

ASSIGNMENT For the students enrolled in July 2019 and January 2020 sessions

COURSE CODE: BPSC-131

INTRODUCTION TO POLITICAL THEORY

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1. Write A Note On The Legitimate Use Of Power.

Ans: The point is that, although the state depends on force, it does not rest on force alone. Here, the notion of the legitimate use of power comes in. Power, in general, and so the power of the state, can be exercised in different ways. Coercion is one form of power and perhaps the easiest to understand, but it is not the only one. Not all power relations are to be understood on the basis of the same crude model.

If a lecturer through force of argument and breadth of knowledge helps students to form their ideas, such a person exercises a kind of power, though not against the students' will. More to the point, all holders of power try to get those who are subject to their rule to believe in the rightness and justness of the power they wield. This attempt at justification in order to make people consent constitutes the process of legitimation.

One can refer to such justified or accepted power as 'authority' to distinguish it from such power as is obeyed only because of a fear of sanctions. In such a situation of legitimate power, or authority, people obey because they think it is right to do so. They believe, for whatever reason, that the power-holders are entitled to their dominant role. They have the legitimate authority, a right to command. In the words of one recent analyst of power, 'Legitimate authority is a power relation in which the power holder possesses an acknowledged right to command, and the power subject, an acknowledged obligation to obey.

2.Examine J.S. Mill's Notion Of Liberty

Ans: J. S. Mill's On Liberty was influential in the academic debates in the 1960s. Mill's work is seen as an exposition of the negative concept of liberty. At the basis of Mill's arguments for individual freedom lay a strong sense of contempt for custom, and for legal rules and norms which could not be rationally justified. It is also sometimes argued that for Mill any free action, no matter how immoral, had some element of virtue in it, by the fact that it was

freely performed. While Mill considered restraint on individual's actions evil, he did not consider restraints to be entirely unjustifiable. He felt, however, that within the society there was always a presumption in favour of liberty. Any constraints on liberty, therefore, had to be justified by those who applied them

Mill, as other liberals, emphasised a demarcation of the boundaries between the individual and society. While talking about reasonable or justifiable restrictions on individual liberty, Mill distinguished between self-regarding and otherregarding actions, i.e., actions, which affected the individual only, and actions which affected the society at large. Any restriction or interference with an individual could be justified only to prevent harm to others. Over actions that affected only himself, the individual was sovereign.

3.What Is Equality Of Opportunity? Explain.

Ans:- Equality of opportunity is an extremely attractive idea that is concerned with what is described as the starting point in life. The implication is that equality requires that all individuals begin from a level playing field. However, the consequences of this need not be egalitarian at all. Precisely because everyone started equally, unequal outcomes are acceptable and legitimized. This inequality would then be explained in terms of differing natural talents, ability to work hard or even luck. Constructed like this, it seems that equality of opportunity provides an equal opportunity to compete in a system that remains hierarchical. If so, then it does not appear to be a substantially egalitarian principle. Equality of opportunity, thus, points to an inegalitarian society, albeit based on the exalted ideal of merit. This idea rests itself on the distinction between nature and convention, the argument being that distinctions that emerge on the basis of different natural qualities like talents, skills, hard work and so on are morally defensible. However, differences that emerge out of conventions or socially created differences like

poverty, homelessness are not. The fact, however, is that it is a specific societal predilection that makes a natural distinction like beauty or intelligence a relevant ground for making distinctions in society. Thus, we see that the distinction between nature and convention is not as clear-cut as egalitarians imply. Equality of opportunity is institutionalized through the acceptance of keeping careers open to talents, providing fair equal opportunity, and the many variations on the principle of positive discrimination. All of these work to make the system of inequality seem reasonable and acceptable. The underlying assumption is that so long as the competition has been fair, advantage itself is beyond criticism. There is no doubt that a system such as this would create people, who concentrate only on their talents and individual attributes. This robs them of any feeling of community with their people, because they can only think in terms of competing. Perhaps, the only community this can create is a community of the successful on the one hand, and a community of the unsuccessful on the other which blames itself for its supposed failure. Yet another problem

with equality of opportunity is that it seeks to create an artificial disjunction between the successes and failures of one generation and the next.

4. Describe The Salient Features Of John Rawls' Theory Of Justice.

Ans: A Theory of Justice gives a final interpretation of the concept. To discuss Rawls's theory of justice, his method of approaching moral problems must be mentioned first, which is in the contractarian tradition of social philosophy. But at the same time, Rawls's method entails that the conclusions of moral reasoning be always checked and readjusted against intuitive moral notions and this contrasts with others in the contractarian tradition, who maintain that the rules of justice are those that would be agreed to in a hypothetical setting. Rawls places men behind the 'veil of ignorance' in a hypothetical original position where individuals are deprived of the basic knowledge of their wants, interests, skills, abilities and of the things that generate conflicts in actual societies. But they will have what Rawls calls 'a sense of justice'. Under these circumstances, Rawls argues, people will agree to accept two principles of justice in the lexical order. First, is the equality principle where each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive liberty compatible with a similar liberty to others. Here, equal liberties can be concretised as the familiar rights of liberal democratic regimes. They include the equal right to political participation, freedom of expression, religious liberty, equality before the law and so on. The second principle is called the difference principle where Rawls argues that inequalities can only be justified, if it benefits the least advantaged. John Rawls's concept of justice has two aspects to it. Firstly, it postulates a "constitutional democracy"; that is, government of laws and one, which is restrained, responsible and accountable. Secondly, it believes in the regulation of the free economy "in a certain way". "If law and government", writes Rawls, "act effectively to keep market competitive, resources fully employed, property and wealth widely distributed over time, and to maintain the appropriate social minimum, then if there is equality of opportunity underwritten by education for all, the resulting distribution will be just".

5. Elaborate On The Procedural And Substantive Dimensions Of Democracy.

Democracy could be well understood by two different views – procedural (minimalist) and substantive (maximalist). The procedural dimension merely focuses on procedures or means in place to attain democracy. It argues that regular competitive elections on the basis of universal adult franchise and plural political participation would produce a democratically elected government. In his 1942 book, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy

Substantive democracy tries to overcome the shortcomings of procedural view arguing that social and economic differences could hamper people's participation in the democratic process. It focuses on outcomes like social equality instead of ends in order to truly work for the governed. In a sense, it talks about 'common good' rather than the benefit of limited individuals. The rights of marginalized sections like women and the poor are protected through redistributive justice so that conditions can be created through state intervention for their participation in political process. Various political scientists like John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill have contributed to emergence of this view. Unlike Schumpeter who believed that a conception of democracy which aims for

ambitious forms of equality is dangerous, Rousseau argued that formal variety of democracy is equivalent to slavery and it is only egalitarian democracies which have political legitimacy.

6. Meaning Of Gender

The word gender is being used sociologically or as a conceptual category, and it has been given a very specific meaning. In its new incarnation gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. It is used as an analytical tool to understand social realities with regard to women and men. The distinction between sex and gender was introduced to deal with the general tendency to attribute women's subordination to their anatomy. For ages it was believed that the different characteristics, roles and status accorded to women and men in society, are determined by biology, that they are natural and therefore, not, changeable. Every culture has its ways of valuing girls and boys and assigning 89 Gender them different roles, responses and attributes. All the social and cultural "packaging" that is done for boys and girls from birth onwards is "gendering". Ann Oakley who was among the first few feminist scholars to use this concept, says : "Gender is a matter of culture, it refers to the social classification of men and women into "masculine" and "feminine". That people are male or female can usually be judged by referring to biological evidence. That they are masculine or feminine cannot be judged in the same way: the criteria are cultural, differing with time and place. The constancy of sex must be admitted, but so also must the variability of gender. Gender has no biological origin and the connection between sex and gender are not natural.

7. Concept Of Citizenship

Citizenship is the status of a person recognized under the custom or law as being a legal member of a sovereign state or part of a nation. A person may have multiple citizenships

and a person who does not have citizenship of any state is said to be stateless. The term 'citizen' can be understood in a narrow or in a broad sense. In a narrow sense, it means the resident of a city or one who enjoys the privilege of living in a city. While in a broad sense, citizen means a person who resides within the territorial limits of the state. Citizenship and nationality are the same in a legal sense. Conceptually, citizenship is focused on the internal political life of the state and nationality is a matter of international dealings. In the modern era, the concept of full citizenship encompasses not only active political rights, but full civil and social rights. Historically, the most significant difference between a national and a citizen is that the citizen has the right to vote for elected officials, and to be elected. This distinction between full citizenship and other, lesser relationships goes back to antiquity. Until the 19th and 20th centuries, it was typical for only a small percentage of people who belonged to a city or state to be full citizens. In the past, most people were excluded from citizenship on the basis of gender, class, ethnicity, religion or other factors.

8. Civil Society

The idea of civil society is deeply entrenched in political thought. The idea of civil society is quite old, but it has become important in the last few decades because of the political evolution worldwide, particularly after the fall of the former communist countries in Eastern Europe. Moreover, many times nonstate actors, especially non-governmental organisations and various issue-based movements, have become influential in shaping public policy debate, sometimes helping the state to formulate and implement policies. The term "civil society" can be traced through the works of Cicero (*societas civilis*) and other Romans to the ancient Greek philosophers, although in classical usage civil society was equated with the state. The modern idea of civil society emerged in the Scottish and Continental Enlightenment of the late 18th century. A host of political theorists, from John Locke, Thomas Paine to Hegel, developed the notion of civil society as a domain parallel to but separate from the state — a place where citizens voluntarily associate according to their own interests and wishes. This new thinking reflected changing economic realities: the rise of private property, market competition, and the bourgeoisie. It also grew out of the mounting popular demand for liberty, as manifested in the American and French revolutions. The idea of civil society took a back seat in the mid-19th century as political theorists turned their attention to the social and political consequences of the industrial revolution. It came back in use after World War II through the writings of the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, who revived the term to portray civil society as a special nucleus of independent political activity, a crucial sphere of struggle against tyranny.

10. Censorship

The origin of the term 'censorship' can be traced to the office of censor established in Rome

in 443 B.C. to regulate morals and ritually purifying the people. From this office derives the modern use of the term 'censorship' to denote the practice of examining, restricting and prohibiting public acts, expressions of opinion, and artistic performances. Censorship is today generally regarded as a relic of an unenlightened and much more oppressive age. The suppression or control of ideas, public communication and information circulated within a society is termed as censorship. Ritu Menon argues censorship is when a work of art expressing an idea which does not fall under current convention is seized, cut up, withdrawn, impounded, ignored, maligned or otherwise made inaccessible to its audience. Censorship is a tool which is used either by state or society for the maintenance of power, achieved through manipulation of the cultural sphere. Cultural realm plays an important role in deciding

“ what is acceptable” in society as cultural hegemony declares some words or acts to be decent and others indecent, and goes on to control its meaning and thought. Apart from cultural understanding, there can be various other sources of censorship like religion, dictatorship and the market as well. Censorship can be first traced under religious leadership. Initially, all art and literary works were heavily influenced by religious thought and “good and acceptable”

was associated with those works which would appreciate the existing status quo while those questioning, used to be regarded as “blasphemous, obscene and irrational”. The Roman Catholic Church developed the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, a list of proscribed books, the origins of which go back (in a primitive form) to the 5th century CE and which continued to have official sanction well into the 20th century. The most spectacular instance of the silencing of a thinker of note may well have been the restrictions placed upon Galileo Galilei (1564-1642) in 1633. The famous scientist had a hard time in Italy as his scientific findings were challenging the widespread explanations by the Church. This kind of control was not only limited to art, architecture or literary works, but also to language and placed the onus of maintaining sanctity and purity over women. It defined the way of life of an “ideal and moral” lady and anyone, who didn't fit into the defined structure, was exposed to societal criticism.