Social capital is social trust which grows out of our social connections, and the attendant norms and obligations. 'The social capital theory', argues Putnam, 'presumes that, generally speaking, the more we connect with other people, the more we trust them, and vice versa' (Putnam 1995: 665). Contrary to Francis Fukuyama's (Fukuyama 1991) arrogant but hollow assertion about the so-called triumph of liberal democracy after the demise of socialist systems, Putnam made a fundamentally different reading of the health of America's democracy:

By almost every measure, Americans' direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply over the last generation, despite the fact that average levels of education—the best individual-level predictor of political participation—have risen sharply throughout this period. Every year, over the last decade or two, millions more have withdrawn from the affairs of their communities (Putnam 1995).

Putnam's concern is thus modest : retrieving the conditions that can make democracy work in conditions of the declining health of democracy in the west, and more particularly in America.

Philosophically though rooted in civic republicanism², Putnam's social capital theory nonetheless has sought to emphasize the community resource as a possible critical factor for making democracy work. In a later work (Putnam 1997: 31), he has re-emphasized the theme of social capital :

For a variety of reasons, life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital. In the first place, networks of civic engagement foster norms of generalized reciprocity and encourage the emergence of social trust. Such networks facilitate coordination and communication, amplify reputations, and thus allow dilemmas of collective action to be resolved.

If democracy worked better in Italy's north and central, so argues Putnam, it was due to the civic traditions in the areas built a long time ago since the 11th century A.D. through to the Renaissance/ evidenced by manifold communal activities marked by mutual trust, cooperation, obligation and fellow-feeling. In Putnam's conceptual framework, community forms a basis of civic-ness, community resources supplying the lifeline to civic-ness —so essential to effective democracy.

The reason why this article begins with the above preface is not to discuss American democracy, but to indicate the brewing crisis in liberal democracy in the West as such.

More specifically, the above preface is meant to show how community, its strength and resources, is banked on for retrieving democracy in the west. This communitarian tilt in democracy re-thinking, as above, provides an important indication of the critique of right-centric and individualist liberalism, which has supposedly failed to provide the ideological sustenance to falling democracy in the West.

The basic objective in this article is to concentrate on aspects of communitarianism as it developed within liberalism and as a challenge against it.

1.2 Crisis in Liberal Society and the Rise of Communitarianism

Communitarianism emerged in the 1980s within liberalism (Smith 2002)³ as a challenge against certain methodological and substantive assumptions associated with individualist, right-centric liberalism, especially of neo-Kantian variety. T.H. Green, the famous British liberal thinker, is thought to be an exemplar of liberal communitarian direction, but then, he is less adequately explored in the debate. (Skorupski 2002: 446). According to Bell (Bell 1993: 1-2), the debate between the liberals and their communitarian critics was central to Anglo-American political theory in the 1980s. In the last two decades, the literatures on communitarianism, particularly on the acrimonious debate between the communitarians and the liberals have grown. (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992; Mulhall and Swift 1992; Bell 1993; Daly 1994; Ramussen 2000; Sterba 2002; Smith 2002, Vol 4) The debate has already crossed the geographical boundaries of its origin, and inspired new thinking relating to identity, right, sovereignty and legitimacy among scholars in the non-western world (Bhargava et al 1999). Communitarian concerns also lie at the heart of multiculturalism, which is another challenge to liberalism (Bhargava et al 1999).

The concept of community is as old as humanity itself, and reflected upon, adored and also criticized for centuries by philosophers and sociologists alike. Markate Daly (Daly 1994) has discussed at length the intellectual roots of the concept of community in western social and political thought. What defines a community itself has been subject to differing opinions. Markate Daly has pointed out that sociologists have so far discovered as many as 94 meanings of the term (Daly 1994: 15). There is perhaps little to add to this intellectual output. What concerns us here is now the term figured in political theorizing in the communitarian mode since the 1980s, and its implications for democracy.

Communitarianism was an intellectual response to the growing crisis in liberal societies of the West. The crises afflicting the western liberal societies are seen as the offshoots of liberalism, to be exact, excessive individualism, which in combination with other factors, has bred large-scale social alienation and other related ill-effects. Putnam has sensed the crisis in the case of America as follows : "A world in which we distrust one another is a world in which social collaboration is a bad gamble, a world in which democracy itself is less safe." (Putnam 1997: 54). Daniel Bell, himself a communitarian, identified certain indicators of the social crisis in liberal societies when he said that the communitarians are "worried by unshackled greed, rootlessness, alienation from the political process, rises in the rates of divorce and all the other phenomena related to a centring on the self and away from communities in contemporary western societies" (Bell 1993:1). The 14 page document entitled "The Responsive Communitarian Platform: Rights and Responsibilities" (1991) launched by a group of communitarians as part of their movement summed up the essentials of what the communitarians aim at and why:

American men, women and children are members of many communities-families; neighbourhoods; innumerable social, religious, ethnic, workplace, and professional associations; and the body politic itself. Neither human existence nor individual liberty can be sustained for long outside the interdependent and overlapping communities to which we all belong. Nor can any community long survive unless its members dedicate some of their attention, energy, and resources to shared projects. The elusive pursuit of private interest erodes the network of social environment, on which we all depend, and is destructive to our shared experiment in democratic self-government. For these reasons, we hold that the rights of individuals cannot long be preserved without a communitarian perspective. A communitarian perspective recognizes both individual human dignity and the social dimension of human existence (Bell 1993:1).⁴

To begin with, there was a moral issue involved in the communitarian challenge. What was centrally aimed at was to find a 'moral basis' for action to ameliorate the problems, a basis, which Bell thinks, was absent in the dominant liberal individualist discourse of the day. (Bell 1993:1) As the above Manifesto shows, communities still bind the Americans, but the bond is fragile because the communities are fragile. Therefore, the communitarians aim to nurture the fragile communities so that they are prevented from being further eroded. In Bell's estimate, the central objective in communitarianism is to "derive certain political measures meant to stem the erosion of communal life and nurture the fragile communities" (Bell 1993: 1).

However, the above communitarian Manifesto raises, as it were, a theoretical dilemma when it seeks to preserve the rights of individuals within a communitarian perspective. What would

be the ontological significance of that proposition? How is one to reconcile between the two from a methodological point of view? Given that the term community suggests a collectivity, how does it then recognize individual human dignity?

1.3 Critique of John Rawls's Left Neo-Kantian Liberalism

No discussion of communitarianism is possible without a prior comment on the theoretical framework established by John Rawls in his celebrated book *A Theory of Justice* (1971). Rawls's book brought about a revolution in western liberal political philosophy and revived the latter from morbidity and slumber. Most contemporary liberals are thought to have been working within the theoretical frame of Rawls (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992; Bell 1993). Rawls's distinctiveness consisted in his invocation of distributive justice and the welfare state within the context of the rights of the individuals conceived in a modified social contract theory and Kantian liberalism.

Achieved on the basis of his answer to two groups of critics, namely, the utilitarians and the political left in the 1960s against liberal theory (Gutmann 1992: 120-137; Bell 1993: 2-3), he first of all defended liberal freedoms, which he believes, cannot be overridden by the good of society as a whole. Basing on the capacity (and responsibility one has to exercise one's Kantian moral powers of shaping, pursuing and revising one's life-plans, and to respect the exercise of the same powers of self-determination on the part of other persons. Everybody, Rawls argues, has a 'highest-order interest' in making use of one's powers of self-determination which, again can only be exercised in the context to available civil and political freedoms. Second, the tenth of left criticisms was the liberalism had nothing to say about the social and economic conditions that allowed for substantive realization of freedoms, and hence liberalism as an ideology served the interests of the propertied classes. To this charge, Rawls offered the following rebuttal: No one deserves his or her natural assets. Liberal equality requires at least partial compensation for unequal talents and abilities. Inequalities cannot be justified by an appeal to unequal endowments and unjust special advantages must be rejected, since under social circumstances do not entitle one to extra rewards and resources (Bell 1993: 3-4).

Arguing along that line is to push the frontier of liberal equality farther beyond its traditional preoccupation with civil and political rights. The government intervention to ensure a just distribution of material resources is its logical political corollary. Rawlsian justice thus is inseparable from a state with redistributive functions.

1.4 Communitarian Critique of Rawls

Not all communitarian critics —Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer, being the leading figures —identify themselves with the 'communitarian movement', as Daniel Bell et al have done. There are, indeed, variations in the ways their communitarian arguments are advanced. Ramaswamy (Ramaswamy 2003: 43-45) has distinguished between three communitarian positions : liberal, conservative and left. But the communitarians share certain common grounds in their criticisms of Rawls's liberalism. What unites them is the

stand that liberalism does not sufficiently take into account the importance of community for personal liberty, moral and political thinking, and judgements about our well-being in the contemporary world.

Daniel Bell has identified three areas of communitarians' critique of Rawls' liberalism:

(1) Self

Liberalism, based as it is on an overly individualist conception of the self, is intended for individuals who rationally choose their way of life. The underlying assumption is that the individuals have a 'highest-order interest', after Rawls, in exercising their choices. Against this view, Michael Sandel argues that we do not choose all our social attachments i.e., we do not choose to love our mother and father, to care about our neighbourhood and so on. In the larger context, our sense of being members of this family, of nation, or people etc are not chosen by us as we choose our life-partner (Sandel 1992: 12-29).

(2) Universalism

According to the communitarians, the liberals are less sensitive to the importance of community or social context. For the sake of neutrality, and universality, so demands liberalism, we abstract ourselves from all the particularities of social relationship that have given us our sense of responsibilities and interests. Rawls's concept of justice is an application of this principle. But the question remains as to why 'real-life individuals living in specific times and places find anything plausible about a political morality conceived for idealized free and equal persons' (Bell 1993: 6). In his *Spheres of Justice* (Walzer 1983) Michael Walzer argues that instead of formulating the principles from an objective and universal viewpoint, we need to be rooted in our traditions so that we can interpret to our fellow citizens the world of meanings and we share. It is further argued that our lived experiences of the society motivate our ideas and values, so the lesson for the philosophers is to ground their theories "in historically contingent social norms and intuitions rather than search for eternal principles of justice" (Bell 1993: 6).

(3) Atomism

Liberal atomism is criticized by the communitarians. The basis of their criticisms is the socially detrimental effects of a callous individualism that liberal atomism has encouraged. The atomistic tendencies of modern liberal societies in the West have produced negative and psychological effects ignoring the community and social obligations. The political aspect of this criticism consists in the criticism of "too much governmental intervention, legitimizing policies that have undermined and continue to undermine our communal attachments," so argues Bell (Bell 1993: 7). The Rawlsians would argue that the state should intervene to protect civil and political liberties and to ensure a fair distribution of economic goods. Charles Taylor objects to that. Worried about the costs of state intervention for justice (fair distribution of goods) in such goods as community spirit, friendship, or traditional identity), he doubts the legitimacy of resorting to such action. The ill-effects of the Swedish (all-embracing) welfare state is cited by Bell as an example in support of Taylor. The overenthusiasm for the welfare state has eroded their economic competitiveness as well as family and social ties outside the umbrella of the all-embracing state

(Bill 1993: 8).

That is not to argue against any kind of state intervention on account of the liberal principle of state neutrality. The communitarians believe that the legitimate sphere of governmental action, most importantly those aiming at developing or restoring some sense of community, should not be barred. But at the same time we must remain on guard that the state does not come forward to telling us what constitutes a good life. The implication of this negative sanction against state action is to foreclose, any possibility of state arbitrariness to be justified in the name of community.

1.5 Communitarianism vs. Individualism: Methodo-logical and Normative Issues

Communitarianism is a post-liberal political philosophy, because it could only have developed within a liberal tradition, which, paradoxically, had allowed community values to decline. In this sense, it is a corrective on the excess of individualist liberalism. According to Markate Daly, “Communitarianism was proposed as just such a corrective; its purpose is to bring the welfare of communities into the centre of political discourse by establishing in the public domain the values of communal associations” (Daly 1994: xiii). Daly does not find the debate between communitarianism and liberalism involving a conflict between the values of liberty and of community (Daly 1994; xiv). What seems to be at issue, according to him, is the stress laid on either liberty or community as the primary value is a society, and all the theoretical and social consequences that follow from it. (Daly 1994: xiv). This way of putting things entails a consideration of the context, which demands such a stress. A certain set of circumstances, historically speaking, justified stressing the ideal of personal liberty. The question is whether the circumstances are so different today that we need to stress a different ideal, of community.

The discussion that follows seeks to highlight the methodological and normative issues involved in the debate between communitarianism and individualism.

(1) *Me thodological*

According to the communitarians, the premises of individualism that the rational individual who chooses freely are wrong or false, and that the only way to understand individual human behaviour is to refer to individuals in their social, cultural and historical contexts (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992: 2-11). this suggests that in studying individuals we must first look at communities and communal relationships.

The starting point of both communitarianism and individualism is the image of the individual. Communitarians claim that social attachments determine the self and thus the individuals are constrained by the community of which they are a part. This goes to serve that the individualist image of the self is ontologically false. Two issues follow from this. First that community is not necessarily voluntary is often overlooked. Second, social attachments are not necessarily chosen (Sandel 1992).⁵ MacIntyre has made a similar and cogent argument in support of the above. He says that one understands one’s life by looking at one’s actions within a story, a ‘narrative’.

Community inevitably comes into the picture because one's narrative converges with the narratives of other people, who become part of one's narrative. Charles Taylor reaches the same conclusion by a different route. He argues that a common culture is the precondition of moral autonomy — the capacity to form independent moral convictions. A common language, for example, has implications for common culture.

Communitarianism thus does not reject the individual but provides a new image of him/her. As Avineri and de-Shalit have argued: "*The communitarian community is more than a mere association; it is a unity in which the individuals are members. This membership is neither artificial nor instrumental, but rather has its own intrinsic value*" (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992: 4).

(2) Normative

Communitarians claim that the premises of individualism gives rise to morally unsatisfactory consequences. Individualism fails to answer the question as to how to achieve a genuine community, why should we neglect some ideals of good life and so on. For the communitarians, the community is good that people should seek for many reasons, and nobody should dismiss such a claim. The normative aspects of the communitarian critique of individualism can be discussed as follows.

First, we need to attach intrinsic (non-instrumental) value to the community in order to justify our special obligations to our communities-families, nations and so on. These obligations are not necessarily voluntary, but then people take them for granted. Second, the community describes a desired level of human relationships involving a set of common values, norms and goals. Each member considers them his or her own values, goals and norms. From this follows the communitarian argument : it is morally good that its communal ties constitute the self (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992: 7). The reason why this is so is that personal autonomy is better achieved within the community, or to put it differently, the community gives our lives their moral meanings (Taylor 1992).⁶ Third, the community is seen as a need. Individualists like Gauthier seek to explain social behaviour as a process of co-operation in which people seek mutual advantage. Against this Walzer advances the following argument: it may be reasonable to regard society as a contract, but then this contract is valid only if people's needs, including the community itself, are met. There is a political dimension to the argument. He considers membership in a human community as a precondition for participation in a state's provision of goods (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992: 7). Fourth, communitarianism is extension of politics. According to Sandel, liberalism, so far as it is individualistic, is the 'politics of rights', while communitarianism is the 'politics of the common good'. The interesting conclusion that follows from this is that liberalism is about how to limit the sphere of politics while communitarianism is about how to extend it. The other equally important conclusion that follows is that active political participation that is often devalued by the individualist (unless it has instrumental value!), is another communitarian goal (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992: 1-11).⁷

1.6 Individualist Responses

Individualists have critically responded to the communitarian challenges, methodologically as well as normatively. In this section, we will attempt a very brief review of such responses in order to have a balanced view of the communitarian project.

Methodologically, we will consider only Gauthier and Rawls as two representative responses to the communitarian challenge.

(1) Gauthier

To begin with, Gauthier does not find any potential conflict between the individualist self and the community. In his essay 'The Liberal Individual', he identifies a number of traits of liberal individuals. He argues that the acceptance of moral constraints underlies the altruistic values that a person develops (Gauthier 1992: 152). This suggests, he says, that the moral constraints have a basis independent of those values. Second, the conception of good held by the liberal individual need not rest purely on a social motivation because he is not a social being. Third, even by defending the priority of individual over community, he does not neglect the social basis of individuality. As he says, "The self-consciousness necessary for a being to have a genuine self-conception may well be possible only as a result of socialization" (Gauthier 1992: 157). To clarify further his position on this he argues that, in the production of self-conscious being, human society is called into question by the individuals, and social practices and institutions as "embodiment of norms" stand in need of justification to the individual before the individual voluntarily accepts them (Gauthier 1992: 157).

(2) Rawls

Rawls's response is very interesting. He admits that liberalism so far as it is individualist is based on 'mistaken and metaphysical assumption' (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992: 5). But as far as justice (and also politics in general) is concerned, the communitarian challenge, he argues, is irrelevant. In an essay entitled "Justice as Fairness: Political Not Metaphysical" (Rawls 1992: 186-205) he discussed at length how the political conception of justice is intimately connected with a democratic constitutional structure and a 'certain political tradition', and a society as a 'system of fair social cooperation between free and equal persons' (Rawls 1992: 193). The two principles of justice that he enunciated are supportive of his view above :

1. *"Each person has an equal right to a fully adequate scheme of equal basic rights and liberties, which scheme is compatible with a similar scheme for all"*

2. *"Social and economic inequalities are to satisfy two conditions: first, they must be attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity, and second, they must be to the greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society"* (Rawls 1992: 191).

1.7 Normative responses

On the normative side, the individualist responses are mixed too. There are no out-right rejections, or acceptance of the communitarian challenge. Ronald Dworkin, while rejecting the view of community as a need in general, nonetheless concedes that the 'people need the community in order to identify with it and recognize that the value of their own lives is only a reflection of and derivative from the value of the life of the community as a whole.' In an essay on "Liberal Community" (Dworkin 1992: 205-25), he distinguished four conceptions of community which have been used to attack liberalism. They are: (1) the democratic argument that associates community with majority; (2) the paternalistic argument which highlights citizens' responsibility in a genuine political community for the well-being of the others; (3) self-interest which condemns atomism, and emphasizes the ways in which the people need community; and (4) integration which equates the value of life of an individual citizen's life with the value of life of the community in which he lives (Dworkin 1992: 205-06). Dworkin has found substantial values in all of them, and finally concluded that 'Political community has ethical primacy over our individual lives' (Dworkin 1992: 223).

Will Kymlicka defends individual rights, and does not take the view that there is any contradiction between the concept of community and individualism or liberalism, and that the concept of community does not contradict the 'priority of rights'. He argues that the communitarian goals of community can be achieved by means of rights. Even the minorities can also be defended in terms of right (Kymlicka 1992: 165-86; 1989).⁸

1.8 Evaluation

As the foregoing shows, the debate between communitarianism and individualism is on going and often acrimonious. Communitarianism is itself a critique of individualist liberalism. Various liberal responses we have briefly surveyed above are, in turn, criticisms of communitarianism. Given the fact that the starting point of both is the individual, the debate between the two 'can simply not be reduced to the old debate between collectivity and individuality. Many communitarians have drawn interesting political conclusions out of communitarianism, which are significant for revitalizing political theory. In this last section, we will consider, first, the impact of communitarianism on liberalism and then the politics of communitarianism i.e., the political lessons of the communitarian challenge.

(1) Impact on Liberalism

To begin with, the communitarian challenge has led to what Bell has called 'communitarianization' of liberalism. To what extent is this so is, however, a matter of some dispute because not all liberals have made concessions to communitarianism *a/a* Rawls. First, so far as the liberal self is concerned, liberals now seem to accept that individual identities are

bound up with some 'constitutive communities' which are not (rationally) chosen by the individuals (Bell 1993: 12). Second, against the charge that liberal justice lacks relevance for actual people living in actual societies, Rawls concedes that his conception of justice may not be "suitable for all societies regardless of their particular social or historical circumstances" (Bell 1993: 10). Bell believes that Rawls's political philosophy does not depart significantly from the communitarian approach (Bell 1993: 10). Third, if there is any area where communitarianism seems to have little impact, this is liberal atomism. Despite communitarian concerns about loneliness, deracination, political apathy and so on connected with the breakdown of community in modern western societies, liberals have yet to modify their traditional liberal institutions and practices in order to incorporate the value of community. The reason is that any community/state intervention to correct the ills afflicting society would mean unjustifiable restriction on people's capacity for leading autonomous lives (Bell 1993: 12). The unrepentant liberals would argue, on the contrary, that liberal individual rights would protect and facilitate genuinely communal ways of life.

(2) Politics of Communitarianism

If communitarianism is a corrective on liberalism, particularly excessive individualism, then it is at the same time a corrective on some aspects of liberal politics including its excesses. Modern liberal history of the world is replete with examples of the rise of all forms of totalitarianism, and the regimes that have severely restricted individual liberty. The notion of limited government in liberal credo has not always gone hand-in-glove with the expansion of the sphere of individual rights. The contrary has often been the case when the scope of individual rights, including political rights, has been restricted, while the government has assumed unlimited powers. Liberals have remained powerless to tackle the situation.

A number of communitarians as well as some liberals who have seen some value in communitarianism have found a new politics in communitarianism that seems to strengthen the fabric of overall liberal politics, and gives it greater sustenance and legitimacy. Daniel Bell's defence of communitarianism, for example, was meant to "derive a procommunity political measures such as local veto power over building projects that fail to respect existent architectural styles" and so on (Bell 1993: 12).

Amy Gutman, granting that communitarianism contains politically conservative lessons, recognizes nonetheless that it has some 'constructive potential': "*Communitarianism has the potential for helping us discover a politics that combines community with a commitment to basic liberal values*" (Gutmann 1992: 133). She is not ready to accept that liberalism has been undermined by many criticisms by the communitarians, but would like us to consider communitarian values as "supplementing rather than supplanting basic liberal values" (Gutmann 1992: 133). The most distinctive aspect of the politics of communitarianism, for her, lies in the ways in which 'local communities and democracy can be vitalized without violating individual rights'. This may call for the formation of new political institutions for the sake of real public life, and democracy and participation, as a dam against the encroaching centralizing, and bureaucratic state (Sandel 1992: 12-29).⁹ This political aspect of communitarianism needs further

elaboration since it has immense democratic potentials. First, in the sense that communitarianism is seen as the 'politics of the common good', it advocates the expansion of the scope of public (community) political participation. In contrast to individualist-liberal political theory, communitarian political theory is participatory. Avineri and de-Shalit argue that the advocacy of increased public participation in politics is the most common theme running through communitarianism. Second, communitarianism is anti-totalitarian. A novel explanation is offered here by the communitarians about the rise of totalitarianism. The roots of totalitarianism do not lie in their own premises', but 'in limiting the political sphere' that alienates people from public debate and discussion (Avineri and de-Shalit 1992: 10), though the finger here is pointed at liberalism.

The above two democratic potentials of communitarian political theory pale into insignificance in the so-called conservative charge against communitarianism. The conservative charge consists in the following : if we are not free to choose, and if our values are determined by our community, then there is no reason to criticize our own community/society. Walzer has refuted the charge forcefully in two recent books (Walzer 1987, 1989) and defended the idea of criticism from within one's society.

1.9 Conclusion : Socialist Communitarianism ?

The above is a post-liberal communitarianism which has evolved from within the liberal tradition to rectify the excesses of liberalism. In no way can liberal communitarianism be seen as an alternative to liberalism. The basic premise of the individual, his/her autonomy, rights and liberties have not been compromised, let alone sacrificed. The material roots of the rise of communitarianism have been provided by the problems of late capitalism in the West and in that sense liberal communitarianism cannot be seen apart from the crises in western capitalist societies. If communities in the West have been eroded, and lost, the reason must be sought in the onward march of capitalism. Today's globalization has only accentuated the problem; maintaining community in the face of the onslaught of the global market seems a hard, if not impossible, task. This raises the question: are capitalism and community compatible? The communitarians have not answered this fundamental question. To my estimate, communities, or communal relationships, as human relationships, are not safe under capitalism. If not, is there then a real alternative? Has socialism got a better alternative?

Any student of Marxism must know that socialism is ultimately committed to community. If socialism is concerned about the quality of human relationships, then it can be defined in terms of community too. Karl Marx's vision of communism, based as it is on egalitarianism, is a communitarian society freed of all class and other forms of domination. As David Miller rightly argued: "*A socialist view of community, unlike certain conservative views, must embody a condition of rationality. Members of the community must be able to subject their relationship to critical scrutiny without destroying it. This follows from socialist egalitarianism — there is no*

privileged caste holding the rest of society in intellectual thrall—together with the idea that the community is an active agent reshaping the world in accordance with its purposes” (Miller 1992 : 90).” One notices genuinely communitarian concerns when equality rather than liberty is taken to be the core of liberalism in some liberal thinking. But then, one doubts if real community can be achieved within the parameters of liberalism. In fine, liberal communitarianism provides useful food for thought for a radical re-visioning of socialism in the future.

1.10 Exercises

Short Questions :

1. Define the term ‘Communitarianism’.
2. ‘Communitarianism was an intellectual response to the growing crisis in liberal societies of the West’ Discuss.
3. What are the three areas of communitarians of critique of Rawl’s liberalism identified by Daniel Bell.
4. Discuss how Gauthier reacted to the communitarian challenge.

Long Questions :

1. Identify the factors that led to the size of communitarianism in the 1980s.
2. What are the major areas of debate between communitarianism and Individualism.
3. Critically discuss the normative approach to the study of Communitarianism.

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MODULE – II

UNIT : I □ PLURALIST POLITICAL SYSTEMS

- 1.0. Objective**
- 1.1. Introduction**
- 1.2. Pluralism — Definition and Types**
 - 1.2.1. The context of Liberal State and origins of pluralism**
 - 1.2.2. Methods and Values**
 - 1.2.3. Basic features of pluralist perspective**
- 1.3. The Pluralist State**
 - 1.3.1. The State :**
 - 1.3.2. The Cipher Model**
 - 1.3.3. The Neutral State Model**
 - 1.3.4. The Broker State Model**
- 1.4. The Pluralist Theory of Sovereignty**
- 1.5. Pluralism in the Political Sphere :**
 - Plolitical Parties and Representative Assemblies**
 - 1.5.1. Political Parties.**
 - 1.5.2. Representative Assemblies.**
- 1.6. Pressure Groups and Pluralism : Robert of Dahl’s Analysis.**
- 1.7. Criticism**
- 1.8. Neo-Pluralism**
- 1.9. Conclusion**
- 1.10. Key Words**
- 1.11. Further Reading**
- 1.12. Specimen Questions**

1.0. Objectives

After studying this unit you would be able to understand

- The meaning and types of pluralism;
- The basic features of pluralist political system;
- The methods and values pluralists use;
- The nature of the pluralist view of the state and sovereignty;
- The nature of representative assemblies;

- The position of the pluralists on political parties and pressure groups with special reference to Robert And Dahl's concept of polyarchy, and
- The limitations of pluralism.

1.1. Introduction

This unit deals with the concept of Pluralist Political Systems. The terms Pluralism and Pluralist Political Systems are very much in vogue today. In this unit we have discussed pluralism from a political point of view. We have divided this unit into seven sections.

The **first** section attempts to define pluralism and takes note of its various types. The **second** section analyses the pluralist conception of the state; The **third** section explains the concepts of sovereignty from a pluralist view point; The **fourth** section deals with political parties and representative assemblies;

The **fifth** section provides an account of the pluralist views on pressure groups with special reference to Robert A Dahl.

In the **sixth** section we have mentioned some important limitations of pluralist political theory.

The **seventh** section gives a very brief account of **Nee-pluralism**.

1.2. Pluralism — Definition and Types

In or politics the term 'Pluralism' is used in the context of political power. Power is a relational concept. A person or a group 'has power' only in relation to some other people or groups. The term political power refers to that kind of relationship which enables an actor to influence the behaviour of others, typically through the power to reward or punish. In contemporary political thought the term pluralism arose as a reaction against monism. Monism is a belief that there is or ought to be only one thing not many. In the context of power of the state monism stands for sovereignty of the state i.e. monopoly of power by the state.

Pluralism began as a philosophy which maintained that reality cannot and should not be explained by one principle. With reference to the power of state it argues that the state is not the all-powerful organisation - the only centre of power. On the

contrary, political pluralism recognises the existence of diversity in social, institutional and ideological practices. According to P. Schmitter.

"Pluralism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constituent units are organized into an unspecified number multiple, voluntary, competitive, nonhierarchical, self-determined....categories which are not specially.... created or otherwise controlled.... by the state as which do not exercise a monopoly of representational activity within their respective categories...."

Clearly, pluralism values diversity. It is a belief in or commitment to diversity.

There are at least four types of pluralism, viz. Philosophical, ethical, cultural and political. Philosophical or Epistemological pluralism is closely linked with the pragmatist school of

William James and Jhon Dewey. It denotes that there are diverse theories of knowledge for understanding the world. That is, there is no final certainty on solution to our problems. We live not in a universe but a multiverse. This school is opposed to Hegel and Bradley. J. N. Figgis, H. J. Laski and many of the American pluralists were influenced by the pragmatist school.

Ethical Pluralism denotes multiplicity of ethical values. It is closely associated with the anthropological understanding of society. Cultural Pluralism recognises diverse social practices and customs in different ethnic groups. According to them, plural societies are those societies which have diverse ethnic groups. Normatively cultural pluralism justifies the existence of multiplicity of ethnic groups and their diverse value systems. In politics, the term is used rather narrowly. It is a theory of distribution of power which argues that power in society is not concentrated in fewer hands (i.e. in the hands of an elite or a ruling clan), but it is widely dispersed. As a theory of political system it argues that power in modern societies is dispersed among various groups and political parties. It denotes party competition.

You should note that the pluralist perspective is also known as 'democratic', 'behavioural', 'individualistic' 'functionalist' or 'market' perspective. Each term signifies and emphasis on a set of issues within the perspective. However, the term 'pluralist' happens to be the most common usage and represents the essential assumptions of this perspective. In this connection you should also note that the pluralist perspective is associated with the tradition of political liberalism, liberal— pluralist tradition defends the institutional arrangements of the liberal state which has been discussed in this unit separately.

1.2.1. The context of the liberal state and origins of pluralism

Pluralism is closely associated with liberal political philosophy. The term 'liberal' stands for 'non-interference' with regard to the activities of the individual. Who does interfere in matters regarded as personal? The answer is : the state, church, religion and dominant culture of the society. Jhon Locke in his second treatise on Civil Government (1689) argued that the state should be founded on the consent of the governed and refrain from having monistic (= absolute) power. He arduously defended individual's right to liberty, especially the right to property. Locke, in fact, challenged the main thesis of T. Hobbes's **Leviathan** (1651) that depicted the state, as the sole holder executor of absolute power. Bodin, Hobbes, Rousseau, Blackstone, Jhon Austin et. al. depicted the state as the final source of authority. All these authors -or the monist doctrine as such - maintain that the state is legally superior to all other groups within its territorial jurisdiction.

It was against the doctrine of absolute power/ Sovereignty that pluralism emerged especially in the work of Montesquieu who propounded the theory of separation of power which put emphasis on the merits of a political system with more than one source of power/ authority. The makers of the American Constitution were influenced **by the Federalist papers** (1787).

The authors of **the Federalist papers** aimed to prevent the tyranny of the state. By tyranny, they understand the arbitrary interference by government with individual's natural rights (i.e. right to person and property) without the backing of the law made by the representatives of the people. To avoid tyranny they propounded the theory of institutional pluralism i.e. the institutional checks and balances. Similarly, Alexis de Tocqueville argued that freedom in democracy required

'intermediate association' between the state and citizens'. This idea of checks and balances and interaction between groups dominated the thought of Arthur Bentley, an American Sociologist. In his **The Process of Government** (1908) he vehemently criticized the doctrine of Sovereignty and depicted the groups as 'the new materials of political life'.

The doctrine of pluralism was developed by a number of social and political thinkers of Europe and America. The most notable figures are J. N. Figgis, Otto von Gierke, F. W. Maitland, Paul Boncour, Leon Duguit, G. D. H. Cole, Hugo Krabbe, E. Barker, A. D. Lindsay, R. M. Mac Iver et. al. Some of the recent contributors are Isaiah Berlin, John Rawls and John Gray. They are known as proponents of value pluralism.

Gierke and Maitland argue that groups in society arise naturally, possess personalities of their own and function independent of the state control. These associations have collective will and consciousness. They maintain that the state should respect the commonly held perception that the associations have rights and duties as groups. **Paul Boncour** draws our attention to the professional and economic groupings in society. **Durkheim** pleads for occupational associations and treats these associations as bases for political representation and as a source of economic regulation. Figgis is opposed to the idea of State control over the social groups such as churches, trade unions, local communities and the family and depicts the State as 'the Society of Societies'. **Barker** denies that groups have personalities of their own but acknowledges that groups precede the state. **Laski** argues that the doctrine of legal Sovereignty gets practically untenable when it faces the resolute resistance by groups within the state. **Duguit and Krabbe** reject the idea that law is the command of the Sovereign.

Usually pluralism stands for multiplicity of beliefs and ways of life. But pluralism sometimes has a different connotation which is generally known as 'value pluralism'. It includes the idea of moral objectivity: that there are certain things that are good for human beings whatever they happen to believe. However, these objective goods are "incommensurable". It is claimed that there is no super value to which all other goods contribute i.e. there can be no final ranking of these basic goods. Value pluralism rules out the possibility of a final form of human society where all genuine goods are realised in toto. Berlin, Rawls and Gray are some of the proponents of 'Value pluralism'.

These diverse strands do not constitute a school but rather a tendency in political thought. The uniting feature of these strands lies in the fact that most of them feel that the intrusion of the state in private spheres of the individuals is nothing but curtailment of fundamental freedoms.

Perhaps it is now clear that the pluralist perspective developed within the liberal democratic framework of society and state. As we have stated above 'Liberalism' stands for the non-interference (by the state and any such omnipotent association) in the 'private' sphere of the individual i.e. 'freedom from' the state. This idea of freedom as propounded by Isaiah Berlin is 'negative' in nature. It may also mean freedom within the state (or 'freedom to') i.e. 'positive' freedom. In the 'negative' sense it means that the individual has got a private sphere of his/her own which the state must never invade. This happens to be the essence of liberalism. This can be contrasted with the democratic idea of freedom which implies the right of citizens to involve himself in the democratic procedure of law-making. This idea basically implies the empowerment of the ordinary citizens. For such empowerment certain rights viz. of assembly, speech and association are deemed very important. According to C. B. Macpherson, the liberal state was

liberal first and democratic second. There is an inherent tensions between the liberal aim of restricting state power and the democratic aim of empowering the people. The people desired extension of their rights trade union.....rights, nights of controlling executive powers and rights to free speech etc.— and the state attempted to resist the pressures for democratization. You should take this point into account because the pluralists claim that liberal democratic political institutions can both check the power holders and ensure popular participation. However, the editists doubt this claim. You should also note that the liberal (democratic) state emerged in a social context of market society which earnestly defended private ownership. The liberal state and the capitalist/market society developed.together. The market society was a ‘free’ society. The term ‘free’ here denoted the fact that economic enterprise and business were free from state control. Thus the principles of **laissez faire** and the right to form associations together constitute the appropriatiae liberal democratic social context within which the pluralist view flourished. The pluralist view of state and society is not thus a recent trend in American political thinking but has a long tradition of its own. It advocates diffusion of political power and attempts to provide remedy against abuse of state power.

1.2.2. Methods and Values

Pllvealists use different types of methods of which three deserve special attention viz. (1) positivism and behaviouralism, (2) method logical individualism, and (3) functionalism.

According to **logical positivists**, scientific political analysis should construct empirically observable universal laws. They put emphasis on quantitative analysis. This very methodological position gave birth to behaviouralism which aimed to analyse peoples objective behaviour patterns. Bentley, Truman and Robert Dahl are some of the leading pluralist political scientists who represent this tradition.

Methodological individualism is -a doctrine which asserts that all hypotheses about human collectivities can and should be reduced to statements about individual agents. Pluralists who follow this method believe that individuals’ interests can be discerned by identifying which policy options they choose. **Individuals** behaviour express their policy preferences. They rule-out the possibility of the existence of any objective interests of individuals/groups which they donot recognize. This position dismisses the marxist notion of false consciousness.

The **functionalist method** claims that all social phenomena have socially useful consequences which explain them. Talcott parsons and his followers constitute the functionalist school. Funclionalism has two major assumptions : (1) Societies become increasingly complex differentiated; consequently roles and institutions get more specialised; (2) the differentiation of society appropriates the form of modernisation, the development of industrial societies and liberal democratic state. Pluralists of functionalist persuasion put emphasis on cultural consensus as the critical component of social integration.

As to the values followers of positivist method think that one can separate fact from value. Others are apologists for status quo.

1.2.3. Basic features of the pluralist perspective

Though there are different brands of pluralism i.e. British, American, French, German etc. we can find out some important features of the pluralist perspective :

1. The pluralists believe that no single group exercises pervasive control over more than one range of issues. They argue that in liberal democratic systems there exists several pressure groups centering around special interests. But a group may be dominant in one area and its influence remains confined to that particular area. Not all groups are equal in power and resources. The pluralists went to establish the fact that no single group dominates over a whole range of different areas. There exists no such cohesive group like a 'ruling class', 'ruling elite', or 'power elite'. That is, they claim that different people exert power on different issues. Power is diffused.

2. The pluralists argue that in the liberal democratic systems there exists counter veiling power. It is argued that in liberal democratic systems a rough equilibrium between the most important producer groups — Capital and labour - is found. The term 'counter veiling power' implies that the exercise of one kind of power gives birth to organisations which counteract this power. That is organisation of the buyers and sellers, of capital and labour balance each other. They can influence and restrain government action. The pluralists assume that there exists a situation nearer to an equilibrium.

3. The pluralists opine that no dominant ideology prevails in the liberal democratic systems. In totalitarian and systems there prevails a dominant ideology which pervades the entire society. Compared to such totalitarian systems there prevails in liberal democratic systems a plurality of ideas, opinions and perspectives. Here the nature of belief system is plural. In such societies an informed public raises issues for political discussions and decisions are taken in consultation with diverse groups. In a pluralist system public opinion plays an important role.

4. According to pluralists, politics is a process marked by competition between parties and groups. The government rests on public consent. It is also accountable to the people. Opposition parties check the excesses of the ruling parties and protect the interests of the minority. Pressure groups champion the cause of diverse interest groups. Citizens are, it is thought, sovereign in the political sphere like the customers in the market. The existence of diverse parties and groups ensures decentralization of power. All this leads to the restriction of power of the government and empowerment of the people— the two prime aims of the liberal democratic system.

5. In the pluralist mode of thinking freedom occupies the central place. In the idealist and socialist/totalitarian political thought liberty is tied to the idea of common good as defined by the state. The pluralists oppose such an idea of liberty. Rather they identify it with the dispersal of powers and authority to groups. "However, they do not agree with spencerian viewpoint which is too much individualistic in nature. All pluralists including Figgis argue that liberty exists only in the context of a multiplicity of groups. M. P. Follet argues that 'no one group can enfold me, because of my multiple nature— no number of groups can enfold me.' Cole and Laski also share this view. This very emphasis on liberty of the groups has two important dimensions : firstly, it assumes that the individual is incapable of resisting the power of the centralised state; secondly, freedom can be maximised only in the society i.e. within the groups. Thus according to the pluralists, that state is the good state which maximizes freedom. They oppose both the Hobbesian 'Leviathan' as well as the utilitarian concept of the state.

1.3. The Pluralist State

1.3.1. The State :

As we have already noted pluralism arose as a reaction against the monistic theory of state and sovereignty. It was opposed to the legalistic view of the state and its unlimited power of physical coercion. As an alternative to monism they were trying to theorize a novel idea of state that will incorporate maximum diversity of group life and some kind of central authority. Historically speaking the pluralists developed more a theory of society than a theory of state. For this reason they do not usually offer to the state. Instead they use such categories as 'political community' the 'political system', the 'polity', the 'pluralist system' etc. These terms suggest the existence of more than one source of authority, institutional differentiations and open access to government.

Avincent identifies two problems in dealing with the pluralist theory of the state: firstly, they use the term 'state' rather imprecisely and, secondly, they differ in their accounts of what the state is. For example, Gierke ascribes to the state some sort of sovereignty. Cole defines it as an organization which is plurally sovereign. This happens to be the most confusing depiction of the state. Figgis, depicts it as the 'Society of societies' which incorporates the community of wills of all groups within a territory. It is no less confusing than that of Gierke. Laski identifies the state as an association among many. Clearly, all these definitions lack precision.

In fact, the pluralists do not have a theory of state which is sovereign in the conventional sense of the term. That is, they deny the idea of any omnipotent state. E. Barker depicted the pluralist state as 'an association of individuals, already united in various groups each with a common life, in a further and higher group and more embracing common purpose.' Thus though the pluralists oppose the conventional monistic theory of state they introduce the idea of state through the back door. They actually propound a theory of the 'implicit state'. Like the precursors Kenneth Arrow, Oliver Williamson and Neil Suelsher share the same view. They are shy of speaking clearly about the state and prefer to talk about the 'government' or 'governmental systems'. In their view, the state is a fiction or a mask under which a number of groups further interest of their own in the name of public interest. They are more interested in seeking answer to such questions as 'who has power in a polyarchy'? rather than 'what is the state'? Eminent pluralists like R. Dane, C. Lindbeom and N. Polsby are more interested in examining the nature of democratic government rather than developing a theory of state.

Nevertheless, pluralists are not blind to the existence of state and its monopoly of legitimate coercion in a given territory. Though they lack any particular view of the state most of them examine the state society relationship. True to the liberal tradition the pluralists assert that the state is neutral vis-a-vis numerous groups, interests and social classes. The state is depicted as an umpire with no special interest of its own. It only supervises and regulates social conflicts. The rule-application structures (or the bureaucracy, the judiciary, the police, the military etc.) are neutral. According to them, the state is the servant of society, not its master. It simply means that (a) the state is subordinate to governmental organs, conforms to the principles of public service and political accountability and (b) the democratic process is meaningful effective. That

is, the state is only a weather cock that is blown in directions the public at large dictates. The pluralist assumption of a neutral state implies that the state can well be captured by the working class. Thus a peaceful transition to socialism becomes a possibility. You should note that this stance is antithetical to the classical marxist position. The pluralists oppose the marxist view of state which sees an organic relation between the economic and the political structures. The pluralists argue that with the extension of the universal adult suffrage, the emergence of working class trade unions and their political parties connection between the 'economic' and the 'political', if any, has got snapped. Politics has thus become autonomous. They also argue that the state is forced to act in general interest because to be returned to power the politicians need popular support.

Patrick Dunlevy and Brendan O'heary in their book **Theories of the State** have found out three possible models of the pluralist state viz. the cipher model, the model of the neutral state and the broker state model. Let us briefly discuss these models.

1.3.2. The Cipher Model

In the fifties of the last century the American political scientists who belonged to the pluralist school depicted the state as a 'cipher institution' or 'coding machine' or a 'cash register'. All this indicates to the fact that the state only responds to or mirrors the balance of pressure groups in the society. It merely receives the pressures from the interest groups of the society and its decisions are shaped in accordance with the strongest pressures exerted by the interest groups. As if it is the 'pawn' at the hands of the pressure groups. The function of the state is merely to mediate between conflicting pressure groups. Like the weather cock which moves in different directions according to the force of the wind the state, in the pluralist view, represents constant flux and changes in the balance of 'dispersed inequalities'. In liberal democratic systems different groups are active in the political arena and are differently successful in each policy area. The structure of state organization mirrors, to quote Dun Leavy and O'Leary, this process of 'dynamic disequilibrium'. R. Dahl has defined this situation as 'polyarchy'. 'polyarchy' means 'rule by many'. A polyarchy operates through institutions which force rulers to take account of the interests and wishes of the electorate. In pluralist parlance the cipher model explains the reality of the post war liberal-democratic states. It is thought that the post. Second World-War period has given birth to free play of polyarchic pressures. The pluralists think that the cipher state translates citizens' demands into public programmes,

1.3.3. The Neutral State Model

A good many pluralists do not agree with the view that the state is a cipher which mirrors changing equilibrium in the civil society. On the contrary they propose a neutralist view of the state. Pluralists with functionalist persuasion propound this view. Neutrality on the part of the state may mean three things :

- (i) The state may be a passive onlooker of events,
- (ii) It may play the role of an umpire who just follows the rules or (iii) it may also take an 'actively neutral position which ensures substantive fairness.

A. Birch and the pluralists of his ilk maintain that the state does not always represent the

dominant pressure groups. It may equally represent the unorganised and can act in the 'public interest'. This is a must for preserving the stability legitimacy of the government. To be returned to power after a short interval of four or five years politicians they argue, are forced, willy nilly, to obey public opinion. Electoral coalitions by political parties dictate them to act in the public interest apart from the interests of the organised pressure groups. Thus D. Truman in his book **The process of Government** (1951) argues that Roosevelt's New Deal Policy in the U. S. A. signifies an attempt to mobilise the support of the minorities. The civil service in U. K., it is argued, after weighing the messages received from different pressure groups may actually tilt the balance in favour of the unorganised consumers. Thus the state is viewed as a mediator, balancer and harmoniser of varied interests. Compared to the first model, the neutral state model does not mechanically mirror the interests in society, but, on the contrary, adopt a neutral stance, weigh different policy options. (as proposed by the interest groups) and may take policy decisions of its own. It is obvious that this position is quite opposite of the marxist position which views the state as partisan or 'the executive committee of bourgeoisie' ?

1.3.4. The Broker State Model

A 'broker' is an agent or middleman who buys and sells for others. But he is not an innocent person; and he has her/his own interests. According to the broker state model, State officials, agencies and elected officials all have partisan interests of their own. Some pluralists, especially the group theorists, nullify the notion of both the 'CIPHER' and 'Neutral State' view. According to them, policy decisions are the outcome of 'self-interested contests within the state apparatuses as it is of contests outside — The broker is constrained by clients, but is more autonomous than a cipher or mere functionary and more partisan or self seeking than an 'honest' broker. It does not mechanically mirror civil society; nor does it serve public interest. The bureaucracy manipulates the conflicting interests of the pressure groups in civil society. It divides and rules and to fulfil its own goals and it exploits crosscutting cleavages. According to Dunleavy and O'Leavy :

“The broker state is not passive, neutral or indeed a 'black box'. It consists of multiple formal and informal pressure group activities; of coalitions and bargains struck, dishonoured and reconstituted; and extends in to the interactions which take place amidst the equally multiple activities, coalitions and bargains amongst non-state pressure groups.....”

1.4. The Pluralist Theory of Sovereignty

Pluralism is not only against the idea of the state, it is also very much opposed to the idea of legal sovereignty, the quintessence of the state. Bodin, Hobbes and Austin were the proponents of the monist view of Sovereignty which implied 'Supreme power over citizens', to quote Bodin, 'and subjects unrestrained by law'. That is, statehood implied sovereignty which is by nature absolute, perpetual, indivisible and inalienable. Theories of Sovereignty popular throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were, in reality, theories of unity. Perhaps the need for unity was very much felt at that time. Incidentally, Roman laws were the source of monistic

theory of sovereignty. The Renaissance and the Papacy simply followed the Romanist doctrine which culminated in Hobbes's Leviathan. Then why did the pluralists reject the theory of sovereignty? Their main reasons can be discerned: Firstly, they rejected the idea of state sovereignty on the ground that the state did not create law. Pluralists objected to the idea that the laws and rights were simply the commands of the sovereign on the ground that law originated in the community of groups. From this standpoint they argue that the state is bound to respect the autonomy of the groups. They observe that the state can recognize and rectify existing laws; it can not create them.

Secondly, they also rejected the idea of political sovereignty which propounds that there must in every society be a 'centre of ultimate reference. According to Laski, such an idea is factually false and ethically indefensible. He described society as a parallelogram of different forces and group interests. Similar was the opinion of Barker. Like the nineteenth century liberal concept of 'isolated individual' the concept of political sovereignty is an anathema to the pluralists. Both these theories, they agree, ignore the existence of autonomous groups.

Thirdly, pluralists are also opposed to the idea of moral sovereignty which depicts the state as an embodiment of common good. According to the monist view, the state champions the common good (e.g. Rousseau's General will) The will of the state is nothing but moral will. Pluralists reject such theories and argue that the moral life of the individual is beyond the purview of the government.

However, despite such opposition to state power the pluralists did not want to abandon sovereignty lock stock and barrel. They rather wanted a radical change in its nature. They opposed monopoly of power and portrayed Society as multicellular in nature. They advocated a theory of democracy which would accommodate plurality of interests.

1.5. Pluralism in the Political Sphere : Political parties and Legislative Assemblies

1.5.1. Political Parties

It is clear from the above discussion that the pluralists want to limit the power of the state. This aim is achieved through various political institutions and mechanisms. A competitive party system happens to be one of such important institutions which aims at clipping state power. In liberal democracies mere exists bi-party or multiparty system. Parties compete for electoral support. The party which gets majority support constitutes the government. The minority party (or parties) constitutes the opposition. Parties with different set of politics and ideologies give citizens opportunities to choose. If the party in power fails to deliver the demands of the electorate it can be ousted from power in the next general election.

Besides the formation of government parities provide opportunities for political participation. Parties contain channels through which party members can make their voices heard, Participate in election campaigns and can influence its policy options. Regular party conferences annual meetings, special meetings and inner party democracy make democratic control of the parties possible. There is no denying the fact that the socialist and democratic parties vary in this respect. However, the moot point is that political parties in democracy are accountable to the rank and file.

Historically speaking, there were initially cadre parties which were nothing but loosely organised groups within the parliamentary periphery. With the introduction of universal suffrage there emerged mass parties. To boost the morale of the electorate, to spread political education mass parties felt the need for party bureaucracies. Thus a new party elite was created. This new elite gradually turned into the controller of the party machine as well as its representatives in the assemblies. Nevertheless it is argued that political parties facilitate institutional democratisation in the liberal states.

But is it genuine democratisation? Max. Weber thinks that it is not. According to him, emergence of party bureaucracy gave birth to a new kind of elite rule. However, there is no unanimity of opinion regarding the role of parties. In the **liberal** view representation is seen as a trust, and the representatives are not bound to obey the specific instructions of the electorate because any attempt to control the representative threatens his/her autonomy. On the contrary, the democratic idea of representation aims at controlling the leaders and wants to turn them into their delegates who are bound by decisions arrived at in the general meetings of the people or the party. This view speaks for developing mechanisms and structures which will prevent the leaders from going beyond the dictates of the electorate. Rousseau, Sorel and Marx examined various ways that will prevent the delegates from turning into dictators. The anarchists however rejected the very idea of representation as it always involved a loss of liberty. The prospects of the **liberal** view stand for the autonomy of the leaders on the ground that the general masses are incapable of understanding their long term interests. That is this view opposes the idea of popular control of the parliamentary representatives. On the other hand, the supporters of the **democratic** view- e.g. Rousseau and J. S. Mill— hold that democratic control is very much required to (a) contain the greed of the power-holders and also (b) To educate the electorate politically. However, the elitists do have no faith in the masses and reject the idea of democratic control of the powerholders by the ignorant, uneducated and callous electorate.

1.5.2. Representative Assemblies

In the liberal political system representative assemblies are seen as the linchpin of democratic life. The ruling and opposition parties face each other inside the assemblies, debate on policy issues, criticise and pass laws. Assembly is that very place where the seal of democratic legitimacy is set on governmental decisions and the task of controlling the power-holders is realised. Opposition parties raise questions and take part in the debate. The governments are accountable to the assemblies. Besides performing the task of securing democratic legitimation assemblies also function as shock absorbers.

Classical liberal thinkers depicted the legislative assemblies as educational centres and training ground for politicians. While the legislators participate inside the assemblies, daily reporting of the proceedings of the assemblies in the media sharpens the political mind and makes the public alert. It is the locus of Sovereignty of the popular will. As the days of direct democracy have gone for ever the assemblies are treated as the only place where popular sovereignty can be realised. Secondly, representative assemblies equip the legislator with skill needed to fill the leadership positions in a democratic political system. It is argued that with the enlargement of adult franchise the representative assemblies in the liberal political systems now provide a

forum for raising issues, expressing grievances and promoting different ideological perspectives. They defend democratic rights and control the power of the executive.

However, one need not overlook the deficiencies of the modern representative assemblies. Firstly, the development of party system has given birth to a caste of professional politicians. They are caught up in parliamentary structures and specialized in the parliamentary culture. As a result, a tendency toward deradicalisation takes place which increases the gap between the general public and the parliamentarians. Secondly, the abuses of power by the military, bureaucracy or civil service escape parliamentary scrutiny. Thirdly, the reality of strong party control makes such a scrutiny formal.

The coordination between the executives and legislatures however vary in accordance with the difference in the structures of political systems. In case of the presidential form of government the executive is elected separately from the legislature. In the parliamentary system the legislature produces the executive. The separation of power prevalent in presidential system gives birth to pluralism and policy fragmentation. However, if the executive enjoys autonomy it helps policy innovation. In the weather cock model of state, parliaments and elected executives are regarded as mere rubber stamping organs for resisting external pressures. Policy coordination, if any, is an unintended consequence of group adjustment. Pluralists who favour the natural state model look for coordinating mechanisms and favour cabinet system as the latter provides a forum for collective decision making. The proponents of the broken state model do not agree with the view that the presidents and cabinets have coordinating capacities.

1.6. Pressure Groups and Pluralism :

Robert Dahl's Analysis

Since the late nineteenth century it has been claimed that power in society is concentrated in fewer hands. But from the beginning of the twentieth century this view of society and politics had been challenged. The beginning was the publication of A. Bentley's **The process of Government** in 1908. Studies of pressure politics flourished in the 1950s. Since the publication of Truman's **The Governmental process** (1951) pluralists took interest group theory a step further and claimed that power in modern society has tended to become diffused. The history of advanced societies, they argued, was one of transition from a simple to a complex differentiated form. Society becomes more and more differentiated with division of labour. New trade or industry in a society provided new occupations and law organisations of their own. Organisations seek to influence policy decisions affecting their views or interests. Proponents of pressure group theory argue that society consists of a variety of interests, many of which organise themselves to press the state to respond to their demands. Thus the management of public affairs tend to be shared between a number 'of persons and bodies with rival interests.

Pluralists claim that power in society is dispersed among various groups which are independent of the state. Pluralism is opposed to both **statism** and **corporatism** where the state is authoritarian and groups lose their power to the state where **statism** rules. In such an environment civil society the entire range of social interests loses its autonomy vis-a-vis state control. This situation is quite opposite of the pluralist system. What is noteworthy is that pluralism is the

negation of totalitarianism /statism. In **corporatist** system on the other hand, the defence and articulation of particular interests is the task of professional groups such as business organisations or trade unions. There are degrees of corporatism. In an extreme case (e.g. in Fascism) **Corporation** and **statism** coalesce. However, in other cases corporatism is not viewed antithetical to pluralism. Rather it signifies a situation where certain groups are in an interlocking relationship with the state. This corporate relationship is mediated through institutions where civil servants and representatives of various interest groups come closer to each other and take decisions through concessions and compromises. And the state is viewed as a responsible trustee, an impartial umpire and the expert broker of conflicting interests and contending powers. Thus the pluralists view the liberal political system as a system of countervailing tendencies a 'balancing society'. The pluralist state is defined as one 'in which there exists no single source of authority that is all competent and comprehensive'. According to Barker, it is 'an association of individuals, already united in various groups each with a common life, in a further and higher group and more embracing common purpose.

Robert A Dahl's Idea of Polyarchy

The classical elitists depicted the social structure as a single pyramid, 'Pluralist elitists' like Robert A. Dahl depicted it as a range of pyramids. Robert Dahl, an American pluralist political scientist in his, **who governs** (1961) hypothesised that in the western democracies different sets of persons are involved in each particular area of policy making. According to him, leaders are in general, specialists in one 'issue area'. In his study of New Haven, an American city he examined particular issues in three policy areas viz. urban renewal, Public education and the making of local party nominations. He showed that, while a person or group wielded power in one issue area where persons constituted the group influential on other issues. That is the three issues were determined by mere different types of groups- there prevailed plurality of interests.

Thus Dahl wants to make it clear that in every political system political power is unequally distributed. No one leader is dominant over a wide range of issues that the pluralist systems are systems of 'Misplaced inequalities'. In his study of New Haven Dahl came to the conclusion that those who were influential in nominating party members for elective office were not dominant in the issue area of urban development or education.

To quote Dahl : 'A political system dominated by one cohesive set of leaders had given way to a system dominated by many different sets of leaders, each having access to a different combination, of resources, It was in short a pluralist system. However, it is worth mentioning that Dahl does not suggest that the plurality of interests compete on equal terms. On the contrary. The various interests are unequal, especially in their availability of resources and ability to influence decisions. That is, according to Dahl, modern political systems consist of Competing elites. He describes such a system as a **Polyarchy** i.e. the rule of the many. Implicit in the idea of polyarchy is that though there may be disagreement over means there exists a value consensus about the form of society and its political structures. No one seeks fundamental change in those Structures. The insistence on the existence of multiple organisations also implies that in a polyarchy there is no ruling class, and hence no concentration of power.

1.7. Criticism :

Critics have drawn attention to some of the drawbacks of the theory of political pluralism :

Firstly, pluralists do not constitute a definite school of thought; it is only a general tendency. Most of the pluralist writers are not political philosophers. They are not also precise in their use of terminology.

Secondly, the findings of the pluralists, especially of R. Dahl, valuable though are not necessarily valid for other cities let alone the general politics of America. Again, one need not identify polyarchy with 'democratic pluralism' i.e. with competitive political systems where power is shared between the state and the maximum possible number of groups and individuals. In modern poly archies there occurs in reality, competition between a few elites. This conception of polyarchy is at odds with the 'Classical' pluralism which propounds high degree of participation.

Thirdly, Bachrach and Baratz argue that the pluralists deal only with the over conflict and key decisions i.e., issues that actually get on to the political agenda. They ignore those issues that are kept off the agenda. A group may be powerful enough to determine 'the agenda of politics and thus prevent other issues from being included on agenda. In support of this argument we can cite the growth of extra and anti-parliamentary ecological, peace, terrorist, ethnic, religious and separatist movements which have recently come to the surface in the so-called polyarchies.

Fourthly, pluralists ignore the fact that the structure of a system within which decisions are made may provide a built in advantage to one group and thus put other groups in a disadvantageous position. Again, claims may be put forward by the minorities but may not be considered by any of the competing groups. Besides, advocates of very radical programmes may find themselves ignored. This may force the minorities to become a pathetic and withdraw from the political scene and the radicals may be forced to opt for violent actions.

Fifthly, Steven Lukes points out that individuals within a systems may be unaware of their real interests and thus may become a victim of 'false consciousness'. prevailing value system may hoodwink the individuals. That is, he argues that latent conflicts can arise from the real interests of the people. The fact that here exists a contradiction between the interest of the power wielders and the interest of those on who power is wielded means that there exists the potentiality for conflict behind the veil of value consensus.

Sixthly, critics point out that the pluralists underrate the might of the state. Classical pluralists championed the cause for a limited state which would control and balance competing social forces. But they failed to note the emergence of more powerful centralized states. The marxist critics have called into questions the validity of the neutral state model. According to them, the state is not neutral . It is controlled by the dominant economic class of the society and is biased again if the poor and the underprivileged. C. W. Mills, an elitist scholar, has successfully shown that there exists a power elite in America which takes the most vital decisions. Though the notion of power elites, is different from the marxist notion of ruling class nevertheless it points to the fact that even in so-called plural systems power is concentrated in the hands of a minority the elites or the competing elite and Clause often argues that the institutions of this state reveal

a certain bias or structural selectivity for capitalist policies. The fate of Chile under the Allende government is cited as an example of ouster of a democratically elected government by the military. Moreover, it has been argued that the bureaucracy in the polyarchy is not neutral; it has got its own interests. The socio-economic content of polyarchies creates a climate of opinion of a dominant ideology which is at odds with the pluralist notion of a diversity of perspectives.

Finally, it has been alleged that the mere existence of a plurality of groups does not automatically ensure broader political participation. They cite Michels's 'Iron Law of Oligarchy' 'Who says organisation says oligarchy'—to show that both political parties and pressure groups are run by the few who impose their own views over its members. They also observe that certain crucial areas e.g. the economy and the workplace, where key decisions are taken are never opened up for popular action. Moreover, as inter-pressure group mobility is a fact as shown by C.W. Mills—the most important pressure groups (e.g. the military, the big business and the political elites) do not longer compete with each other. On the contrary, they act in unison with each other which, willy-nilly, nullifies the pluralist claim of democratic elite competition. Privileged organisations like big business labour unions can thus effectively weaken citizens' control over the policies adopted by the 'democratic' political system.

1.8. Neo-Pluralism

The classical pluralist theory has been criticised by the Marxist, elitist and new-right thinkers. As a result, a small number of pluralist thinkers especially Robert Dahl, Charles Lindblom, Albert Hirschman, John Galbraith et. al. in their writings of late 1960 and 1970s have provided a somewhat updated version of classical pluralism. It should be mentioned here that among the neopluralists both Dahl and Lindblom in their writings up till 1960s defended conventional pluralism. However in their later writings they changed their position and put forward new ideas to address the fundamental problems of the advanced industrial societies.

In the late sixties several incidents like race riots in American cities, Vietnam war, student movements in France in 1968, ecological movement in Italy and Germany, micro-nationalist movements in North Ireland and Spain, city riots in Britain and France in the 1980s shattered the dream of 'stable democracies' put forward by the pluralists in the 1960s. The stagflation and unemployment in many western societies in the 1970s and 1980s worsened the situation further. As a result, the pluralist thesis faced unprecedented challenges. In response to these challenges the thinkers mentioned above in their writings in the 1970s somewhat modified their earlier position and provided new interpretations of pluralist politics which is generally known as neo-pluralism. First of all neopluralism attempts to analyse the nature of the post industrial and post-capitalistic societies. Secondly, though it prefers capitalism, the free market model (propounded by the new right thinkers) is abandoned. Thirdly, western democracies are now described as 'deformed polyarchies' in which major corporations exert disproportionate influence. In the words of Dunleavy and O'Leary,.....(the neo-pluralists) seek to demonstrate the irrelevance of conventional socialism, the Utopian deceptions of ecological rejection of modernity, and the anachronism of new right attempts to turn the clock back to a simpler world of entrepreneurial firms and a night watchman state.....

Neopluralists abandon the simple classbased political division. They argue that the mode of production in the west has changed from manufacturing towards the tertiary sector which has dramatically reduced the degree of class polarisation in the post industrial societies. Consequently, the role of the trade unions, they argue, has got weakened to a great extent and they have been incorporated in the liberal corporalist system. In 1960 Daniel Bell had predicted **The End of Ideology**. The post industrialists argue that with the emergence of 'postindustrial politics the traditional class based politics has withered away and new types of movements ecology movements, ethnic movements etc. have filled the vacuum. According to the neo-pluralists, the growth of such movements outside the parliamentary politics indicates the decline of traditional representative institutions. The most amazing thing is that while the pluralists deny that the large economic corporations enjoy more influence, the neo-pluralists like Lindblom conceded to the marxist and elitist thesis that big corporations and economic elites enjoy much more influence on public policies. Especially, Galbraith observes that large corporations can shape citizens demands. All this produces 'deformed polyarchies'.

1.9. Conclusion

In this unit we have discussed the concept of pluralism in the context of power. The elitists argue that in every society power gets concentrated in fewer hands. The pluralists argue that the opposite is the case. According to them, power in society never gets concentrated in the hands of the minority. On the contrary, it is dispersed in different centres.

We have shown that the pluralists do not agree with the monist view of sovereignty which propounds the theory of absolute power of the state on the contrary, the pluralists observe that there are multiple centres of power in society. Society consists of many groups. Every group exerts power. The state is one among many such groups in society which competes with other groups for the obedience of the people. The main thesis of the pluralists is that power is decentralized. This section gives special attention to Robert Dahl's contribution to pluralism.

In course of our analysis we have also shown that pluralism belongs to liberal-political tradition and is opposed to marxism. Besides its opposition to marxism, pluralism is also opposed to classical liberalism and elitism. It has also been shown that pluralism is opposed to any form of totalitarianism and stands for liberty of individuals and groups.

1.10. Key words

(i) **Civil society** : The realm of autonomous groups and associations; the entire range of private interests which are independent of state control.

(ii) **Monism** : A belief in only one theory or value. In politics it refers to enforced obedience to a unitary power.

(iii) **Political pluralism** : The existence of a range of political values, philosophies and movements, especially, a competitive party system.

(iv) **Polity** : A society organised through the exercise of political authority.

(v) **Polyarchy** : Literally, it means rule the many. It is an approximation of democracy based on the accountability of power-holders through regular and competitive elections.

(vi) **Pressure group** : An organised association that aims to influence the policies of government

(vii) **Sovereignty** : Absolute and unlimited power; it can as 10 simply supreme legal authority.

(vni) **Value pluralism** : The existence of plurality of values (- moral principles that prescribes an accepted standard for individuals and groups) which are in commensurable.

1.11. Further reading :

1. Alford, R.R. and Friedland, R. (1985) **Powers of theory**, (Cambridge : Cambridge university press).
2. Dunleavy, P. and O'leary, B (1987) **Theories of the State**, (London : Macmillan)
3. Vincent, A. (1987) **The History of the State**, (London; Basil Blackwell.)

1.12. Specimen Questions :

Eassytype :

1. Write a note on pluralist political system.
2. Write a note on pluralist theory of state.
3. Discuss the pluralist theory of distribution of power.

Short answer type :

1. Briefly discuss the basic features of plural of politics.
2. Discus, in brief, Robert Dahl's concept of **Polyarchy**.
3. Define pluralism.
4. Write a brief note on the limitations of the pluralist theory of power.

Objective answer type :

1. Who did coin the term **polyarchy**?
(A) Robert Dahl (B) Vilfredo Pareto
(C) M. K. Gandhi. **Answer : A**
2. **The process of government is written by.**
(A) H. J. Laski (B) Arthur Bentley
(C) D. Truman, **Answer : B**
3. **The pluralist political system is**
(A) Authoritarian (B) Democratic or
(C) Polyarchical in nature. **Answer : C**

UNIT : II □ CONSOCIATIONAL DEMOCRACY

Structure

- 2.1. Introduction**
- 2.2. Meaning and Nature of Consociational Democracy**
- 2.3. Four Characteristics of Consociational Democracy**
 - 2.3.1 Grand Coalition**
 - 2.3.2. Three Other complementary Instruments**
 - 2.3.3 Mutual Veto**
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2.1. INTRODUCTION

Democracy as a form of government has its basis in society where the collective social life of people is lived. The relationship between society and democracy has been discussed in the context of stability or instability of a democratic government. It has been maintained that stable democracy can be found under conditions of social homogeneity and political consensus. By implication, therefore, plural societies — those with deep social divisions like class, caste, religion, language etc. - are not conducive to stable democracy. John Stuart Mill wrote that democracy is “next to impossible” in multiethnic societies and completely impossible in linguistically divided countries. In political analysis, there has been viewpoint like this suggesting that it is difficult to achieve and maintain stable democratic-government in a plural society.

Against this viewpoint, a particular form of democracy called “Consociational democracy” has been held as a possible model for the achievement and maintenance of stable democratic government in a plural society. We owe this concept of Consociational democracy’ to Arend Lijphart, Research Professor of Political Science, University of California at San Diego. As Lijphart observes : “it may be difficult, but it is not at all impossible to achieve and maintain stable democratic government in a plural society, hi a consociational democracy, the centrifugal tendencies inherent in a plural society are counteracted by the cooperative attitudes and behaviour of the leaders of the different segments of the population. Elite cooperation is the primary

distinguishing feature of consociational democracy....”

According to Lijphart, consociational democracy is both an empirical and a normative model. *Empirically*, countries like Austria, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland and specific instances of political stability in the midst of social heterogeneity. *Normatively*, the consociational model has special significance for the plural societies of the Third World. The argument that this form of democracy can serve as a normative model is a challenge to the conventional pessimistic mood that democracy is improbable and completely impossible in the Third World plural societies. Lijphart warns that this kind of pessimism entails the danger of becoming a self-fulfilling prediction : “if politicians and political scientists are convinced that democracy cannot work in the plural societies of the Third World, they will not even try to introduce it or to make it work”, This kind of negative attitude is likely to lend support to the continuation of non-democratic forms of government. Lijphart is of the view that despite failures in many countries of democratic experiments, it is unrealistic to give in to complete despair. There are evidences now available that suggest that consociational democracy has good prospect of survival in divided societies.

2.2. Meaning and Nature of Consociational Democracy

Consociational democracy can be better explained by referring to its opposite, i.e. majoritarian winner-take-all democracy. In the latter type, there is concentration of power in bare-majority one-party governments. Its other features are centralized power, a disproportional electoral system, and absolute majority rule. By contrast, consociational democracy has its basis in the idea of power sharing. This form of democracy means segmented pluralism, if it is broadened to include all possible segmented cleavages in a plural society. Consociational theory maintains that power sharing is a necessary (although not a sufficient) condition for democracy in societies characterised by deep divisions. According to Lijphart, a consociational democracy is characterised by :

- (a) *grand coalition governments* that include representatives of all major linguistic and religious groups;
- (b) cultural autonomy for these groups;
- (c) Proportionality in political representation and civil services appointments; and
- (d) a minority veto with regard to vital minority, rights and autonomy.

As Lijphart argues, in deeply divided societies (plural societies, as he calls them) it may be counterproductive to try to replace segmental loyalties by a common national allegiance. Such attempts, instead of promoting national cohesion, might stimulate segmental cohesion and inter-segmental violence. “The consociational alternative avoids this danger and offers a more promising method for achieving both democracy and a considerable degree of political unity”.

2.3. Four Characteristics of Consociational Democracy

As earlier stated, consociational democracy can be defined in terms of four characteristics. The primary characteristics, as Lijphart points out, is government by a grand coalition. To repeat,

three other basic elements of consociational democracy are :

- (i) Mutual veto or “concurrent majority” rule;
- (ii) the proportionality principle; and
- (iii) group cultural autonomy. We can now examine each component by turn in much more details.

2.3.1 Grand Coalition

“The primary characteristic of consociational democracy is that the political leaders of all segments of the plural society cooperate in a grand coalition to govern the country.” This is how Lijphart has defined the first and foremost characteristic of consociationalism. Its opposite form is a government with bare majority support and a large opposition, as in British parliamentary system. The British model is competitive or ‘adversarial’. By contrast, the consociational model is ‘coalescent’. In plural societies with diverse social groups zealously guarding their cultural identities, politics need not be conducted as a game or all-out war. Under such social conditions, a grand coalition is more appropriate than the government-versus-opposition pattern of politics. Adversarial style is more appropriate for a homogenous society. A grand coalition fits a plural society very well. As Lijphart points out, in this connection: “In practice, majority rule works well when opinion are distributed unimodally and with relatively little spread — in other words, when there is considerable consensus and the majority and minority are in fact not very far apart But in a political system with clearly separate and politically hostile population segments, virtually all decisions are perceived as entailing high stakes, and strict majority rule places a strain on the unity and peace of the system.” Thus, in plural societies, it is the nature of social divisiveness (a basic social structural feature) that calls for a longer-term grand coalition providing every significant social segment an opportunity to participate in the government. The prospect of participation in government acts as a powerful stimulus to moderation and compromise. “By being in the government together, parties that do not quite trust each other have an important guarantee of political security. The essential characteristic of a grand coalition is thus the participation by the leaders of all significant segments in governing a plural society”.

2.3.2 Three Other Complementary Instruments

As earlier stated, grand coalition — the primary attribute of consociational democracy — is complemented by three other secondary instruments : (i) mutual veto, (ii) proportionality, and (iii) segmental autonomy. We can now discuss these instruments by turn. All the four instruments are closely related to each other, and together they define the nature of consociational democracy as a distinctive form different from the familiar majority rule.

2.3.3 Mutual Veto

In short, mutual veto stands for negative minority rule. The grand coalition, no doubt, protects the vital interests of the minority segments. But, such a protection may not always be foolproof. Policy decisions are taken in grand coalitions where the leaders of all significant segments would be present. The minority’s presence in the grand coalition gives it a chance to express

its views forcefully, yet, the decision will be a majority decision, and the minority may be outvoted. Such decision may adversely affect the vital interests of the minority segments, and hence may not be acceptable to it. The way out of this situation, which may put strain on inter-segmental elite cooperation, has been found in the device called 'minority veto'. Only such a veto can assure full guarantee of political protection against possible majority tyranny in a grand coalition.

Such a device of minority veto has its demerits also. It might lead to minority tyranny leading to possible disruption of elite cooperation in a grand coalition. But, as Lijphart points out, there are three reasons why this danger is not serious as appears. *First*, the veto is a mutual veto. All minority segments can use it. All minority would like to harm its own interests by frequent use of the veto power. *Second*, the veto, the minorities know very well, is a potential weapon. This feeling itself is quite comforting to the minority segments. *Third*, each minority group would like to avoid, as far as possible, political deadlock and immobilism.

2.3.4 Proportionality

The principle of proportionality, like the mutual veto, is closely interlinked with the grand coalition principle. Two important functions of proportionality are :

- (a) "it is a method of allocating civil service appointments and scarce financial resources in the form of government subsidies among the different segments;" and
- (b) The other more important function of proportionality relates to the decision-making process. All groups or segments influence a decision in proportion to their numerical strength in the grand coalition. Proportionality adds a refinement to the grand coalition concept: "not only should all significant segments be represented in decision-making organs, but they should also be represented proportionally",

Referring to the European scene, Lijphart points out, by way of illustration, that the Swiss 'magic formula' for the composition of the Federal Council is a proportional formula. Similarly, in Austria the grand coalition cabinets were constituted in such a way as to reflect faithfully the electoral strength of the two coalition partners.

The proportionality principle does not solve the problem of how to achieve proportional influence when the nature of the decision is basically dichotomous, or yes or no type. In such cases, the use of either majority decision or a minority veto seems unavoidable.

There are two methods, as Lijphart points out, that can offer partial solutions. "One is to link several issues and to solve them simultaneously by reciprocal concessions", and the other method is to delegate the most difficult decisions to the top leaders of the participating segments.

2.3.5 Segmental Autonomy

Segmental autonomy is the logical corollary to the grand coalition principle. There are matters of common interests; and there are other matters that are exclusive concerns of the minority. Thus, in the latter sphere, the minority's right to rule is acknowledged. The minority rules over itself in the areas of its exclusive concern. When rule-making and rule-execution powers are delegated to the segments, this arrangement serves as a powerful stimulus to the segmental organizations. Segmental autonomy celebrates, sustains and promotes the plural nature of a

multi-cultural society. As Lijphart observes, “It is in the nature of consociational democracy, at best initially, to make plural societies more thoroughly plural. Its approach is not to abolish or weaken segmental cleavages but to reorganize them explicitly and to turn the segments into constructive elements of stable democracy.

2.4. Consociationalism and Federalism

Federal theory is based on the political duality of a “centre” for common purposes and the “regions” of ‘states’ or ‘provinces’ for fairly autonomous living within their own domain. So federal theory can be regarded as a limited and special type of consociational theory. When, in a federation, the segmental cleavages and regional or territorial cleavages overlap, federalism becomes a useful constitutional arrangement to implement the idea of segmental autonomy.

Segmental autonomy, as it often exists in non-territorial form (scattered over different territorial units of a federation), may also be encouraged in the realm of cultural affairs such as education, arts and communication. In such a system, segmental autonomy may be regarded as a generalization of the federal idea; the federal ideal of territorial autonomy being transferred to cultural spheres to encourage and sustain cultural plurality.

2.5. Critique of Consociational Democracy

As a normative example, consociational democracy needs to be evaluated to appreciate its real and alleged weaknesses. Two major weaknesses pointed out by Lijphart are :

- A. Consociational democracy may be criticised for not being democratic enough; and
- B. Consociational democracy is insufficiently capable of achieving a stable and efficient government..

A. As regards the first weakness, a grand coalition, which is the primary feature of consociational democracy, necessarily involves either a relatively small and weak opposition or the absence of any formal opposition in the legislature. If the presence of a strong opposition of the British type is considered vital for democracy, consociational democracy is by definition less democratic.

But, as Lijphart observes, the idea of a vigorous opposition that is possible to achieve to a large extent in homogenous societies, cannot be used as a standard for evaluating the political performance of segmented societies.

Another criticism of the democratic character of consociationalism is that it falls short of the democratic trinity of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The separate existence of different social segments leads to communal living with a dampening effect on individual liberty. The ideal of ‘equality’ is also affected in this kind of insular communal living. Consociational democracy ensures not “individual” equality but equal or proportional treatment of “groups”. Also, segmental autonomy may be an impediment to the realization of society-wide equality. The democratic ideal of ‘fraternity’ is also affected in a consociational system. Consociational democracy ensures “negative” peace, whereas fraternity stands for “positive” peace.

In defence of the consociational model, Lijphart argues that segmental section may tend toward, but does not inherently lead to, inequality. Also, peaceful coexistence of different social segments in a consociational system is no mean achievement.

The democratic quality of the consociational model has been further criticised on the ground that it is based on structured elite predominance' reducing, thereby, the non-elite groups to "passive and deferential role". While the phenomenon of elite leadership is conceded in the consociational system, its democratic character is still preserved by the leaders' responsiveness to non-elite wishes and demands. Again, a considerable degree of participation by the non-elite members in segmental organisations seems to promote the cause of democracy.

B. Its potential failure to bring about and maintain stability is the "most serious and fundamental criticism" of consociational democracy. As Lijphart points out, indecisiveness and inefficiency are likely to characterise the consociational system. The reasons are :

- (a) Decision-making is likely to be slow in a grand coalition of all major social segments.
- (b) The system of mutual veto may immobilise the decision-making process.
- (c) As a standard of recruitment to the civil services, the proportionality principle may stand in the way of recruitment on merit. This might affect administrative efficiency.
- (d) To satisfy different social segments, the consociation system may require the multiplication of the number of governmental and administrative units. Consociational democracy would in that event be a pretty expensive form of government.

Lijphart's answer to these questions is very pragmatic. As he observes, "consociational democracy may appear slow and ponderous in the short run but has a greater chance to produce effective decisions over time, particularly if the leaders learn to apply the mutual veto with moderation". The experience of European consociational democracies corroborates this viewpoint.

A final point made by Lijphart, in this context, is that "government" and "regime" coincides in a consociational democracy, which is not the case in a British type government *versus* opposition model. Dissatisfied citizens can cast their votes against the government without voting against the regime in this system. Dissatisfaction with governmental performance quickly turns into disaffection from the regime in a consociational system. In a mild rebuttal to this point, Lijphart draws attention to the advantage of proportional representation in a consociational democracy, under which it is easy for new parties to gain a voice in the political process.

2.6. Favourable Conditions for Consociational Democracy

Cooperation by segmental leaders in a spirit of moderation and compromise, despite deep cleavages among different social segments, makes consociational democracy effective. The role of leadership is, therefore, a crucial element in consociational democracy.

On the basis of a comparative study of European cases of consociational democracy, Lijphart has identified the following facts that have contributed to overarching elite cooperation and stable non-elite support :

- (i) a multiple balance of power among the segments of a plural society (that a dual balance or hegemony of any one segment) :
- (ii) small size of the country involved facilitating direct contacts among the leaders of segmental groups in a spirit of cooperativeness and accommodation and reducing the burdens of decision-making (due to smallness) :
- (iii) overarching loyalties exerting a moderating effect on intersegment conflicts and tensions (nationalism, for instance, may have unifying role);

- (iv) segmental isolation in a plural society limiting mutual contacts and reducing, thereby, chances of potential antagonism among different segments;
- (v) traditions of elite accommodation creating a psychological disposition among the influential political leaders to be “coalescent rather than adversarial” in decision-making; and
- (vi) the presence of crosscutting cleavages — the way in which social cleavages (e.g. linguistic, religious, economic etc.) cut across each other — affecting the chances for consociational democracy to survive and grow (because it affects the numbers and relative sizes of the segments and inter-segmental balance). As Lijphart illustrates: if the religious cleavage and the social class cleavage crosscut to a high degree, the different religious groups will tend to feel equal.

These factors, according to Lijphart, are “helpful, but neither indispensable nor sufficient in and of themselves to account for the success of consociational democracy”. Importantly, these factors contribute to cooperation among segments and their leaders, and they are “helpful not only in establishing consociational democracy in a plural society but also, once it is established, in maintaining and strengthening it”.

2.7. Consociational Democracy and the Third World

In the segmented societies of the Third World in Asia and Africa, there are both favourable and unfavourable conditions that influence the course of adoption and sustenance of consociational democracy. Because of deep social segmentations, it is the consociational model that should be given serious consideration as against the British model of party-in-power and party-in-opposition type of democratic government.

The role of elite leadership, as already discussed, in freely choosing the consociational model is of crucial importance in this context.

To the extent there would be fairly strong “national” feelings among the elite and the mass, the situation is favourable for consociational democracy. While under colonial rule, the freedom struggle against the colonialists forged a unity among the leaders and the mass. Also, the adoption of the language of the colonial power — English or French — had a significant unifying influence at the elite level. The other favourable condition is segmental isolation. This kind of isolation among the Third World social groups has tended to strengthen “the political inertness” of the non-elite public, and to create a deferential attitude toward segmental leaders, but in the ultimate analysis, the adoption of the consociational model would however depend on the role of the political leadership — the elites of segmented sections.

Lijphart identifies some “ambivalent” factors also — factors that may be favourable under certain circumstances, also they may not be so favourable in other situations. First such factor is the condition in respect of balance of power among the segmental groups. Extreme fragmentation, as in many African countries, creates problem for the success of consociational democracy. It all depends on how a balance of power is struck among the segments. The second ambivalent factor (favourable in some cases, and unfavourable in others) is the size of a country. The population sizes of many non-Western countries differ greatly. Finally, another ambivalent factor concerns the economic equality of the constituent segments of a country. Vast

discrepancies (in economic condition) act as a irritant and create bitterness among segments.

Lijphart straightway identifies a few “unfavourable” conditions as well. First, the political consequences of economic and social mobilization for plural societies have implications for consociational democracy. When attempts are made to bring about social and economic development, experience suggests that there may not be commensurate “political development”; rather there may be “political decay” setting in. Under the impact of socio-economic modernization, the plural societies may witness the rise of new non-elite individuals with hostile belief and jealousies toward the opposing segments. The deferential attitudes toward the political elites may weaken, rendering inter-elite negotiations difficult. With rising expectations concerning prosperity, segments! groups start placing more and more demands on the government, straining in the process governmental decision-making systems. Second, the struggle to gain independence, which forged unity among segmental groups, tends to become a matter of historical past. As memories of such struggle start fading away, the unifying effect of “national” struggle does not linger on any longer to put the social segments together. Third, most of the plural societies in the Third World had been colonies of Western Powers. So, “the models of democracy that they tended to follow when they tried to institute democratic institutions of their own were those of their former masters; the British model or models closely resembling the British one rather than the consociational example”. Thus, imitating the colonial model and accepting a kind of “imposed” political system *ab initio* worked against the thinking and adoption of any alternative consociational system of democracy.

2.8. Summing Up

It was thought that a stable democratic form of government is possible only in a homogenous society. In that case, plural societies with multiple social segments based on religion, languages etc. are not fit for democratic stability. This argument has proved to be false, as many of the multi-cultural European countries like Switzerland, Netherlands and Belgium have enjoyed democratic stability. A special form of democracy that has worked in these countries is known as ‘consociational democracy’.

This form of democracy has certain special features like grand coalition of the segmental groups in society, segmental autonomy, proportionality in respect of civil service jobs, and mutual veto.

Consociational democracy has not escaped criticism. But, even then it has worked well under conditions of segmental divisions in society.

Many of the countries in the Third World are characterised by social heterogeneity, as there are distinct social segments based on religion, language etc. Consociational democracy, and not majoritarian democracy of the British type, is the more appropriate form of democracy for these countries. In reality, however, these countries have usually opted for the democratic form of the colonial power that had ruled them prior to independence (like adopting the British type of party-in-power and party-in-opposition model). In this connection, both favourable and unfavourable conditions for Consociational democracy in the Third World countries need to be carefully considered. Also Lijphart’s apt comment in this context is worth remembering;

democracy itself may elude the Third World countries if Consociational democracy is not given adequate trial, and the conservative opinion may ultimately prevail that the Third World is not ripe for democracy.

2.9. Referenes and Further Readings

1. Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies : A comparative Exploration*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1989.
2. Arend Lijphart, "The Puzzle of India Democracy : A Consociational Interpretation", *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 90, No. 2, June 1996.

2.10. Questions

- Q. 1. Define Consociation Democracy.
- Q. 2. Discuss the features of Consociational Democracy.
- Q. 3. Write a critique of Consociational Democracy.
- Q. 4. Identify the favourable conditions of Consociational Democracy.
- Q. 5. is Consociational Democracy applicable to Third World countries?
- Q. 6. Discuss the favourable and unfavourable conditions of Consociational Democracy in a Third World situation.

UNIT : III □ ELITE THEORY

Structure

- 3.0 Objective.**
- 3.1 Introduction.**
- 3.2 Definition.**
 - 3.2.1 Basic Assumptions of Elite Theory.**
 - 3.2.2 Types of Elite.**
 - 3.2.3 Approaches to Elite Rule.**
- 3.3 Classical and Modern views of” Elite Rule.**
 - 3.3.1 Vilfredo Pareto.**
 - 3.3.2 Gaetano Masca and Robert Michels.**
 - 3.3.3 James Bumham.**
 - 3.3.4 C. Wright Mills.**
- 3.4 Limitations of Elite Theory.**
- 3.5 Elitism and Marxism.**
- 3.6 Elitism and Democracy.**
- 3.7 Conclusion.**
- 3.8 Key Words.**
- 3.9 Further Reading.**
- 3.10 Specimen Questions.**



3.0. Objectives

After studying this unit you would be able to understand,

- The meaning of elite rule;
- The nature of unequal distribution of” power in society;
- The different interpretations of elite rule;
- The relation between elitism, marxism and democracy;
- The limitations of elitist thesis.

3.1. Introduction

This unit deals with the concept of elite. You must have heard of this term in day to day life. But perhaps you do not know the political importance of this term. Our aim is to explain this concept from a political point of view. We have divided this unit into five sections.

The first section provides the definition of elite. This section also deals with types of and approaches to the elite rule.

The second section provides analysis of the views of key elitist thinkers.

In the **third** section we have mentioned some important limitations of elite theories of politics.

The fourth section compares elitism with marxism.

The **fifth** section compares elitism with democracy.

3.2. Definition of Elite

The term 'elite' originally meant, and still means, the best, the excellent or the best of the best. According to the oxford English Dictionary, the term was first used in 1823 and was applied to social groups. In the middle of the eighteenth century, Raymond Williams informs, the term was used to mean 'the chosen' or someone elected. The Latin term 'elegere' means to 'choose' or select. From early nineteenth century it mainly expressed social distinction by rank. In the writings of Pareto and Mosca the term was used in opposition to the conception of class. They meant by 'elite' a small effective group which remained and elite only by regular circulation and recruitment,

Pareto provides the simplest definition of elite. By the term 'elite' he refers to those individuals who have the highest indices (Scores) excellence in any particular branch of activity viz. law, fishing, bussiness or train — robbery. Thus according to him, the most successful train robber who gets never caught by the rail police be awarded ten (10) and the robber who often gets caught by the police be given zero (0). Thus we can define elite as a distinctive minority group within a society who is socially acknowledged as superior and who influences and controls every segment of society. The term refers to those minorities which are set apart from the rest of the society by their excellence. They are secular in nature and composition.

Now a days the term is generally used to functional or occupational groups which enjoy high status in a society. Sometimes it is used as a synonym for leaders. Harold Lasswell has difined eiltes as 'influential' people 'who get two most of what there is to get'. 'Those who get the most', he maintains, 'are elite, the rest are mass'. The elite is always less numerous, perform political functions, monopolies power and enjoys the fruits of power. The mass, on the other hand, is the more numerous class, directed and controlled. As elites are regarded intellectually superior by society, they hold positions of high status, set standards for the whole society. They happen to be the real decision-makers. They enjoy supreme political power and authority clearly, the 'term' elite helps us to examine the power structure of society.

3.2.1 Basic Assumptions of Elite Theory

We live in Society. Society is defined as a cobweb of social relations. Power relation in an important component of society. It is also known as political relation. There are a few groups in every society who simply exert power. There are namy other who simply obey the powerful.

Who enjoys power? And why? How is power distributed in society and polity? Do the people in a democracy really hold power? Is power unequally distributed? Why is it so? The elite theory attempts to give answer to these questions.

The basic assumptions of elite theory are :

1. All societies are divided into two groups : (a) ruling minority, and (b) the masses. The ruling minority — the elite — takes major decisions in the society; they rule power, organization, political skill or personal qualities of the elite are important mechanisms through which they exert power. The elites possess three important qualities : group consciousness coherence and two common will to action. These three qualities reinforce the privileged position of the elites in its relation to the other groups in the society. The elite theorists believe that power regenerates power. Once in the position of power, they believe, the elite constitutes a closed group i.e. it bars the entry of other to their own circle. However, the survival of the elites depend upon their capacity to adjust to pressures from outside and also in incorporating the potential elites of other groups into their own group.
2. There may be two stratum within the elite — the upper and the lower. The upper stratum explains and justify the decisions to the rest of the society. The bureaucracy constitutes the lower stratum of the elite.
3. The elite theory also implies that in a so-called democracy it is not the majority who controls the minority. On the contrary. It is the minority (i.e. the elite) which is always in a position to manipulate. In a democracy it is again the elites who rule, not the masses. According to Peter Bachrach, all elite theories are 'founded on two basic assumptions : first, that the masses are inherently incompetent, and second, that they are, at best, pliable, inert, stuff or at worst, aroused, unruly creatures possessing an insatiable proclivity to undermine both culture and society.

(P. Bachrach — **The Theory of Democratic Elitism P. 2)**

3.2.2 Types of Elites

Elites may be classified into two types — strategic and segmental. The judgments, decisions and action of those which are of supreme importance to the entire society may be termed as strategic elites. Others are segmental elites eg. cultural elite, economic elite etc. Among the strategic elites there may be a smaller group which is defined by C. Wright Mills as 'power elite'. According to him in America the business tycoons, chief military officials and the political leaders constitute the power elite. And they are the actual rulers. T.B. Bottomore in his book **Elites and Society** has identified five standard types of elites e.g. (a) a dynastic elite, (b) the middle class, (c) the revolutionary intellectuals, (d) the colonial administrators, and (e) the nationalist leaders in modernising societies.

Elite theorists can be divided into two groups : classical and modern. Vilfredo Pareto (1848 - 1927), Gaetano Mosca (1858 - 1941) and Robert Michels (1876 -1936) are generally known as classical elitists. Others like James Burnham, C. Wright Mills and Harold Lasswell are the modern followers of this line of thinking produced varieties of elite models. W. Domhoff (1978),

C. Perrow (1979) are some of the many recent elite thinkers of repute.

3.2.3 Approaches to Elite Rule

There are at least four approaches to elite rule, e.g. the psychological, organisational, economic and institutional. Among them Pareto's is the best elucidation of the elite theory.

33. Classical and Modern views of Elite Rule

3.3.1 Vilfredo Pareto

Vilfredo Pareto Provides a psychological approach to elite theorising. According to G. Parry, he is 'the grandest of all the classical elitist doctrines. Trained as a civil engineer at the Turin Poly technical School Pareto began his career as an engineer in the Italian Railways. He was initially supporter of the democratic and republican ideals. Later he deviated from this positions. In the eighties of the nineteenth century he joined politics. Soon he got disillusioned and developed a cynical attitude towards politics. In the nineties he was offered the chair of economics in the University of Lausanne and retired in 1907. During Mussolini's regime he was made a Senator of the kingdom of Italy, In 1923 he breathed his last.

His major work, **The Treatise on General Sociology** (1915) appeared in English translation as **Mind and society** (1936).

Logical and non-logical Action

According to Pareto human actions can be divided into two categories — logical and non-logical. Logical actions are those "which use means appropriate to ends and logically links means with ends". These actions are both objectively and subjectively logical. Non-logical action refers to all actions which do not fall into the category of logical actions. The study of non-logical actions, maintains Pareto, is important because it explains the inner forces (e.g., sentiments) of the actors. The breeding ground of non-logical actions are human psyche. He wants to use these Psychological facts as data of Socio-Political analysis.

Residues and Derivatives :

The non-logical actions are associated with Pareto's theory of residues and derivatives, with the help of these two concepts Pareto wants to unmask non-scientific theories and belief systems. **Residues** refers to the underlying emotion or sentiment that motivate man's non-rational actions. **Derivations** stands for rational explanations for non-logical or non-rational actions. It is equivalent to ideology.

Pareto describes six classes of residues which, he maintains, have remained more or less constant throughout the western history. Out of these two — **instinct of combinations, and group persistences** or **Persistence of aggregates** are of much importance to the study of elites in society. The former involves the use of ideas and imagination. Those who operate on this basis, according to Pareto, are 'foxes'. The followers of the instinct of persistence of aggregates are 'lions' (see the following table). The 'foxes' are imaginative; the 'lions' are strong-minded.

Class - I
'Instincts of Combination'

(Foxes)
Intelligent
Imaginative
Manipulative
Persevering
Consensual
Compromiser
Patient

Class - II
'Persistence of Aggregates'

(Lions)
Strong-minded
Reliable
Possessing integrity
Ruthless
Confrontational
Inflexible
Impatient

with the help of his theory of residues Pareto tried to explain various theories and belief systems, social movements and social changes.

Circulation of Elites :

According to Pareto, every society is divided into the 'masses' and the 'elite'. As human beings are unequal physically and mentally, he argues, in all social groups there are some people who are more intelligent and able than others. It is these people who constitute the 'elite'. We have already seen that Pareto defined elites as a class of people who have the highest scores in their branch of activity. Though the elites form a minority, they are divided into a 'governing elite', and a 'non-governing elite'. The governing elite are those who directly or indirectly influence or control political decision. The non-governing elite are those who hold leadership positions in society and are either out of power or are elite-in-waiting to get an opportunity to rule over the society. The rest constitutes the non-elite.

Pareto rejects the Marxist position that the dominant group in society (the ruling class) is the product of the economic structure of the society. On the contrary, he claims that the elite stems from individual attributes and instincts. Two important attributes are, as we have noted above, residues and derivations. He explains that change in society takes place through the circulation of elites'. And circulation takes place in terms of change in the psychological characteristics of elite. The circulation of elites implies, firstly, circulation of individuals between the elites and the non-elite, and, secondly, replacement of one group of elite by a new one; It is noteworthy that Pareto's position is akin to Machiavelli's 'Prince' which is a combination of wisdom (foxes) and ruthlessness (lions). Pareto is quite aware of the fact that his ideal-type elites —the foxes and the lions — are seldom materialised and that the balance between the two changes. And thus there takes place a 'circulation of elites'. That is, the 'foxes' replace the 'lions' and vice-versa. However, the 'foxes' gradually replace 'lions', while the 'lions' suddenly replace the 'foxes'. It means that recruitment of elites can take place either by evolution or revolution. In course of time, the governing elites lose their vigour owing to two declines in the proportion of the

residues which earlier enabled them to win power. They are then replaced by a new elite. The new elite comes to power because there is an increase of elements of superior quality in them. Opposing Karl Marx's explanation of history in terms of class struggle Pareto concludes that the history of the mankind is nothing but 'a graveyard of aristocracies'.

Clearly, Pareto's theory of social change is cyclical in nature. Marx provided a linear theory of social change in which evolution of human society from the primitive communism onwards ends with the coming of a Communist Society. According to Pareto, all societies move from one form to another form in a cyclical manner.

You have learnt about Pareto's contribution to political theory. Let us now discuss the other approaches to elite theory.

3.3.2 Gaetano Mosca (1858 - 1941) and Robert Michels (1876 -1936) : The Organisational Approach

Mosca was an Italian jurist and Political theories' Michels was a German sociologist and economist. Mosca developed his elite theory in **The Ruling Class** (1896) and Michels is best known for his **Political Parties** (1911)

Gaetano Mosca :

Mosca maintains that in all societies there are two classes of people — a class that rules and a class that is ruled. The ruling class (or the Political Class) is always less numerous, performs all political functions, monopolises power and with it the advantages that power brings. The second group, on the contrary, is more numerous, directed and controlled by the first. According to Mosca, the ruling class — the elite — because of its minority status gets advantages over others. Its minority status and capacity for organisation facilitate its striking to power. In times of crises the unorganised majority always looks to the elite for the right 'cue'. Mosca divides the elite into upper and lower strata. The upper stratum consists of a small group of political decisionmakers and the lower stratum consists of opinion leaders and political activists. This stratum is the main recruitment pool for the upper stratum.

Mosca traces two 'Principles' in the flow of authority. He finds two 'tendencies' in employment behind the recruitment of elite members. According to him the flow of authority generally takes two courses — downward (or the 'autocratic principle') or upward (the 'liberal principle'). In an autocracy officials are appointed and granted authority by some higher official. In a liberal system the rulers get authorised by the ruled. However, he makes it clear that these two types are the ideal typical analytical constructs in the Weberian sense not the real ones, to which any given society will more or less conform. In reality we see a mixture of these two principles. Recruitment of the ruling class display either 'aristocratic' or 'democratic' tendency. In Political system where aristocratic tendency prevails, the members of the ruling class are recruited from the very existing ruling class. Contrarily, the democratic tendency is displayed where the ruling class is renewed from the members of the ruled. In its extreme from each tendency has its dangers. In any society where aristocratic principle is dominant the ruling class loses contact with the interest of the society and any society where extreme democratic tendency prevails the ruling class faces threats of revolution. Mosca acknowledges that sometimes the

masses, or the non-elite, might become discontented and may attempt to overthrow the ruling elite. But in that case too an organised minority within the non-elite would be responsible and would soon form a new ruling class.

Mosca was a contemporary of Pareto. Like Pareto he observes that in every society there is a minority which rules over the masses. He is also in agreement with Pareto that the 'governing elite, or the 'Political Class' is replaced by the new forces. But while Pareto emphasises a separation between the rulers and the ruled and rejects the view that a democratic polity is different from any other form of governance, Mosca notices an interaction between the ruling minority and the ruled majority. That is, there is no single domination by the ruling minority over the masses. Secondly, unlike Pareto he recognises difference between modern democracy and other forms of polity. Finally, while Pareto's theory is based on psychological explanations, Mosca combines both sociological and psychological factors. Mosca views that as a result of economic and cultural change new social groups may be formed in any society. That is, sometimes Mosca's position comes closer to that of Marx.

Robert Michels :

Robert Michels, a disciple of Mosca, in his book — **Political Parties** propounds his famous 'iron law of oligarchy'. He attempts to analyse the nature of the European socialist parties and trade unions with special reference to the German socialist party. According to Michels, every organisation, big or small, requires leadership for its survival. And the nature of organisation is such that it gives power and privileges to a group of leaders who cannot be restricted or held accountable by their followers. Because of the vast size and complex nature of modern societies direct involvement of people in the decision making process becomes difficult. This happens to be one of the reasons for the emergence of representative form of government. According to Michels, representative system of governance paves the way for bureaucratisation which is, in essence, undemocratic. Bureaucracy maintains its hold over power even at the cost of the interest of the society through their manipulative skills.

There are in the main, two sets of factors which facilitate bureaucratisation — organisational and psychological. According to Michels, for its smooth functioning every organisation requires expertise which the masses lack. The technical indispensability of leadership' requires that the control of the party goes to the hands of the politicians and the bureaucracy. The leaders control the party funds and the party's channels of information play vital role in selecting candidates, electioneering, raising contributions and dispensing patronage. It is obvious that Michels focuses on the internal power structure of the parties. To keep its hold on power, he argues, the party is forced to shed dogma, purity of doctrine and gets bound to adopt a moderate line. All this, he maintains, strengthens the party bureaucracy which is very much interested in exercising power than maintaining the purity of its doctrine. Besides this, it also strengthens the position of the elected parliamentary representatives. When a proletarian party captures power a 'proletarian elite' emerges which, in turn, gets 'bourgeoisified' and turns itself into a power group with interest of its own. That is, the organisational and structural forces push toward oligarchy which means self-perpetuating dominance by the few.

As to the psychology of the masses Michels is of opinion that people are generally apathetic

and take part in politics only when their private interests are affected. Moreover, they are technically incompetent. Their apathy, submissiveness and deference to their leaders provide ideal condition for the emergence of oligarchy. The prime aim of an elite — the state, society or an organisation whatever may be the case— is to maintain and consolidate its own power. This, according to Michels, is the iron law of oligarchy which is applicable to all societies including both the capitalist and socialist ones. Michels argues that the very nature of the organisation gives birth to the domination of the elected (the minority of the elite) over the electors (i.e., the masses) of the mandatories over the mandators of the delegates over the del'egators. That is why Michels opines that 'who says organisation, says oligarchy'.

3.3.3 Tames Burnham (1905 - 87) The Economic Approach

We have already noted that elite theories grew as a reaction against marxism. However, James Burnham in his **The Managerial Revolution** (1941) attempts to combine marxism and elitism. Burnham's main thesis is that hi the aftermath of the industrial revolution the control of the means of production in advanced industrial societies has passed from the hands of the capitalists to the hands of the managers and technical experts. He agrees with the marxist thesis that the dominant groups of any society control the means of production and prevent others from gaining 'access' to it. The controlling group receives 'preferential treatment' in the distribution of the product. The group which gets the lion's share constitutes the ruling group. Its dominance over the economic resources gives rise to political power, social prestige and wealth success or failure of the elite depends upon it's capacity to monopolise the instruments of production. If any group other than the ruling one gets access to the means of production the position of the ruling class gets undermined and the new group becomes the ruling group.

Burnham obseres that with the passage of time the capitalist class has got divorced from the actual operations of production. As a consequence of it, the task of managing the production process has been 'shifted to the professional managers, technicians et al. Not only that, hi course of tune the capitalist class has even dissociated itself from financing the production units and has turned into a 'leisured class'. As a result, the production process has passed into the hands of the managerial class and the technical elites. According to Burnham, this managerial class would eventually establish total control in the economic sphere, receive the preferential treatment and thus, after a certain period of time, replace the capitalist class. Burnhum maintains that these managers. - cum - technicians constitute the new elite. The state gets subordinated to the needs of this managerial elite. Industrial societies get centralised and are ultimately run by bureaucrats.

Thus, contrary to the marxist dream of replacement of the capitalist class by the proletariat, argues Burnham, the managers replace the capitalists. Similarly, he observes that it is not the legislatures but the executive which takes actual decisions. The separation between the state and economy comes to an end because industries are now run by the state. And as G. Parry maintains the 'managerial personnel and state bureaucrats become interchangeable with the growing similarity of their functions and methods. Managerial control of the state and the state control of the economy will ultimately consolidate a new elite domination — elitism with a marxist flavour'.

3.3.4 Wright Mills (1916 - 62) The Institutional Approach

C. Wright Mills, an American sociologist, wrote several books on Sociology and Political Sociology. Though not a convinced Marxist he is generally dubbed as an intellectual with leftist leanings.

In his **The Power Elite (1956)** Mills propounds the thesis that in America three important institutions play a vital role in decision making. He dislikes the term 'Ruling Class' on the ground that it smacks of economic determinism and does not allow 'enough autonomy to the political order and its agents and it says nothing about the military as such'. Instead he prefers the term 'Power elite'. Like Pareto's concept of 'governing elite' Mills defines 'Power elite' in terms of power - as those who occupy the command posts'. He identifies three important 'power elites' in the USA — the big business corporations, the political clique and the military leaders and demonstrates their interconnections. The corporation rich, the warlords, the political directorate, all are at the top of the mass society which the elites manipulate by advertising and propaganda. Martin Dale summarises Mills's position in the following manner : "...The public is transformed into a mass which, for Mills, means that (1) fewer people express opinions than receive them, (2) communications are so arranged that the individual receiving opinions is unable to answer back immediately with any effect, (3) opinion is controlled by the authorities who dominate the channels of communication, (4) the mass has no institutions for developing autonomous opinions....". In contrast with the power elite, Mills maintains, the great majority of people are politically fragmented, passive and powerless.

To make the powerful responsible Mills suggests that they must be held accountable to the intellectual elite. Ideally, decision makers should be held responsible to the ordinary people, but since the latter lack the knowledge to direct "history making decisions", argues Mills, the responsibility falls upon the intellectuals.

For Mills, the elite happens to be the product of the 'institutional landscape' of the society. He holds that in any society some institutions hold very important positions and persons placed at the topmost ranks of hierarchy occupy the 'command posts' of the social structure. He insists that the principal elites — economic, political and military — constitute a cohesive group and that the power of the elite stems from its position rather than from status, wealth or ability, power, he argues, is attached to institutions and the elite formation takes place only in the context of these important institutions. The cohesiveness of these groups results from the similarity of their social origin, institutional proximity and free interflow of personnel among them. The greater the degree of interchange and institutional proximity the more unified the elite. Because of institutional proximity, the power elite shares a similar lifestyle which generates a sense of unity. The styles of life get perpetuated as like-minded peoples recruit like-minded ones. Thus, the elite in the USA, he maintains, is recruited from the wealthier classes.

To sum up, Mills believes that within the dominant institutions of modern USA the instruments of power are concentrated into a few hands. He argues that the major policy decisions of the US government up to the first fifty years of the twentieth century vindicate the enormous concentration of decision-making power in the hands of a very small number of institutional office holders viz, the big business, the military and the federal government. Contrary to the popular belief that power in America is diffused, Mills shows that in reality it is concentrated

in fewer hands.

We may not agree with Mills's notion of a conspiracy at the top but must appreciate that **The Power Elite** is one of the most pioneering studies of our time.

Though the classical elitist thinkers provide different versions of minority rule certain points of agreement among them can be shown. **First**, all the five thinkers agree that power is concentrated in fewer hands and that all societies irrespective of their dissimilarities in political forms are ruled by a minority — the elite. The elite is powerful because of its organising ability which springs from its minority status (Mosca), or every organisation is inevitably-run by an oligarchy (Michels), or because it possesses appropriate psychological attributes (Pareto) or because it has command over two economic forces of production (Burnham), or it occupies command positions (Mills) in society. **Second**, the elite constitutes a conscious cohesive and conspiratorial group **Third**, **power** is cumulative in nature i.e., power generates more power.

3.4. Limitations of Elite Theory

Elite theories of politics and society are not flawless. Their major limitations are as follows : **Firstly**, It is argued that the idea of elite has been conceived to counter the marxist conception of class and class struggle.

Secondly, as a political doctrine it is opposed to modern democracy and socialism. Elitists insist upon the inequality of individual attributes but the democrats put emphasis on the underlying equality of individuals.

Third, R. E. Dowse and J. A. Hughes doubt if the elite is a cohesive group at all. According to them it is very difficult to obtain information about the actual manner in which the elite accord is reached. The advocates of elite theory, they argue, have failed to show that as a cohesive group all power, authority and control are concentrated in few hands.

Finally, Raymond Williams in his **Culture and Society** opines that “.....the theory of elites is, essentially, only a refinement of social **laissez faire**....”.

3.5. Elitism and Marxism

At this junction we can compare marxism with elitism. The major features of marxism are :

- (i) Every society consists of two classes — the ruling class and the subject class;
- (ii) The owners of the means of production constitute the ruling class;
- (iii) The interests of these classes are contradictory and they are in perpetual conflict;
- (iv) Societies change through class struggle;
- (v) Class struggle reaches its zenith when their antagonistic interests are radically polarised;
- (vi) Class struggle ends when the working class seizes power through revolution and thereafter prepares the ground for a classless society.

Most of the elite theorists criticised marxism on the ground that it allegedly propounded an economic deterministic explanation of social and political change. Instead they put emphasis on the role of non-economic factors in explaining social change as well as unequal distribution of power in society. For Marx, the ruling class is not only a political ruling class, but also an

economic ruling class as well. But excepting Burnham all the elite theorists are of opinion that the 'ruling class' is always a political class. According to Marx and Engels, change in the ruling class is a result of changes in the relations of production (i.e., in the economic sphere). The elitists however think that such a change takes place only in the political sphere. The marxists envisage a radical change in the distribution of power, but the elitists believe in cyclical change e.g. the proletarian elites succeed the capitalist elites (Pareto). Finally, the elitists find no validity in the marxist idea of a classless egalitarian society. They are the supporters of an unequal stratified social and political order.

However, despite these differences we can discern one important similarity between the marxists and the elitists. Both agree on the point that in every society power gets unequally distributed and it is concentrated in the hands of a few. In the works of Burnham we see incorporation of some elements of marxism. Later Raymond Aron also attempted to synthesize marxism and elitism.

3.6. Elitism and democracy

As with marxism elitism is also inconsistent with democracy. Generally, democracy means a government by the people. But the elitists believe that the so-called modern democratic government is a government run by the elites. However, it can be said that the modern representative government is nothing but the government run by the elites. Because here mass of the population participates in the election only to choose between rival elites (i.e. leaders of political parties). Hence it can be claimed that elitism and democracy are not inherently contradictory.

However, this elitist version of democracy has been criticized on many grounds :

First, the classical proponents of democracy have defined democracy as participation of the mass of the people in the government. But the elitists deny it. For them, in modern complex societies only indirect democracy is viable. The representative, they argue, are always a minority who monopolise power.

Second, the elitist account of democracy is 'something accomplished and complete', not a 'continuing process of empowerment' of the ordinary people.

Third, it is questionable whether the competition between parties and rulers is the only viable condition for ensuring democracy.

Fourth, the elitists exclude from their definition of democracy the non-political factors which play important role in the making and unmaking of democracy.

Fifth, it is doubtful whether any form of government could survive for long if the rival elites are in permanent opposition with each other.

Sixth, P. Bachrach argues that the 'fundamental difference' between the elitists and the classical democrats is significantly reflected in their diverse approaches to what constitutes the 'public interest'.

3.7. Conclusion

In this unit we have discussed the concept of elite in the context of power. In every society

power is distributed unequally. We have shown that the elite theories provide non-economic explanations for distribution of power.

We have discussed the views of some well-known scholars who are of opinion that in all societies the ruling class constitutes a minority. Elite theory is explained here as developed in opposition to the marxist theory of class as well as in opposition to democratic theory of mass rule. Views of Pareto, Mosca, Michels, Burnharn and Mills have been especially highlighted. Finally, we have compared elitism with marxism and democracy and shown its limitations as well as its importance in explaining political realities.

3.8. Key words

Circulation of Elite : The term introduced by Pareto refers to the replacement of one group of elite by another group.

Derivations : The term used by Pareto means rational explanations for non-rational actions. It is equivalent to ideology,

Elite : The most influential, best, prestigious, successful and well off section of society.

Oligarchy : Rule of few.

Residues : The term introduced by Pareto refers to the replacement of one group of elite by another group.

3.9. Further Reading

Bottomore, T. B. 1964 **Elite and Society**, London, Penguin. Parry, G. 1970 **Political Elites**, London, G. Allen and Unwin.

3.10. Specimen Questions

Essay Type :

1. Write a note on circulation of elites as propounded by V. Pareto.
2. Discuss the elite theory of distribution of power.
3. Write a note on the concept of Power Elite.
4. Discuss the organisational approach to elite rule.
5. Distinguish between marxism, democracy and elitism.

Objective Type :

1. Who has written the book — **The Mind and Society** ?
2. Who, according to Mills, constitute the power elite in America ?
3. What is meant by 'circulation of elites' ?
4. Who said : 'Who says organisation, says oligarchy' ?
5. What is Pareto's view on social/ political change ?
6. What is meant by 'residues' and 'derivations' ?

MODULE - III : MARXIST POLITICAL THEORY

■ GENERAL INTRODUCTION ■

This Module discusses how, as distinguished from liberal political theory, an alternative tradition in political theory, based on the principles of Marxism, developed in the twentieth century. Marxist political theory, therefore, is not necessarily identical with Dialectical and Historical Materialism which, however, constitute the general theoretical foundations of Marxism. While Dialectical and Historical Materialism provide the materialist explanation of man's existence and his history, traditionally Marxism views questions of politics as elements of the superstructure, to be explained as derivatives of, and determined by, the economic base. The underlying premise is that it is the socio-economic foundation of society which provides the key to the understanding of the state, the focal point of politics. Consequently, within the Marxist tradition for quite a long time the dominant trend has been to consider the socio-economic factors as decisive, and treat politics and questions of political theory as their derivatives. This resulted in the birth of a reductionist viewpoint within mainstream Marxism, commonly known as determinism, the implication of which has been to deny a proper autonomy to the sphere of politics. This, for instance, was the outlook of the Second International (1889-1914), dominantly represented by Kari Kautsky, and whom Lenin sharply criticized. What it denied was the active role of consciousness and organization in the shaping of history. The triumph of the Russian Revolution in 1917, therefore, came to be known as the defeat of this deterministic outlook, since this was a revolution which testified to the active role that will, consciousness and organization can play in the making of revolutions. In other words, the victory of the Russian Revolution opened up a new perspective in the history of Marxism, the focus being on will, consciousness, organization, as distinct from the commonly held belief that Marxism was a kind of determinism, the idea of determinism, again, being associated with the idea that Marxism is a science. This was strongly defended by Kautsky in the Second International. Just as science rests on certain infallible and universal principles, Marxism, it was claimed, also provided a scientific explanation of life and society in terms of the immutable principles of Dialectical and Historical Materialism; it meant that a socialist revolution can take place only in an advanced capitalist country when the crisis matures, denying any role to consciousness, will and subjectivity. Actually in the writings of Marx these two aspects, namely, science and subjectivity, were present. But in the kind of , interpretation of Marxism that emerged in the Second International through Kautsky these two aspects got not only separated but also in the name of science Marxism was reduced to a kind of determinism. Primarily through the theoretical interpretations provided by Lenin the Russian revolution restored the lost dimension of Marxism, namely, consciousness, will and subjectivity. This largely contributed to the shaping of the idea that politics has an autonomous sphere, since although it belongs to the superstructure, the superstructure itself is not to be considered simply as a derivative of the base. Assigning this autonomy to the superstructure and thereby to politics, together with the

idea that politics plays the key role in the transformation of a bad society into a good society whereby this act of transformation becomes an act of revolution, constitutes the crux of what has commonly come to be known as Marxist political theory. Although the ingredients of such a theory have nowhere been clearly identified, one possible reason being that neither the founding fathers of Marxism (Marx, Engels) and their successors like Lenin, Mao and others nor theorists like Gramsci, Lukacs and Althusser were academics trained in the so called discipline of Political Science. They were either professional revolutionaries or philosophers, and in many cases they combined the role of an activist and a theoretician. Consequently, while it is difficult to distinguish any specific political theory from Marxism in their writings, it is possible, however, to broadly formulate an outline of what Marxist political theory is all about by identifying the following principles. One ; The essence or meaning of a phenomenon has to be distinguished from its appearance by theoretically analyzing and exposing the falsity of the appearance (the distinction between the appearance and essence of capitalism, for instance). Two : a phenomenon is to be explained in the context of totality and not in isolation. This makes the role of history extremely important in Marxism. Three : phenomena are to be explained in the light of contradictions, the underlying idea being that change is permanent, while stability is temporary. The important point to be remembered is that the operation of these principles involves an element of conscious theoretical activity, as distinct from a mechanical and deterministic outlook, in this Module an attempt has been made in the following Units (I-IV) to present the contributions of four key thinkers in twentieth century Marxism to the development of Marxist political theory. Although there are certainly variations in their understanding, it will be evident that notwithstanding differences they all provide a perspective which is sharply opposed to a deterministic understanding of Marxism. Consequently, their views consider politics not simply as a derivative of the socio-economic structure but as a superstructural sphere that is relatively autonomous in relation to the base. Moreover, it is to be kept in mind that they are not just academics; they are strongly motivated by a sense of critiquing capitalism and a theoretical defence of an alternative view of politics, grounded in the philosophy of Marxism.

In Unit I an outline of the contribution of the great Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who belongs to the pre World War II period, is given. Gramsci is generally considered as a major figure in what is commonly known as Western Marxism, a tradition in Marxism that originated in Western Europe, under the impact of the Russian Revolution, and which primarily emphasized the idea of subjectivity, consciousness and superstructure in the interpretation of Marxism, contesting thereby the kind of deterministic Marxism that had flourished during the period of the Second International. Gramsci's use of the concepts of Hegemony, Modern Prince and his understanding of the strategy of revolution and the State constitute the key elements of his contribution to Marxist political theory, in Unit II the contribution of one of the most wellknown representatives of post-World War II French Marxism, namely, Louis Althusser, is discussed. Like Gramsci, Althusser is also noted as a theorist of the superstructure and a staunch opponent of any deterministic understanding of Marxism. But, methodologically, Gramsci and Althusser

represent two quite distinct traditions in twentieth century Marxism. While Gramsci, together with Lukacs, and followed by Merleau Ponty and Sartre, represents the humanist tradition in Marxism, their understanding largely anchored in Marxism's Hegelian roots, with emphasis on such Hegelian categories as consciousness, subjectivity etc, Althusser provides a structuralist interpretation of Marxism, which directly questions the rationale of subjectivity, consciousness and humanism in the interpretation of Marx. Althusser, who termed Marxism as "theoretical antihumanism", conceptualised Marxism as a science, firmly embedded in Dialectical and Historical Materialism. The Althusserian interpretation rejects the Hegelian heritage of Marxism as well as any deterministic or empiricist understanding of Marxism as a science. Althusser's structuralist interpretation of Marxism, developed under the influence of Freud and structuralist linguistics, opened up new horizons in twentieth century Marxism by developing a new method of studying Marxism through the development of such key concepts as Overdetermination, and by providing an altogether new understanding of state and ideology.

In Unit III the contribution of Ralph Miliband, a very prominent British Marxist, belonging to the post World War II period, is discussed. Miliband is particularly well known for his analysis of the modern capitalist state and his scepticism about the claims of the modern liberal democratic state in the West. Miliband's contribution to Marxist political theory generally refers to his examination of the state under modern capitalism in terms of the class interests of capitalism, popularly known as his defence of the instrumentalist view of the state. This led him to be engaged in a critical encounter with the structuralist view of the state under capitalism, as advanced by Nicos Poulantzas.

In Unit IV the views of Nicos Poulantzas, a very distinguished figure in the aftermath of World War II, are presented. Originally hailing from Greece, but later exiled in France, Poulantzas, like Althusser, is considered as a major representative of structuralist Marxism in the twentieth century. Poulantzas is primarily known for his debate with Ralph Miliband on the understanding of the modern capitalist state. Commonly known as the Miliband-Poulantzas debate, methodologically speaking, this was a critical engagement between the instrumentalist (Miliband) and the structuralist (Poulantzas) position. To be more precise, while in Miliband the emphasis was on class, in Poulantzas the focus was on the relations which constitute the structure of the capitalist state.

UNIT I : GRAMSCI

- 1.1. □ INTRODUCTION**
- 1.2. □ HEGEMONY, CIVIL SOCIETY, STATE AND STRATEGY OF REVOLUTION.**
- 1.3. □ MODERN PRINCE” AND THE “THEOREM OF FIXED PROPORTIONS”.**
- 1.4. □ EXERCISES**
- 1.5. □ SUGGESTED READINGS**

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Antonio Gramsci, generally known as the theoretician of the superstructure, an opponent of any positivist and deterministic understanding of Marxism, and one of the founders of the Italian Communist Party (PCI) in 1921, combined in him the role of an activist and an intellectual. Learning from his own experience of and participation in the social, political and cultural life of Italy during and after the end of World War I, Gramsci's alternative vision of Marxism was shaped by his concern for the following developments which he witnessed. First: the mounting crisis of Italian state and society, especially after Italy's defeat in the War, resulting in growing unrest among the labouring masses; the bankruptcy of the Italian Socialist Party in mobilizing the masses for a revolutionary alternative, especially after the victory of the October Revolution in Russia in 1917; the rapidly growing influence of fascism and the ability of fascism to come to power in Italy in 1926 by manipulating the consciousness of the masses; the failure of the Italian Left, especially the PCI, to withstand the challenge of fascism. Gramsci developed his ideas in a highly complex and sophisticated form primarily in his Prison Notebooks, which he wrote between 1926 and 1937, after he was arrested following Mussolini's coming to power. In trying to explain how and why fascism triumphed in Italy by securing the consent of the masses through its ability to skillfully control the various components of the superstructure, namely, church, the educational institutions etc, which Gramsci broadly characterized as Civil Society, Gramsci disagreed fundamentally with an influential section within the PCI, led by Amadeo Bordiga. While for Gramsci, fascism in Italy had struck deep into the consciousness of the masses, warranting thereby the need for a cultural and ideological strategy to combat fascism on the level of superstructure, Bordiga wholly discounted this viewpoint and argued instead in favour of an insurrectionary strategy on the model of the October Revolution, the presumption being that fascism in Italy was basically a weak and unstable force without any popular support base. In the light of these considerations Gramsci developed certain key ideas in defence of his interpretation of an alternative vision of Marxism. The kind of Marxism that

Gramsci developed is described by him as “philosophy of praxis” in his Prison Notebooks, and an active, interventionist role is attributed to will, subjectivity and consciousness, since he rejects the conventional Marxist understanding that consciousness is simply the product of the material world. A brief summary of his main ideas is given below.

1.2 HEGEMONY, CIVIL SOCIETY, STATE AND STRATEGY OF REVOLUTION

Hegemony, for Gramsci, refers to the notion of intellectual and moral leadership of a class which is able to secure thereby the consent of the governed and which thus enables the hegemonic class to rule not necessarily through violence and coercion. This hegemony has been historically established in the West in course of the coming to power of the bourgeoisie, following the development of capitalism, whereby the rule of the bourgeoisie in the West has been able to legitimize itself in the eyes of the people. Hegemony primarily targets the institutions of the superstructure in the sense that by taking control of the mechanisms, which shape our mind and consciousness, the stability of political power is ensured. Hegemony, therefore, is a strategy of modern capitalism.

It is in this context that the question of Civil Society becomes crucial for Gramsci. While civil society generally has been termed as the realm of the private, as distinct from the realm of the public, thus associating the Civil Society generally with the sphere of private economic activities of individuals under capitalism, free from the control of the state, Gramsci, while not denying this understanding, widens the sphere of Civil Society by relating it to the superstructural institutions (i.e., family, church, educational and cultural institutions etc), which, notwithstanding their private nature, are not totally unrelated to the state. Hegemony, for Gramsci, focuses on Civil Society and thus reaches out to the masses through its control of the cultural and ideological institutions of the superstructure, resulting in the ability of capitalism to govern without resorting to domination and coercion as the primary strategy.

This understanding enables Gramsci to introduce a new perspective in the traditional Marxist understanding that the state is necessarily and exclusively a coercive institution and that it rules only through violence and coercion, necessitating thereby the strategy of armed violence and insurrection for overthrowing the state. While Gramsci did not underrate the role of force and violence under capitalism, what he emphasized was that capitalism does not sustain itself by relying predominantly on coercion, but on consent, which is secured through the establishment of hegemony in Civil Society. Thus, for Gramsci, the modern capitalist state is actually a combination of force and consent, coercion and hegemony, that is, state = political society (force) + civil society (consent). Thus not only the notion of Civil Society is broadened but also the narrow understanding of the State is widened, resulting in an expanded understanding of the conventional Marxist understanding of the State.

It is this new methodological understanding of State and Civil Society which explains

Gramsci's unique understanding of the strategy of revolution. Modifying the traditional Marxist understanding that the road to socialism lies through armed insurrection and violent seizure of state power, the premise being that the state is an instrument of coercion in the hands of the bourgeoisie, Gramsci argued that this strategy would work only in those societies where there is almost complete absence of hegemony and thereby Civil Society. This, for instance, was the situation in Czarist Russia where "the state was everything, the civil society nothing", and where, as a consequence, the element of consent was virtually absent. Gramsci thus makes a distinction between what he describes as the "East" and the "West", which means that societies of the "East" are those where, historically, the Civil Society has not evolved and where the state rules predominantly through coercion, the element of hegemony being minimal; in contrast, Gramsci terms those societies as belonging to the category of the "West" where civil society has matured and, as a result, the state predominantly rules through hegemony (= consent). The implication of this distinction for Gramsci is extremely crucial. To wage a revolution in the "East" the strategy of military confrontation/armed insurrection would be appropriate, because a state based on coercion calls for a strategy of revolutionary violence for its overthrow, — a strategy that Gramsci describes as "the war of manoeuvre (movement)". On the contrary, to launch a revolution in the "West" would mean taking into consideration the presence of the civil society (i.e., in countries where capitalism has advanced) and since in these countries the state rules predominantly by securing the consent of the governed, a direct revolutionary assault on the state would not work. The state is here protected by the "trench" of civil society and the seizure of state power, therefore, would involve prior capturing of the civil society by establishing a counter hegemony in this realm, that is, the state being the fort, to capture it the trench surrounding it would have to be seized first. This would be a protracted battle, which would have to be fought on the level of ideology and culture, a strategy that Gramsci describes as the "war of position". Fascism in Italy, Gramsci argued, could not be defeated simply by revolutionary violence without addressing the question of hegemony. In this connection two clarifications are necessary. First, Gramsci, of course, did not contrapose force and consent, since they are two elements of the modern state, and he also makes it clear that ultimately it is the military factor (the element offeree) which becomes decisive. What is significant is that Gramsci does not universalize a particular strategy, irrespective of all societies. Second, if hegemony in the true sense means a kind of intellectual and moral leadership which is consciously accepted by the people, fascism in that sense was not hegemonic proper. Through its rhetoric and manipulative skills it could take over the institutions of civil society and appeared as a hegemonic force but it was actually "domination without hegemony", a phenomenon that Gramsci describes as a "passive revolution" whereby the slogans and rhetoric of revolution are appropriated in order to scuttle any real revolution in the long run.

1.3 “MODERN PRINCE” AND THE “THEOREM OF FIXED PROPORTIONS” :

Gramsci was a thinker as well as an activist and he was the General Secretary of the PCI when he was arrested in 1926. Consequently, his vision of Marxism had a strong focus on the idea of a revolutionary party in a new perspective. He related his idea to the notion of hegemony and his arguments imply that as against bourgeois hegemony the battle for an alternative hegemony would have to be led by a new kind of Communist Party, which would not act simply as the leader of the working class but as an intellectual and moral leader symbolizing the “national popular collective consciousness” of the entire society. Such a party, according to Gramsci, would be destined to play the role of Machiavelli’s Prince and so Gramsci describes it as the Modern Prince. Just as Machiavelli projected the image of a Prince of the future under whose hegemonic leadership Italy would emerge as a socially and morally integrated nation, similarly, for Gramsci, it was possible for the Communist Party to emerge as a real hegemonic force in Italy of his time provided it could project itself as the Modern Prince.

Gramsci was not satisfied simply with a new idea of the party. He was no less concerned with organizational questions of the Communist Party. A fundamental question that confronted him was how to constantly ensure a dynamic leadership in the party and prevent concentration of power permanently in a few hands. For Gramsci the answer lies in devising a mechanism whereby mobility can be a permanent feature of the organizational life of the party. This explains Gramsci’s “theorem of fixed proportions”. It means that within the party there has to be a continuously upward flow of elements from the ranks to the leaders through the cadres. Thus, today’s ranks will become tomorrow’s cadres and today’s cadres will become tomorrow’s leaders and in the process not only there will be a continuous infusion of blood from the lower to the higher level but also in case of a crisis demanding urgent replacement of old by new leaders, this strategy would pay dividends (Gramsci reminds us as it happens in war). Thus a proportionate balance between the three elements (rank, cadre and leader) would be maintained, together with its dynamism, and this is what Gramsci describes as the “theorem of fixed proportions”.

1.4 EXERCISE :

Short Questions :

1. What is a ‘civil society’?
2. What do you understand by the concept “philosophy of praxis”?
3. Discuss the concept of the “Theorem of Fixed Proportions”.
4. Write a short note on ‘Prison Notebooks’.
5. What do you understand by the idea ‘domination without hegemony’?

Long Questions :

1. Discuss Gramsci's concept of 'hegemony'.
2. Discuss how Gramsci makes a distinction between the Societies of the 'East' and the Societies of the 'West' ?
3. Discuss the major area of controversy between Gramsci and Amadeo Bordiga.
4. Discuss how Gramsci was concerned with the organisational questions of the Communist Party.

1.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

- A. Tom Bottomore et al (eds) : A Dictionary of Marxist Thought. The entry on "Gramsci".
- B L. Kolakowski: Main Currents of Marxism. Vol II. Chapter VI, sections 1, 5-7.
- C. David McLellan : Marxism after Marx. An Introduction. Chapter 14.
- D. Martin Carnoy : The State and Political Theory. Chapter 3.



UNIT II : ALTHUSSER

- 2.1. □ INTRODUCTION**
- 2.2. □ ALTHUSSER'S METHOD**
- 2.3. □ ALTHUSSER ON IDEOLOGY**
- 2.4. □ ALTHUSSER ON STATE**
- 2.5. □ EXERCISES**
- 2.6. □ SUGGESTED READINGS**

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Louis Althusser, a French Marxist, is regarded as one of the most wellknown theorists of the post World War II period. Although like Gramsci he too was an uncompromising critic of any kind of determinism and, like Gramsci, again, he focused his attention on the superstructure, his methodological position was fundamentally different from that of Gramsci. Althusser is generally considered to be an exponent of what has come to be known as Structuralist Marxism, its another leading representative being Nicos Poulantzas (for discussion on Poulantzas see Unit IV). Influenced by Freud and structuralist linguistics, Althusser developed a kind of Marxism which he himself described as “theoretical antihumanism”, meaning thereby that he aimed at replacing the emphasis on man, consciousness, alienation etc found in the humanist Marxism of many of his French contemporaries (i.e., Jean Paul Sartre, Merlau Ponty, Roger Garaudy in the 1960s) by science and structure, derived from what he considered to be the writings of “mature Marx”, namely, Capital, for instance. The writings in which Althusser elaborated his ideas are For Marx (a collection of essays), Reading Capital (written jointly with E. Balibar) and his essay “On Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses”.

To understand Althusser’s Marxism, it is, therefore, essential to keep in mind the following : (a) Althusser is uncompromisingly critical of the kind of the tradition of humanist Marxism that flourished in Europe in the 50s and 60s after the end of World War II, with emphasis on categories like subjectivity, will and consciousness, two major events providing the impetus to humanist Marxism being first, the discovery of the early writings of Marx and, second, the impact of Destalinization on European Marxism, in the wake of the 20' Congress of the Soviet Communist Party in 1956. Consequently, Gramsci and Althusser represent two altogether different traditions in twentieth century Marxism, (b) Althusser’s defence of science and structure thus questions the Hegelian anchorage of the tradition of humanist Marxism and builds itself up on an entirely different set of premises, derived from structuralism, a methodology which is opposed to philosophical idealism’s focus on subjectivity and consciousness. Structuralism argues that meaning is not constituted by the words expressed by the subject; rather it is the

invisible, impersonal structure of the language which constitutes the meaning. In place of the autonomy of the subject, it is the autonomy of the structure, then, which is the focal point of structuralism, the implication being that the human subject and his consciousness are framed by the parameters of the structure of production, which constitutes the essence of Historical Materialism. For Althusser, this is the method of science, as found in the mature writings of Marx. It is on the basis of this basic principle that Althusser has developed his version of structuralist Marxism. Below a summary of his views concerning (a) Method (b) Ideology and (c) State is given.

2.2 ALTHUSSER'S METHOD

Rejecting the Hegelian notion of Totality which claims that particulars are simply the expressions of the universal (i.e., Spirit/Absolute/Idea), Althusser argues that the superstructure is not a simple expression of the economic base, and thus the notion of any determinist understanding of Marxism is dismissed. For him the terrain of the superstructure is not only autonomous but also a complex of contradictions as manifest in its multiple layers. Thus, for him, the superstructural reality being complex and manifold, it has to be explained not as an effect of economic contradictions, but with reference to the plurality of contradictions in the realm of the superstructure itself. Reality, therefore, is to be explained in terms of a plurality of factors, which Althusser calls Overdetermination, as different from determination of the superstructure by the base in the traditional understanding of Marxism. This autonomous realm of the superstructure, characterized by manifold relations of contradictions, is known as the structure in Althusser's Marxism and it is in this structure that the production relations of capitalism are reproduced, making the structure necessarily a vehicle of capitalist class interests. The method that Althusser adopts in his understanding of how scientific knowledge of reality is attained is to be understood in the context of his rejection of the claims of humanism as well as empiricism. Thus, humanism, with its emphasis on self-consciousness, subjectivity and will, found for instance, in the early writings of Marx, and in the tradition of Marxism, that flourished through Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Garaudy, is dismissed by Althusser. The humanist focus of Marxism, according to Althusser, attributes the most important role to such categories as the human essence, class consciousness of the proletariat etc. Empiricism, which makes no distinction between knowledge and the object of knowledge is also rejected by Althusser, since, for him, knowledge cannot be acquired through direct observation of the object. Knowledge, according to Althusser, is a theoretical exercise which has to be worked on the object of knowledge, and Althusser calls it "theoretical practice". This, according to him, consists of three elements called Generalities I, Generalities II and Generalities III. Generalities I are the raw materials of a given discipline, its ideas and concepts, the immediate object of knowledge. These have to be worked over by means of a theoretical process of scientific abstraction, grounded in a conceptual framework, described as "problematic". This is Generalities II. The output of this

exercise is the generation of scientific knowledge, which Althusser describes as Generalities III. Through this process Generalities I (“concrete-real”) is transformed into Generalities III (“concrete-in-thought”) and attainment of knowledge of reality is possible. In empiricism knowledge is supposed to be derived from Generalities I (“concrete-real”) itself, since it does not recognize the distinction between knowledge (“concrete-in-thought”) and object of knowledge (“concrete-real”) and this is what is contested by Althusser. In his opinion, this is the method that Marx adopted in his “mature writings”, namely, in *Capital* and this is what distinguished the “mature Marx” from the “early Marx”, the early Marx’s writings being “humanist”, as distinct from the “scientific” writings of the “mature Marx”. It is in this sense that Althusser characterizes Marxism as “theoretical antihumanism”.

2.3 ALTHUSSER ON IDEOLOGY

Althusser rejects the traditional Marxist understanding that ideology is a kind of false consciousness or that it is simply a superstructural phenomenon, a reflection of the economic base. The Althusserian understanding conceptualizes the domain of ideology as an autonomous sphere, to be viewed in terms of its own structure. Consequently, he makes a very important pronouncement, namely, “Ideologies interpellate individuals as Subjects”. The implication of this statement is twofold. First : ideology is not simply a matter of consciousness, being authored by the human subject. Second : ideology has a material existence and this relates to practices as governed by rituals and these are themselves defined by what Althusser describes as a material ideological apparatus, as manifest in the production of ideas through a vast complex of social, cultural, religious institutions, their customs, rituals and practices. This constitutes the domain of ideology as an autonomous structure which, Althusser argues, shapes the individuals, since they are born in ideologies, and thereby the individual is transformed into a subject of ideology. This implies that ideology is not a product; rather it exists on its own, and thereby it constitutes and interpellates (hails) the individuals as subjects. Third : ideologies are superstructural vehicles through which the capitalist production relations are reproduced and thereby articulated in the form of kind of cultural consciousness which defines and moulds the individual.

2.4 ALTHUSSER ON STATE

Althusser provides a highly innovative understanding of the Marxist theory of the state by expanding the notion of relative autonomy. Unlike the traditional Marxist understanding which argues that seizure of state power by the revolutionary forces permanently settles the issue of political power, since it now fortifies their position securely, Althusser makes a conceptual distinction between state power and state apparatus. He argues that seizure of state power by the revolutionary forces does not necessarily fortify the position of the revolutionary forces,

because he makes a distinction between state power and state apparatus, and the latter, he says, may very well outlive the capture of state power. Althusser, then, makes a distinction between Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) and Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), meaning thereby that RSAs comprise the police, military etc while ISAs are constituted by a plurality of ideological structures represented by the educational system, the family, the legal institutions, the various cultural institutions and organizations etc which act as vehicles or bearers of the ideology of the dominant class and which continue to survive in the mind and consciousness of the people who were subjected to their ideological conditioning for years. Consequently, mere seizure of state power does not at all settle the issue of political power, because, unless this distinction is kept in mind, both the RSAs and the ISAs will outlive the act of seizure of state power and the outlook of repression (RSAs) and bourgeois world view (ISAs) will continue to threaten the proletarian state from within, despite the change of hands. For Althusser, it is the ISAs which become especially important, and this is explained by his understanding of the autonomous domain of ideology. Consequently, he refers to the ISAs as the emerging site of bitter class struggles which need to be waged in the wake of a socialist revolution. It is in this context that he refers to Lenin's concern to revolutionize the educational ISA, simply to make it possible for the Russian proletariat, who had seized State power in the October Revolution of 1917, to ensure the transition to socialism.

2.5 EXERCISES

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on "mature Marx".
2. What is the relationship between Generalities I, Generalities II, Generalities III as conceptualised by Gramsci.
3. "Ideologies interpellate individuals as Subjects". Explain.
4. Distinguish between 'Ideological State Aparatus' (ISA) and Repressive State Apparatus (RSA).

Long Questions :

1. Write an essay on Althusser's concept of Ideology.
2. Discuss how Althusser provides a highly innovative understanding of the Marxist theory of the state by expanding the notion of relative autonomy.

2.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

- A. David McLellan : Marxism after Marx. An Introduction. Chapter 22.
- B. Tom Bottomore et al (eds): A Dictionary of Marxist Thought. The entries on "Althusser" and "Structuralism".
- C. Martin Carnoy : The State and Political Theory. Chapter 4.

UNIT III : MILIBAND

- 3.1. □ INTRODUCTION**
- 3.2. □ MILIBAND ON THE CAPITALIST STATE**
- 3.3. □ EXERCISES**
- 3.4. □ SUGGESTED READINGS**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Ralph Miliband, a very distinguished British Marxist, belonging to the post World War II generation, is wellknown for his analysis of the capitalist state. Miliband is one of those very few Marxist writers of this period who considered the state to be the most crucial arena of struggle for political power. This is largely explained by the fact that he was, an uncompromising critic of the capitalist state and motivated by the idea that socialism, notwithstanding its global collapse, was the only possible alternative to the state power of capitalism. Consequently, as E.M. Wood has pointed out, that the distinctiveness of Ralph Miliband's intellectual style has always been essential to his substance and to the qualities that have continued to be such a vital resource for the socialist left, making his death such a serious blow. That style represented a project. It testified to a specific conception of the task confronting socialist intellectuals even after the collapse of the socialist world. And it may be no exaggeration to say that this style and this project have distinguished Miliband from all other major socialist intellectuals of his generation. Thus, "the ultimate purpose of counter-hegemonic struggles," Miliband wrote in Socialist Register in 1990, "is to make socialism the common sense of the epoch", meaning thereby that this involves two things: first, "a radical critique of the prevailing social order", and, second, "an affirmation that an entirely different social order... is not only desirable ... but possible".

Motivated by this spirit, Miliband developed his views on the capitalist state in *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969) and it is on this issue that he became later engaged in what has come to be recognized as one of the most weliknown debates on the nature of the capitalist state, namely, the Miliband-Poulantzas debate. In this debate Miliband's position is generally regarded as a defence of instrumentalism as against Poulantzas's advocacy of structuralism in the analysis of the state. A summary of Miliband's views on the capitalist state is given below.

3.2 MILIBAND ON THE CAPITALIST STATE

Miliband's position on the state has to be understood as a critique of the prevalent pluralist theories of the state which, as E.M. Wood has pointed out, exposed the state as a concentration of social power and the state thus re-emerged from behind the mystifications of "the political

system” and “political behaviour” to become a, if not the, central theme of political studies. The pluralist/behavioural orientation in the study of politics seeks to explain the nature of the modern capitalist state in terms of a plurality of factors, resulting in a concealed view of the essence of capitalist exploitation. To cite Wood again, “Marxist historians like E. P. Thompson have contributed greatly to the denaturalisation of capitalism, and to the affirmation of other human possibilities, by tracing its history back to its contested origins, to the confrontation of capitalist principles with other, resistant practices and values. And some Marxist philosophers have laid a foundation for a socialist epistemology and ethics. But Miliband stands virtually alone in his systematic effort to map the political terrain of capitalism, to chart a course for socialist struggle within it, and to delineate the anatomy of class and state power in capitalist society — the barriers which it erects against a more humane and democratic social order as well as the resources and agencies available to overcome them.” Miliband believed that socialism is an objective that cannot be achieved in a single life-time. It should perhaps be seen, he wrote in his last book, *Socialism for a Sceptical Age*, as a striving toward a goal rather than the goal itself and his vision of a socialist project is informed not by a hint of pessimism but by a steady conviction that the goal is worth striving for and can be finally achieved. Thus his contribution to Marxist political theory is to be viewed in the context of his uncompromising critique of the capitalist state as well as his unflinching defence of the values and principles of socialism which he characterized as democracy, egalitarianism and cooperation.

Miliband’s position on the capitalist state is generally considered as an instrumentalist viewpoint, the best illustration of which is his book *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969). The central arguments underlying Miliband’s thesis are ; one : in the advanced capitalist societies of the West the state is necessarily an instrument in the hands of the ruling class, because it is the representatives of this class which control the different institutions of the state, namely, the government, parliaments, civil service or bureaucracy, police, legal system and armed forces. Those who occupy these positions Miliband calls the state elite. The state elite is made up of Cabinet Ministers, top judges, top civil servants and those in the top ranks of the Police and Army. In his opinion the members of the state elite are predominantly drawn from the ranks of the upper class and upper middle class, landed aristocracy and highly paid professions and this is how the state acts in the service of the capitalist class. For example, Miliband points out that between 1889 and 1949 more than 60% of cabinet members in the US government were businessmen. Thus, he points out that most of the time it is not necessary for the capitalist class to intervene, since the state will nearly always act in the interests of the capitalist class. Two: Miliband does, however, admit that from time to time concessions can be won by the working class, as in the Welfare State in Britain. But the fact is, he points out, that those who get into the seat of power sooner or later get themselves inextricably linked up with the ruling class and its interests, resulting in the emergence of a state which acts as an instrument of capitalism. The class origin of the ruling elite, therefore, which, in turn, defines its class position, according to Miliband, is the key to the understanding of state power. Even in Parliament, which may have a few representatives of the working class, is ultimately controlled

by the ruling interests of capitalism. Miliband's position was, however, contested by Nicos Poulantzas, leading to the Miliband-Poulantzas debate in the 1970s (**for further details see Unit IV**).

3.3 EXERCISES

Short Questions :

1. Why did Miliband considered the state to be the most crucial area of struggle for political power?
2. Why did Miliband conceived the idea that socialism as an objective cannot be achieved in a Single Life-time?

Long Questions :

1. Discuss Miliband's idea on the Capitalist State.
2. Discuss how according to Miliband, the class origin of the ruling elites, in turn, defines its class position.

3.4 SUGGESTED READINGS

- A. E.M. Wood : "The Common Sense of Socialism" . Internet web page article in Radical Philosophy, 2.4.2004.
- B. From Internet Web page Marxism made Simple.
- C. Martin Carnoy ; The State and Political Theory. Chapter 4 (see Reading C under Unit II)
- D. Robin Blackburn (ed): Ideology in Social Science. Readings in Critical Social Theory. Chapter II.

UNIT IV : POULANTZAS

- 4.1. □ INTRODUCTION**
- 4.2. □ POULANTZAS ON THE CAPITALIST STATE AND HIS DEBATE WITH MILIBAND**
- 4.3. □ EXERCISES**
- 4.4. □ SUGGESTED READINGS**

4.1 INTRODUCTION :

Nicos Poulantzas, originally hailing from Greece, but later settled in France, is regarded as a key contributor to Marxist political theory in the 1970s when he became engaged in a major debate with Ralph Miliband concerning the nature of the capitalist state. This controversy, generally known as the Miliband-Poulantzas debate, is also sometimes interpreted as the debate between instrumentalism (Miliband) and structuralism (Poulantzas). The context of the debate was Poulantzas's critique of Miliband's *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969), which was published in a wellknown British journal *The New Left Review*, No.58 in 1969 under the title "The Problem of the Capitalist State" This led to a reply from the side of Miliband in the same Journal in its No. 59 issue in 1970, carrying the heading "The Capitalist State — Reply to Nicos Poulantzas". While the key issues of the debate centred around these presentations, following the publication of Miliband's aforesaid book, Miliband further elaborated his position vis a vis Poulantzas in 1973 in an article "Poulantzas and the Capitalist State" in No 82 of the *New Left Review*. Meanwhile, Poulantzas's book *Political Power and Social Classes*, originally published in French, had been translated in English in 1973 and in 1976 in No. 95 issue of *New Left Review* and he wrote another article entitled "The Capitalist State : A Reply to Miliband and Laclau", elaborating his position.

Methodologically speaking, Poulantzas is generally known as a structuralist, influenced as he was by Louis Althusser, the distinguished French Marxist, often regarded as a pioneer of the structuralist school of Marxism. Accordingly, following the Althusserian outlook, Poulantzas emphasized, in place of the traditional Marxist argument that the state was an instrument in the hands of the capitalist state, the idea that the capitalist state operates in an autonomous terrain, represented by a complex structure of institutions the working of which is not to be explained simply as a derivative of the position of the class which controls the economy. Thus, Poulantzas, quite in line with the structuralist viewpoint that the relations that constitute the structure are to be treated autonomously, provides a sophisticated critique of Miliband and a defence of his own position. A summary of Poulantzas's position on the capitalist state and his debate with Miliband is given below.

4.2 POULANTZAS ON THE CAPITALIST STATE AND HIS DEBATE WITH MILIBAND

Poulantzas's central argument can be termed as a kind of exercise in what may be generally considered as structural determinism. It means, to put it very simply, that the state would necessarily always operate in the interests of the capitalist state not because of the fact that those who control the state apparatus are representatives of the capitalist class but because the institutional mechanisms of the capitalist state are organized in such a way that they make it imperative for the rulers to run the state in the interests of capitalism. The autonomy of the structure thus becomes decisive in Poulantzas, while the emphasis on class origins of the rulers, that is, the human, the subjectivist, dimension underlying the working of the capitalist state gets dismissed. This is what reminds one of how Althusser described his structuralist outlook as a kind of "theoretical humanism". The contrast with Miliband thus is quite obvious. In contrast to Miliband, Poulantzas argues that it might be possible for people from humble backgrounds to occupy the state's elite positions but it would make no difference, since the state would still operate in the interests of capitalism. For example, even if a Left Wing government comes to power, it cannot just implement those policies, because it will be under pressure from bureaucracy, police, the army not to carry them out, as they would hit their class interests. Thus, if the capitalist class thinks that its interests are under threat it can simply withdraw its capital from circulation and invest it elsewhere, with the result that economic activity will slow down, people will lose their jobs, and unemployment will soar along with poverty. Consequently, the government would not take any course of action that vitally affects the interests or offends the sensibilities of the capitalist class.

The actions of the state are also constrained by the state itself. This sounds confusing but it is not. The play of the autonomy of the structure is manifest when one element of the state can constrain what another element of the state might do in retaliation. Thus, if a Left Wing government comes to power and decides to push through its reforms then it might find that it is threatened to be overthrown by the military or a section of the military. This is, more or less, what happened in Chile in 1973, notwithstanding the fact that the CIA had a hand in the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Salvador Allende.

This being the central thrust of Poulantzas's structuralist understanding of the state, his analytical understanding of the autonomy of the structure of the state now deserves attention. This involves two main propositions. First: he points out, contesting Miliband, that the state is necessarily controlled by the representatives of any homogenous capitalist class. In his opinion, the capitalist class is now divided in a number of power blocs and, consequently, what actually happens is that the state is actually controlled not necessarily by the capitalist class as whole but by its fractions. Second: this, however, in no way makes the capitalist state unstable or weak, because the logic of class conflict in society, together with the class interests of capitalism, is mediated through the complex structures of the state whereby the state is

objectively bound to be geared to maintain balance and stability in defence of capitalism.

What Miliband rejects, however, is this structural determinism of Poulantzas. His two main criticisms are : first, it is not simply enough to say that the state will always act in the interests of the ruling class. For example, if a radical Left wing government comes to power would the state continue to act in the interests of the ruling class, making no difference in the situation ? Second, Poulantzas's argument provides legitimacy to the positions of those who believe that there is no distinction between fascism and liberal democracy, since Poulantzas's understanding logically implies that there is no meaning in the struggle for reforms or for an alternative government within the limitations of parliamentary democracy, for instance, as even a progressive government with an agenda for major reforms would be of no help, for it is bound to be ultimately swallowed up by the structural constraints of the capitalist state. Scholars like Ernesto Laclau and Bob Jessop have criticized Poulantzas particularly for his abstraction of the state from the human, the class, factor, which provides the key to the understanding of capitalism. To be more exact, if the allegation of Poulantzas against Miliband is that of class determinism, the objection against Poulantzas is that of an abstract structural determinism.

Nevertheless we should bear in mind that this debate continues to have its significance today in the age of globalization when the actions of the state are constrained by outside factors, for example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO (World Trade Organization), and as they to a large extent determine the policy for many Third World governments, in the face of which the Governments are quite often helpless, the warning of Poulantzas is not out of place. Again, it is precisely for this reason that the struggle for reforms, electing a government which ideologically would put up a stand against the forces of global capitalism, makes Miliband's position no less relevant.

4.3 EXERCISES

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on "theoretical humanism".
2. What do you understand by the term "Structural determinism"?

Long Questions :

1. Write a note on Poulantzas - Miliband debate.
2. Discuss the relevance of Poulantzas's ideas in the present day International Scenario.

4.4 SUGGESTED READINGS :

- A. From Internet Web page Marxism made simple (see Reading B under Unit III).
- B. Martin Carnoy : The State and Political. Theory. Chapter 4 (see Reading C under Unit II).
- C. Robin Blackburn (ed) : Ideology in Social Science. Readings in Critical Social Theory. Chapter 11 (see Reading D under Unit III).

MODULE-IV : New Horizons of Political Theory

■ General Introduction ■

This module addresses some of the key issues of contemporary political theory which developed in the closing decades of the twentieth century and are emerging as dominating themes in the political theory of the twentyfirst century. The issues presented in this Module, despite their quite distinct thrusts, have one thing in common, namely, they are all reactive in nature. This is explained by the fact that Neoliberalism (Unit 1) emerged in the 1980s as a kind of reaction to welfarist and statist liberalism, and it has now become an integral part of the agenda of Globalization. Postmodernism (Unit II) emerged by questioning the established claims associated with the accepted notions of European modernity. It contested the standard and secure arguments of European liberalism as well as Marxism. Again, the traditional understanding of politics, which had never treated the Women's question as a separate issue, was challenged by the issue of Gender (Unit III). The issue of Ecology (Unit IV), which had generally been treated as a specialized domain and was never a component of political theory, emerged as an alternative perspective, which reacted against the man-centred (anthropocentric) notion of politics, thus questioning the understanding that nature was simply an object of domination and control, something out there to be appropriated and consumed. The four themes discussed under this Module (Units I to IV), therefore, provide altogether new perspectives in the understanding of politics. But it is also to be kept in mind that while Neoliberalism (Unit 1) represents what is generally considered to be a vindication of an extreme Right/Conservative outlook, Postmodernism (Unit II) symbolizes an extreme radical position. Both Gender politics (Unit III) and Green politics (Unit IV), again, are radical in orientation but quite different from the standard and conventional understanding of radicalism, manifest, for instance, in the ideology of Marxism. Moreover, it also requires to be mentioned that each of these areas has generated a vast range of literature and highly complex and sophisticated debates, demanding very specialized attention. The aim of the following Units, supported by the Readings, however, is to provide a broad overview of the themes.

In Unit 1 under the heading Neoliberalism the shift from the welfarist model of liberalism, with its emphasis on a positive view of the state, to the notion of a market-oriented, rights based, minimalist notion of the state is discussed. In other words, it explains, in the context of the rise of Thatcherism and Reaganism in the 1980s, followed by the advent of Globalization in the 1990s, how this new trend, questioning the premises of the Keynesian notion of Western liberalism, took shape, the theoretical foundations of which were laid down by John Locke in the 17th Century and now revived again, in the field of economics by Friedrich Hayek and Milton Friedman, and in the field of political theory by Robert Nozick. It has been explained how Nozick, most wellknown for his uncompromising defence of the libertarian outlook, develops his rights-based, minimalist view of the state and a theory of Justice, the inspiration of his neoliberal position being predominantly Locke and to some extent Kant.

In Unit II the basic tenets of postmodernism are outlined in the context of how it challenges the accepted versions of European modernity, which took shape under the aegis of the Enlightenment in the 18th century. Thus, after briefly explaining the constituent elements of modernity, it is examined how postmodernism, expressing a mood of anger and discontent vis a vis modernity's emphasis on ideas like universality, reason, progress, totality etc completely rejects the idea of a grand narrative and instead defends an alternative position the focus of which is on fragmentation, deconstruction, absence of closure, microidentities and localism. The reader is then given to understand that postmodernism emerged in a very specific historical context in the 1980s, the philosophical influence of Friedrich Nietzsche being quite decisive in the shaping of postmodernism. It is then explained why postmodernism rejects traditional liberalism as well as Marxism as grand narratives of modernity and thereby dismisses them. This is followed by a summary of the Habermas-Lyotard debate in the 1980s in which Habermas contested the orthodox postmodern defence of Lyotard and put forward his defence of the proposition that the Enlightenment remained an "unfinished project". Finally, an outline of the debate between Marxism and postmodernism is provided.

In Unit III the title Gender politics basically discusses issues concerning Feminism after explaining the difference between Sex and Gender, the former being a biological and the latter being a social and cultural construct. Then, after a brief analysis of how gender became an issue in political theory, some of the central themes of Feminism are discussed, namely, the (a) public-private divide, (b) patriarchy, (c) equality and difference. Consequently, an outline of what may generally be described as a feminist approach to politics notwithstanding certain elements of ambiguity therein is provided. This involves (a) inclusion/addition of women as active subjects, (b) rejection of the very foundations of mainstream (= malestream) political theory, (c) deconstruction and transformation of the established version of political theory. Finally, a brief discussion is made of the different versions of Feminism, namely, Liberal Feminism, Socialist Feminism and Radical Feminism.

In Unit IV under the heading Green politics it is the issue of Ecology and politics that is discussed. First, the difference between Environmentalism and Ecology is explained and it is analyzed how Ecology has emerged as a very major issue in contemporary political theory. It is shown how Ecologism challenges the presumed anthropocentric view of the relation between man and nature, which got a booster with the advent of modernity and Enlightenment. Ecologism, therefore, stands for harmonious and creative relation between man and nature. Consequently, Ecologism represents an alternative philosophical and moral outlook, which addresses the following themes: (a) holism, (b) sustainability, (c) environmental ethics (d) postmaterialism. Finally, it is also pointed out that Ecologism is not a homogenous doctrine and, accordingly, the following schools of Ecologism, namely, (a) Rightwing ecologism, (b) ecosocialism, (c) eco-anarchism and (d) ecofeminism are briefly discussed.

UNIT I : NEO-LIBERALISM

1.1. □ INTRODUCTION

1.2. □ NOZICK'S NATION OF THE MINIMAL STATE AND HIS THEORY OF JUSTICE

1.3. □ EXERCISES

1.4. □ SUGGESTED READINGS

1.1 INTRODUCTION :

Neoliberalism is a conservative variant of liberalism which emerged as a dominant theme in the late twentieth century as a reaction against the welfarist model of liberalism which prevailed in the post War period. Generally considered as a Right wing outlook, Neoliberalism gives priority to the protection of individual liberty and rights, and limits the role of the state to such protection. In other words, it questions the claims of welfarism, associated with the ideas of J.M. Keynes, the celebrated economist of modern liberalism in the 1930s, who pioneered the idea that for capitalism to survive its crisis, the state has to produce jobs by direct intervention in the economy. Following in the footsteps of Keynes eventually a welfarist model of liberalism emerged in the post War period, the theoretical premises of which were : (a) the classical notion of liberalism, rooted in the ideas of John Locke and Adam Smith, which maximizes the notion of the individual, abstracted from the social collective, and considers the state as a necessary evil, and thereby minimizes the latter, can no longer be the dominating theme of liberalism; (b) a positive attitude towards the state has to be taken, without, however, diluting the notion of liberty and rights of the individual, the argument being that if capitalism has to survive, the individual cannot be simply left to the free play of market forces. There is, in other words, no contradiction between state intervention and individual liberty and, therefore, the state has to act as a regulator by promoting programmes of social welfare. Neoliberalism challenges these premises of welfarist liberalism and goes back to the doctrine of classical liberalism, most expressly stated earlier in the ideas of economists like Friedrich Hayek and later in the outlook of Milton Friedman, for whom the agenda of social welfare through state intervention goes against the very spirit of liberalism, since for them, this emphasis on statism militates against the notion of individual freedom, the cornerstone of liberalism. As the welfarist model, however, failed to solve the problem of unemployment and accelerate economic growth in the West, it began to face a crisis in the West, and as the cause of the neoliberals now began to attract popular attention and by the 1980s, with the coming to power of Thatcherism in Britain and Reaganism in the United States, Neoliberalism was embodied in practice. Finally,

with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe between 1989 and 1991, followed by the entry of Globalization through the IMF (International Monetary Fund) and WTO (World Trade Organization), Neoliberalism was further legitimized. It now began to be argued that the only way how an economy could survive was through privatization, which would unleash the market forces, and the withdrawal of the state. While Hayek had long ago portrayed the entry of the state as equivalent to the acceptance of serfdom, Friedman identified democracy and freedom with the freedom of the market under capitalism.

However, the most forceful and sophisticated defence of Neoliberalism in the field of political theory has been provided by Robert Nozick in his classic work *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (1974). While Nozick's philosophy is known as a defence of libertarianism, his position may be sharply contraposed to the philosophical position of John Rawls and Amartya Sen, who continue to champion the cause of state intervention in the interests of social welfare primarily on grounds of ethics and for whom there is no necessary conflict between state intervention and individual freedom. Nozick's outlook may be described as deeply informed of the Lockean concept of rights, while its ethical justification he derives from Kant. Thus, he argues that individual rights and freedoms are like Kant's categorical imperatives, i.e., universally binding moral principles, which cannot be restricted by any institution and that rights being intrinsically basic to man, they can on no account be compromised. It is in this perspective that he builds up his theory of the minimal state and his theory of Justice.

1.2 NOZICK'S NOTION OF THE MINIMAL STATE AND HIS THEORY OF JUSTICE

The state, for him, is nothing more than a dominant protective agency. The basic presumption of Nozick is that in a state of nature individuals are capable of enforcing and protecting their rights, the most important of which is the property right, through voluntary arrangements in the sense that such protection can be bought in the market from private protective agencies. However, this may lead to clash of the protective agencies, leading to monopoly of one agency and elimination of the rest, a situation which may not be acceptable to many who may reserve to themselves the private right to enforcement of protection rather than buy the service of a protective agency in the market. Nozick calls it an "ultramiminal state" which he wants to transform into a "minimal state". The role of the minimal state is to emerge as the dominant protective agency, which will cater to the rights and interests of those who have been left out of protection or who have taken upon themselves the right to enforce their own protection or to the interests of those private protective agencies who have been eliminated by a monopoly agency. Sharply opposed to the Rawlsian theory of justice, Nozick builds up an alternative notion, based on the philosophy of acquisitive individualism of John Locke. His central proposition refers to two principles of Justice, namely, the principle of Justice in acquisition

and the principle of Justice in transfer. The first principle refers to the argument that an acquisition is just if the item is previously unowned and the acquisition leaves enough room to meet the needs of others. The second principle is meant to protect voluntary contracts while ruling out theft, fraud, etc. Thus, an acquisition is just if it has been obtained through a legitimate transfer or through original acquisition. In other words, for Nozick, like Locke, what is most important is the rationale of acquisition of property. By mixing one's labour with the material world, he argues, ownership of a portion of the material world is established whereby the value of a portion of the material world is increased.

Consequently, Nozick rules out any idea of interference in one's life on any account and for him, therefore, what is fundamental is the notion of process equality, which means equal treatment before the law. The presumption being that all individuals are equal, it implies that all individuals should be subjected to the universal principles of law and the state must refrain from granting any special privileges or support to anyone. This is how Nozick puts into practice the idea of the minimal state. It is evident that, for Nozick, reservation, which has become a dominant theme of Indian politics today, would be quite unacceptable. It is not surprising, therefore, that he questions the rationale of the contrary view of equality, namely, the end-state equality. This is an outlook which shows that equality among people increases when the differences between their incomes, level of wealth, standards of living decrease and this is possible when the state intervenes, as, for instance, suggested by Rawls. While the first principle is the cornerstone of Neoliberalism, the second principle constitutes the foundation of welfarist liberalism. It can very well be ascertained from this discussion of why Nozick's theory is considered to be so appropriate by the defenders of Neoliberalism and why any agenda of welfarism is sharply contested by this framework.

1.3 EXERCISES

Short Questions :

1. Write a short note on 'Neoliberalism as a conservative resistant of liberalism.'
2. Discuss the concept 'welfarist model of liberalism.'
3. Distinguish between 'Ultramiminal state' and 'minimal state'.

Long Questions :

1. Discuss Nozick's theory of Justice.
2. Discuss how Neoliberalism gives priority to the protection of individual liberty and rights, and limits the role of the state to such protection.

1.4 SUGGESTED READINGS

- A. Andrew Heywood : Political Ideologies. An Introduction. Section on Neoliberalism, pp. 92097.
- B. Michael H. Lessnoff : Political Philosophers of the Twentieth Century. Chapter 11.
- C. Edward W. Younkins : “Robert Nozick’s Libertarian Framework for Utopia” in Socialist Perspective, vol 31, no 1-2 June-September, 2003.



UNIT II : POST MODERNISM

- 2.1. □ INTRODUCTION**
- 2.2. □ THE RISE OF POST MODERNISM**
- 2.3. □ THE LYOTARD HABERMAS DEBATE**
- 2.4. □ THE DEBATE BETWEEN POST MODERNISM AND MARXISM**
- 2.5. □ EXERCISES**
- 2.6. □ SUGGESTED READINGS**

2.1 INTRODUCTION :

Postmodernism is an extremely radical doctrine which has flourished in social sciences in the last decades of the twentieth century. It has emerged as a critique of the idea of modernity, which constitutes the foundation of today's Western thought and ideas, based on science, reason, progress etc. Postmodernism questions the attempt of European modernity to universalize these notions and aims at replacing the notion of modernity by a totally different perspective which considers these attributes of modernity pejoratively. This in no way suggests that postmodernism wants to revive premodern, conservative ideas. What it contests is the universalist claims of European modernity which were most powerfully legitimized by the Enlightenment. The European notion of modernity expresses a mood of optimism and power, the foundations of which were laid down by the scientific revolutions of the 17th century, followed by the Age of Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution in the 18th century. It universalized the idea of progress latent in history, emphasized the idea of reason, glorified the outlook of empiricism and thereby established very firmly the idea that, equipped with the power of scientific reasoning, all phenomena in nature and society can be subjected to certain universal scientific principles. This all-pervasive, totalizing claim of scientific reasoning thus aimed at schematizing everything in a framework, a kind of cage, which postmodernism describes as a grand narrative or a metanarrative and which it contests. Its obvious implication was the legitimation of the kind of market society based on the principles of liberalism which was now taking shape in Europe. Postmodernism's principal contention is that this so-called universalization of the claims of modernity were nothing but the universalization of the Western, the European, man, a justification of its universal claims of domination over the rest of the world. In other words, the notion of European modernity sanctified and certified the claims of the European man in such a way that it eliminated the idea of dissent, difference and criticism, because the very idea of universalization precluded this possibility. This meant the complete erasure of freedom, autonomy, plurality and criticality. Modernity thus becomes synonymous with domination, control and repression. Postmodernism, therefore, celebrates precisely those elements which are opposed to those of

modernity. Consequently, postmodernism rejects the idea of any meta or grand narrative, any notion of essentialism or universalism or any kind of totalizing claim. It has its focus on fragments, localism, microidentities and it does not believe in any kind of boundary or closure. Instead of the universalist or essentialist perspective of modernity postmodernism, then, espouses the cause of absolute relativism. Since postmodernism does not believe in any essentialist or universalist construction of any meaning or concept, it looks for multiple or pluralist versions of any word, meaning or concept by going beyond the given or accepted sense of any word or expression. This search for a number of hidden meanings by questioning the given meaning of something is known as deconstruction, a perspective explained by the postmodern outlook.

2.2 THE RISE OF POSTMODERNISM :

The rise of postmodernism in the 1980s and its rapidly growing influence can be explained broadly with reference to certain sociological and philosophical factors. Sociological : (a) Despite the claims of progress and stability, made by the liberal democracies of the West, in the post War period it began to be experienced that capitalism's track record was highly deceptive. Not only it was unable to solve its crisis but also it promoted war, oppression, domination and control, as manifest for instance, in the Vietnam War in the 60s. This led to growing scepticism about the universalist claims of reason and progress made by the West, (b) The collapse of Soviet socialism in the 1990s and the track record of Stalinism in the erstwhile USSR shattered the hopes of the Left, many of whom now began to argue that both capitalism and socialism were bereft of any universalist appeal, both having been seriously discredited. This led to the abandonment of ideologies and any kind of macro framework, paving the way for microidentities. Philosophical : the influence of the ideas of Friedrich Nietzsche, the controversial German nihilist philosopher of the 19th century, who questioned the accepted foundations of European thought in the sense that he was deeply sceptical of the universalist claims of any concept and strongly advocated the notion of absolute relativism. As opposed to the idea of any positive affirmation, Nietzsche stood by the idea of radical negation. Influenced by all these factors postmodernism thus assumed a character which also became expressive of the ideas of nihilism and anarchy, critical as it was of any notion of universality and essentialism. Postmodernism thus claimed that it questioned the so-called idea of humanism, which was nothing but concealed domination perpetrated by the Western man in the name of universality and this constituted the crux of modernity.

2.3 THE LYOTARD-HABERMAS DEBATE

The philosophy of postmodernism was first systematically outlined in the early 1980s in a report prepared by Francois Lyotard, a distinguished French philosopher, under the title The Postmodern Condition. The philosophy of postmodernism, however, was already emerging as

a powerful doctrine, as evident in the writings of influential French philosophers like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. While Foucault argued that the world was a play of power in the sense that power was a network that prevailed everywhere in society without any distinct location, either economic or political, Derrida put forward the idea of deconstruction, pleading for a search for multiple meanings underlying words, concepts and practices, instead of accepting the universality of any meaning. All these came up for a critical review by a very eminent German philosopher, namely, Juergen Habermas, in the 1980s and which was questioned by Lyotard immediately thereafter, who strongly defended the thesis of postmodernism and continued to question the claims of modernity, anchored in certain essentialist, universalist and foundationalist principles. This has come to be known as the Lyotard - Habermas debate. While Habermas agreed generally with the postmodern criticism that an uncritical acceptance of the European notion of modernity would lead to problems, he was not prepared to reject in principle the idea of modernity, since, for him, the Enlightenment idea of modernity remained “an unfinished project”. Thus, he observed that he agreed with the critics of modernity that in the name of specialisation and scientific reasoning modernity had certainly eroded the freedom and autonomy of the individual in the fields of arts and sciences but modernity itself is not necessarily a pejorative concept. The arguments of Habermas may be summarized as follows : (a) The postmodern rejection of the idea of modernity wholly and completely ignores the importance of the distinction between premodernity and modernity. This would mean simply a denial of the contribution that modernity has made in questioning the values of the premodern era, which were predominantly steeped in conservatism and blind faith, (b) Postmodernism fails to distinguish between the promise and the practice, the potentiality and the actuality, of the Enlightenment ideal of modernity. While it is true that Enlightenment has led to many problems, this has to be attributed not to the idea of modernity as such but to the path that was adopted in interpreting the idea. It is in this sense that Habermas puts forward his proposition that the Enlightenment thus has remained “an unfinished project”. Identifying the project of modernity with its consequences would be tantamount to throwing the baby with the bathwater, (c) An unqualified rejection of the Enlightenment would lead to the espousal of a philosophy of despair, disillusionment, nihilism and also political conservatism, since this would indirectly strengthen those forces which are opposed to the idea of science and progress.

2.4 THE DEBATE BETWEEN POSTMODERNISM AND MARXISM

Postmodernism is also engaged in a debate with Marxism. Postmodernism’s main objection against Marxism is that Marxism is also a component of modernity, since it believes in a grand narrative of history, illustrated in the theory of Historical Materialism and in its grounding in the notions of reason, science and progress. Thus, postmodernism rejects Marxism’s focus on a macro framework, which is anchored in essentialist categories like class struggle, laws of historical

development etc. Marxism, however, rejects the criticisms of postmodernism, the central premise of which is that, while Marxism was certainly a component of Enlightenment, it was also critical of the way it took shape in the sense that Marxism did not dismiss the notion of modernity but aimed at an alternative, revolutionary construction of it. Accordingly, Marxism's responses to the allegations of postmodernism are : (a) Ultimately class struggle is the key factor, despite micro level struggles. Marxism argues that without a global, macro perspective of class struggle between the forces of revolution and those opposed to it, micro level, localized struggles would not be able to make their impact, (b) Marxism rejects the anarchic, nihilistic stance of postmodernism, since this becomes ultimately the defence of a negative philosophy. Marxism, since it believes in a positive alternative to capitalism, that is, socialism, cannot accept the non-ideological, negative, stance of postmodernism, which rejects the claims of ideologies as essentialist or universalist. (c) Marxism argues that the scientific knowledge of society which it aims at has ultimately a moral purpose, since it wants to transform the bad society of capitalism into a good society of socialism, and hence it cannot accept the postmodern philosophy of absolute relativism.

2.5 EXERCISES

Short Questions :

1. Do you agree that port modernism is an extermely radical doctrine? Justify your answer.
2. What do you understand by the term Tost Modernism'?

Long Questions :

1. Write a note on Lyotard-Habermas debate.
2. What is the main idea behind the debate between post modernism and Marxism?

2.6 SUGGESTED READINGS :

- A. S. Hali and B. Gieben ; Formations of Modernity. Chapter I, sections 1-3.3
- B. B.S. Turner : Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity. Chapter 2.)
- C. Stuart Hall et al: Modernity and Its Futures. Chapter 7, sections 1 -4, 8.1.
- D. Z. Bauman : Intimations of Postmodernity. Introduction.

UNIT III : GENDER POLITICS

- 3.1. □ INTRODUCTION**
- 3.2. □ THE CENTRAL THEMES OF FEMINISM**
- 3.3. □ THE FEMINIST APPROACH TO POLITICS**
- 3.4. □ THE SCHOOLS OF FEMINISM**
- 3.5. □ EXERCISES**
- 3.6. □ SUGGESTED READINGS**

3.1 INTRODUCTION

With the growing impact of the women's movement all over the world and the emergence of women as an autonomous subject of attention in politics, gender has come to occupy a crucial role in contemporary political theory. The basic presumption underlying the entry of women's question as a field of inquiry is the distinction made between sex and gender, which now constitutes the foundation of what has come to be known as Feminism. Traditionally it is the biological factor, that is, sex, which constitutes the explanation underlying the discrimination that is made between man and woman and the way the superiority of the 'stronger sex' over the 'weaker sex' is justified. Feminism, however, argues that while biological inequality of sex is a natural phenomenon, when this is extended to legitimize permanently the superiority of man over woman in social life, this becomes a cultural and political construction of the male sex to perpetuate its control and domination over the opposite sex. Thus the biological distinction of sex which is natural is extended to justify what has come to be known as gender distinction between man and woman. This is what the Feminists oppose, their central argument being that while sex inequality is a natural phenomenon, gender discrimination is not natural but a social and cultural construct. Thus, the inquiry into the question concerning how gender discrimination in society can be explained, how it is related to the issue of power, domination and control, and how the woman can emerge as an autonomous subject with her very own identity, independent of the male's construction of the woman, explains the correlation of Gender and politics. Moreover, it is this perspective which provides the key to the understanding of how Feminism is now emerging as an integral component of political theory. This also provides the explanation of how the growth of Feminism has witnessed the evolution of contending perspectives.

3.2 THE CENTRAL THEMES OF FEMINISM :

While it is difficult to provide a complete catalogue of all the components of Feminism, one

major reason being that among the Feminists there are many variations, it is possible, however, to identify some of its central or representative themes. These are : (a) public-private divide; (b) patriarchy; (c) equality and difference.

(a) Public-Private divide : Traditionally it has been a standard practice to argue that men operate in the public sphere, while the women's domain is the private sphere; the two areas being almost mutually exclusive. Thus, it is contended that the sphere of politics and administration is necessarily a male bastion, while the woman's central concern is her home, her task being to act as a mother, to maintain the household and look after her husband and the family. The private sphere, according to this logic, is essentially non-political and the woman, therefore, has to be totally disengaged from politics, since she has been created by nature to remain confined to home, while nature has chosen man to operate in the public sphere, the sphere of politics.

Feminism questions this presumption and argues, on the contrary, that this discrimination is false, arbitrary and dangerous, at least on two grounds. First : this is an attempt to rationalize gender inequality on the basis of an imaginary construction of the public-private divide, the objective being to keep the public sphere, the sphere of power, exclusively reserved for men. It simply denies the fact that in matters of politics and administration, the so-called public life, the man-woman distinction is totally false and irrelevant, as there are examples galore to prove it. Second : the argument that the private sphere is non-political and the public sphere is political is a tricky explanation to justify the apparently non-political and private acts of domestic violence, oppression and discrimination perpetrated by the male members over the female members in family, in general. In other words, if politics refers to acts of power and domination, the so-called private sphere is no less political, where the woman is a silent victim in the everyday operation of the male exercise of power. This has led Feminists to proclaim that "the personal is political" and the public-private divide thus is a social and cultural construction which has no rational basis.

(b) Patriarchy : This is a gender construct which refers to the practice of male domination in all spheres of life in society and to the kind of male dominated hierarchical social order reflective of this spirit of male supremacy. Patriarchy rules within the family as well as outside the family, even in the governance of the country. This is most strongly evident in the manning of all major political institutions by the males. While this phenomenon has been quite effectively challenged in the West, in the developing countries the experience is quite alarming. In India, for instance, this is most strongly evident in the discrimination between the boy and the girl child, the widespread practice of the premature killing of the foetus of the girl child, the male domination of our Parliament and the key administrative positions, the reluctance of the male dominated Parliament to pass the Women Reservation Bill etc.

(c) Equality and Difference : There is a trend within the feminist movement, which is somewhat traditional, and it strongly calls for achievement of gender equality. Accomplishing this goal has been the standard agenda of Feminism. There is, however, a section within

Feminism, which focuses on the notion of difference rather than on equality. Broadly known as Radical Feminism this is a school which, instead of calling for equality of the gender calls for recognition of woman as fundamentally different from man. Accordingly, the representatives of this position argue that as women are endowed with certain special qualities these have got to be asserted and the notion of difference is to be highlighted so much so that women have to build up their own fraternity against the dominance of men. In this understanding the notion of difference which separates man from woman is thus made an absolute.

3.3 THE FEMINIST APPROACH TO POLITICS

Within Feminism there are considerable ambiguities concerning the feminist perception of politics. For instance, there is a section which believes that the political goal of Feminism is the accomplishment of certain rights and privileges which have been traditionally denied to women. In other words, attaining the position of equality vis a vis the men is the ultimate political goal. There is, however, another opinion which is based on the premise that power and domination being the key elements of politics, which have been dominated by men, and the woman having suffered for generations because of this practice, the woman has to carve out an autonomous space, free from the sphere of male domination. The struggle for this autonomous space constitutes, therefore, the key element of feminist politics. There is, again, another viewpoint which calls for a total rejection of the mainstream understanding of political thought, which, it is alleged, is nothing but a “malestream” version, wholly constructed by men in their own interests, to the exclusion of women. These ambiguities and differences notwithstanding, certain elements of a Feminist approach to politics can be, however, identified. These are, broadly speaking : (a) inclusion/addition of women as active subjects : this refers to the overcoming of the traditional attitude of underplaying the role of women in politics and recognition of their very distinct position. Its implication is the stipulation that the unequal position of women in society has to be changed by recognizing their rights and bringing the women at par with men. (b) rejection of the very foundations of mainstream (= malestream) political theory : this has its focus on the point that the standard, accepted version of the traditions of political theory are unilaterally biased towards men and are thus marked by their tilt against women. This leads many Feminists to argue that this male dominated tradition, which does not accord any recognition to women as autonomous subjects has no relevance for women and has to be, therefore, rejected, (c) Deconstruction and transformation of the established versions of politics : primarily writing under the impact of postmodernism, many Feminists argue that what is imperative for Feminism is to expose the male gender bias in the so-called gender-neutral versions of politics. This deconstruction of the so-called gender neutral politics aims at revealing-the hidden meaning of male domination whereby the very meaning of politics is transformed.

3.4 THE SCHOOLS OF FEMINISM

Feminism, however, is not one comprehensive doctrine. While it has many variations, broadly the following schools can be identified, namely. Liberal Feminism, Socialist Feminism and Radical Feminism, (a) **Liberal Feminism** : Starting with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), and continued by Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), Liberal Feminism primarily focuses on the framing of the women's question in the light of the philosophy of individualism. On one level it aims at endowing women with all those rights and privileges which are traditionally enjoyed by men and not necessarily granted to women and on another level Liberal Feminism fights against the standard argument that women are after security and fulfilment in domestic life, — a clever ploy to keep women away from politics and public life.

(b) **Socialist Feminism** : Initiated by Friedrich Engels and continued by such revolutionary personalities as Alexandra Kollontai in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, Socialist Feminism predominantly argues that the inequality suffered by women is the result of inequalities in class societies and, consequently, it is contended that only under socialism this inequality can be redressed. However, the crisis of socialism which was witnessed in the closing years of the 20 century has belied many of the claims of traditional Socialist Feminism. In fact, one of the objections levelled against Socialist, especially Marxist, Feminism is that its primary focus on class actually underplays the issue of Gender as an autonomous category and does not address the issue of women in proper perspective.

(c) **Radical Feminism**: While Liberal and Socialist Feminism are generally regarded as belonging to First Wave Feminism, Radical Feminism, which itself has many variations, is generally associated with Second and Third Wave Feminisms that took shape in the 70s and 80s of the 20th century. Radical Feminism's central focus is on the gender identity of the woman and on how his identity, primarily expressed in her sexuality, gets distorted in the male dominated, patriarchal society. In other words, Radical Feminism argues that in the patriarchal society the woman has no freedom over her body and as she becomes an object of sexual pleasure in the hands of men, she is transformed into a sex- object, having no control over her own body and her own sexuality. While the roots of this understanding go back to Simone de Beauvoir's celebrated book *The Second Sex* (1949), the outlook of Radical Feminism was very distinctly expressed in Kate Milieu's *Sexual Politics* (1970) and Shulamith Firestone's *The Dialectic of Sex* (1972). Particularly significant is the position of a section of Radical Feminists in recent times which espouses the cause of a kind of feminist separatism. The argument is that sex difference being a phenomenon of nature, the roots of patriarchy are deeply embedded in the male sex itself and that is why, it is contended, men are physically and psychologically oriented to dominate and oppress women. On this ground men constitute themselves as the enemy of women and the women, therefore, can survive as free and autonomous subjects only by treating men as haters and oppressors of women. This is what provides the rationale of the

understanding that the woman must be free to retain her control over her own body and sexuality and there is, therefore, nothing wrong with lesbianism, for instance.

3.5 Exercises

Short Questions :

1. What do you understand by 'Public - Private' debate?
2. What are the different Schools of Feminism?

Long Questions :

1. Identify the major themes of Feminism.
2. Identify the ambiguities that prevails in the understanding of feminist perception of politics.

3.6 SUGGESTED READINGS

- A. Andrew Heywood. Political Ideologies. An Introduction. Chapter 8.
- B. Chris Beasley : What is Feminism ? An Introduction lo Feminist Theory. Chapters 1-2,5.
- C. Elizabeth Fraser and Nicola Lasey : "Public-private Distinctions" in Alan Finlayson (ed): Contemporary Political Thought. A Reader and. Guide.

UNIT IV : GREEN POLITICS

- 4.1. □ INTRODUCTION**
- 4.2. □ THE CENTRAL THEMES OF ECOLOGISM**
- 4.3. □ THE REPRESENTATIVE SCHOOLS OF ECOLOGISM**
- 4.4. □ EXERCISES**
- 4.5. □ SUGGESTED READINGS**

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Although the Green movement, expressing concern for environmental protection, has now become a world wide phenomenon, following unprecedented industrialization and its dangerous after effects, traditional environmentalism has been somewhat narrow and managerial in its outlook. It has been primarily a response, in the form of concern for adoption of appropriate measures, to crisis situations related to environment. It is in this context that a distinction is made between Environmentalism and Ecologism, the latter representing a radical moral, political and philosophical outlook focusing on a new understanding of relationship between man and nature. The politics of the Greens that we are now familiar with, most notably in Germany, is actually a manifestation of Ecologism, which attempts to provide an alternative understanding of the relation between man and nature. To understand how Ecology has become a major issue in contemporary political theory, one has to view the issue of man-nature relation in the context of European modernity and Enlightenment. Although the central idea underlying Ecologism is that the man-nature relation is necessarily harmonious, and while it is true that this idea that man should live in harmony with nature is to be found in Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, the advent of European modernity was a challenge to this understanding. The Enlightenment, with its emphasis on science as the guiding element underlying the idea of progress, reversed this understanding. The Enlightenment perspective taught man to view nature as an object of appropriation, control and domination. In the age of capitalism and industrialization, which became the distinguishing marks of modernity, this outlook concerning the man- nature relation accelerated environmental pollution, destruction of nature, deforestation and dangerous manipulation of the global ecosystem. While all these have been justified in the name of development and progress, these have been alleged to have been actually prompted by the considerations of business and profit in the industrial society. This is where Ecology becomes significant and Ecologism emerges as a critique of this order as well as an alternative. It is in

this perspective that Ecologism and politics have got linked up, and the phenomenon of Green politics has taken shape as a distinct field of study.

4.2 THE CENTRAL THEMES OF ECOLOGISM :

Ecologism as an alternative perspective or n alternative vision addresses the following themes : (a) Holism, (b) Sustainability. (c) Environmental Ethics, (d) Post-materialism.

(a) Holism: Ecologism challenges the Newtonian, the Enlightenment understanding of the world which took shape in the 17th - 18th century whereby the world was viewed as a machine and knowledge was reduced to a knowledge of the parts of the machine in terms of certain definite rules or principles. This led to a loss of the sense of totality, the whole, the idea of an organic integration of man and nature. It is now contended that when Ecologism focuses on this idea of organic integration and wholeness, it draws its clues from modern science as well as ancient religions. The advent of Einsteinian physics and the rise of Quantum mechanics disproved the infallibility of the Newtonian understanding that everything can be subjected to certain universal laws. It proclaimed the idea of indeterminism, which was a blow to Newtonian reductionism. Again, the idea of the whole, one God or one Nature has been the characteristic of many religions. All these went into the making of the idea of Holism in Ecology.

(b) Sustainability : This is based on the presumption that it is imperative to protect the earth from extinction through a balanced use of energy and resources. The way pollution, overconsumption and reckless destruction of nature are increasingly telling upon the earth, Ecologism stands for the sustainability of the world. In other words, Ecologism warns us about the limits of the strain that the world's fragile ecosystem is capable of bearing. This implies on the one hand a strategic shift away from the present spate of consumerism, exclusive focus on heavy industry without caring for its toxic effects, and reckless destruction of nature in the name of development and, on the other hand, an alternative strategy of sustainable development which calls for giving priority to the survival of the planet earth.

(c) Environmental ethics: Sometimes known as Green ethics, Ecologism highlights the point that nature is like a community in which all its animate products, namely, man and animal, have equal rights as well as responsibilities. Thus it is a moral code of conduct that nature has to be respected and honoured and like men animal rights also have to be protected. In other words, environmental ethics demands that the values of tolerance, moderation and non-violence have to be espoused.

(d) Postmaterialism : This refers to that element in Ecologism which has been associated primarily with what has come to be known as deep Ecology. Modernity with its exclusive concern for science and development, it is argued, has generated the birth of a crude, materialist and consumerist individual who is obsessed with satisfaction of self-interest, without caring for its impact on his environment. Ecological concern thus explains the justification for the world-wide environmental movements and, on this score, environmental movement has come to be considered as part of new social movements like women's movement, human rights movement etc. So it is contended that the egoistic, materialist view of life has to be replaced by an alternative, postmaterialist view of human life, where the focus will be not on narrow self-interest but on an integrated, holistic, moral understanding which upholds the view that the individual is a part of the whole, i.e., nature.

4.3 THE REPRESENTATIVE SCHOOLS OF ECOLOGISM

Ecologism, however, is not a homogenous doctrine. It is broadly divided into the following schools : (a) Right-wing Ecologism; (b) Socialist Ecologism; (c) Eco-anarchism; (d) Ecofeminism.

(a) Right-wing Ecologism : Although Ecologism has generally been considered as a variant of radicalism, the premise being that it aims at providing an alternative perspective vis a vis modernity, it is an irony that the philosophy underlying Ecologism has also been quite effectively utilized by representatives of the Right in contemporary history. Thus, in Hitler's Germany Walter Darre came out quite forcefully with the argument that the concern for environmental protection and ecological balance called for a return to nature, a negotiation with Romanticism and glorification of the past in the name of exploring and unleashing man's vital energy. This is what fitted in quite nicely with the fascist ideology of Nazi Germany. Similarly, in the 1980s Margaret Thatcher espoused the cause of this romantic nostalgia and claimed Conservatism to be the natural defendant of Ecologism. Ecologism thus, in this perspective, has come to be associated with Conservatism's call for going back to tradition, a romantic and pre-modern, rural order, based on small communities.

(b) Ecosocialism : Ecosocialism has been primarily associated with the Left, socialist and Marxist understanding that it is capitalism which is the mother of all environmental problems. Capitalism with its drive for profit and money-spinning has destroyed ruthlessly the ecological balance and generated the birth of a society which promotes consumerism and crude materialism, without caring for human life and the global ecosystem. Consequently, the alternative that ecosocialism calls for is socialism and it is argued that socialism is the only system that takes into consideration the issue of effecting a balance between man and nature. But after the

Chernobyl nuclear disaster in Ukraine in 1986 and the fall of Soviet socialism in 1991, followed by many startling revelations regarding lack of concern for the ecological factor under socialism, the claims of Ecosocialism are being questioned.

(c) Eco-anarchism: Influenced by the ideas of William Morris and Prince Kropotkin, Eco-anarchism parallels the classical anarchist viewpoint that governmental restrictions are unnecessary, that small communities constitute the ideal and that spontaneity and, not organization is what matters. Eco-anarchism thus argues that nature itself releases the forces of spontaneity and balance and these should be left undisturbed. Any attempt to control and manipulate the forces of nature might prove dangerous and disastrous.

(d) Ecofeminism : This is a school which combines Feminism with Ecology. The central argument underlying the Ecofeminist understanding is that women and nature are virtually synonymous, while men, guided by the notion of patriarchy, are insensitive to nature as well as women. While it is patriarchy which drives men to dominate women, it is the same patriarchal instinct which explains man's attitude of domination, control and manipulation vis vis nature. Thus, in the male dominated world of patriarchy both nature and the woman are victims of subordination and control. The argument is grounded in the logic that women by nature represent the elements of harmony, peace and spontaneity, the essential elements attributed to nature. Consequently, patriarchy becomes a threat to women as well as nature and the only alternative whereby nature and the woman can survive is through destruction of patriarchy.

4.4 EXERCISES

Short Questions :

1. Write short notes on the following :
 - (a) Holism
 - (b) Sustainability
 - (c) Environmental Ethics
2. What is Post materialism?

Long Questions :

1. Write an essay on the different representative Schools of Ecologism.
2. Discuss the relevance of Green movement in the context of rapid growth of industrialisation in the age of globalization.

4.5 SUGGESTED READINGS

- A. Andrew Hey wood : Political Ideologies. Anintroduction. Chapter 9.
- B. Tim Haywrd : “Ecologism and Environmentalist!!” in Alan Finlayson (ed) Cntemporary Political Thought. A Reader and Guide.
- C. Vandana Shiva, “Development, Ecology and Women” in Alan Finlayson (ed) Contemporary Political Thought. A Reader and Guide.

