

BLOCK: III
UNDERSTANDING POWER

- Unit 1 : Chapter: Power Authority and Legitimacy**
- Unit 2 : Dimensions of Power**
- Unit 3 : Ideology and Power**
- Unit 4 : Pluralist and Elitist Notion of Power**
- Unit 5 : Power as Subject: Foucauldian Perspective**

CHAPTER: POWER AUTHORITY AND LEGITIMACY

Unit Structure:

- 1.1 Introduction**
- 1.2 Objectives**
- 1.3 Meaning and nature of Power**
- 1.4 Sources of Power**
- 1.5 Different types of Power**
- 1.6 Different Perspectives of power.**
 - 1.6.1 Class Perspective of Power**
 - 1.6.2 Feminist Perspective on Power**
 - 1.6.3 Group Perspective of Power**
 - 1.6.4 Elitist Perspective of Power**
 - 1.6.5 Gandhian Perspective of Power**
- 1.7 Authority: Meaning and its' Nature**
- 1.8 Different types of Authority**
- 1.9 Relative meaning of Power and Authority**
- 1.10 Meaning and Basis of Legitimacy**
- 1.11 Types of Legitimacy**
- 1.12 Relationship among Power, Authority and Legitimacy**
- 1.13 Summing Up**
- 1.14 References/Suggested Readings**

1.1 Introduction:

Power, Authority and Legitimacy are three central subject in the field political science. From the very beginning of political science these three terms are playing key role in the domain of political debates, analysis and even in practical field. For some scholars, political science begins and ends with power. All three terms are interlinked with each other and even in many

times these terms are used synonymously. Yet there are some fundamental differences among them. This chapter is an attempt to introduce the meaning of the concepts, its sources, and different forms of the terms and find out the relationship among the terms.

Space for Learner

1.2 Objectives:

After going through this unit you will be able to–

- *understand* the concept of Power, its sources and its various forms,
- *discuss* the concept of Authority and identify its types,
- *explain* the relative meaning of Power and authority,
- *understand* the concept of Legitimacy and identify its types,
- *examine* the relative meaning of Power, Authority and legitimacy.

1.3 Meaning and Nature of Power:

Power is one of the core issues of political science. Politics is considered as the struggle for power. In real sense no one separated politics from the study of power. Yet there is no agreement among the scholars regarding the meaning of power.

The word “Power” is derived from the Latin word “potere” or “potestas” which means ability to do something. So in general power is considered as the ability to do something in favor of himself or herself. Oxford English Dictionary defines power as the “ability to do or act” and control, influence, ascendancy. Webster Dictionary defines power as the possession of control, authority or influence over others. Both these dictionary defines power as influence, control, ability through which one can make himself superior and through his superiority he/she can control the behavior of others for his/her favour. Bertrand Russell in his book “Power: A new social analysis”(1938) has defined power as “the production of intended effects”. By his definition he defines power as the ability of a person to fulfill his desires or achieve something in favor of him/her. According to David Easton power is the “relationship in which one person or a group is able to determine the actions

Space for Learner

of another in the direction of the formers' own ends". For Easton power is the capacity of an individual or a group to control or affect the actions of others in accordance with his/her own wishes. Karl Friedrich defines power as "certain kind of human relation" While for Tawney "it is the capacity of an individual or a group to modify others" communist leader of China Mao Zedong described power "flowing from barrel of gun". On contrary to Mao, Mahatma Gandhi analyses power from his viewpoint of nonviolence and love. For him power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent then the one derived from fear of punishment. Michel Foucault uses the phenomenon of power synonymously with knowledge. For him 'knowledge is power'. Foucault uses the term power/knowledge to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding and truth... 'in fact power produces, reality: it produces domains of object and rituals of truth'. Though different scholars have different opinion regarding the concept and meaning of Power yet we can sum up it as follows—

- Power basically means more ability, capacity, skill, knowledge in comparison to others.
- Power assumes a relationship between dominant group and subordinate group.
- Power is a means to fulfill one's need.
- Power is relative. It is situational.
- Power basically means controlling others behaviour or activity in accordance with one's will.
- Power manifests itself in a variety of ways.

● **Nature of Power:**

The analysis of the concept of power gives a few nature of it. Some of them are—

1. **Power means capacity:** Power is the capacity to influence the behavior of others. When an individual or a group is considered as

powerful he/she must have some superior capacity than the others. This superior capacity enables him/her to get things done from others as his/her wishes.

2. **Power belongs to relationship:** Fredrick defines ‘power is a certain kind human relationship’. It is not the property of single individual. For use of power, there must be two actors, one who exercises the power and the other upon whom power is exercised. Power does not exist in vacuum. Power can be only exercised in relation to others.
3. **Power is situational:** Power is not absolute but relative only. Power depends on situation, circumstances and position. For example an officer may use his power and give order to his subordinate when he is in service, the subordinates are also bound to follow him as he is more powerful than them in terms of service law but they may not follow his order after his retirement. Likewise a teacher may exercise his power in school campus but that teacher is not able to use his power in a market place. Hence power is situational.
4. **Positive and negative aspects of power:** Power has two aspects, one is positive and other is negative. Positive aspects of power helps to initiate an activity for the wellbeing of society while negative aspect of power restricts or put some hindrances in the development of society.

Stop to Consider

Some important points:

- The word “Power” is derived from the Latin word “Potere” or “Potestas”.
- Power is the capacity to influence the behaviour of others.
- Power is not absolute but relative only.
- Power is always relational.

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress

1. Define Power.
2. Who opined that 'Power comes from barrel of gun'?
3. What are the natures of power?

1.4 Sources of Power:

There are many sources of Power. The major sources of power are Force, Political organization, skill, money, knowledge, customs, personality, law, spiritual dominance etc.

(a) Force:

Force and physical power is one of the important sources of power. By physical power a man can control the behaviour of other people. In international politics also nations use force (military power) to fulfill their national interest. According to Mao force is the prime equipment for political power.

(b) Organization:

Organization is another source of power. When people work together their strength increases. For example a person having support by an organization his power automatically increases in comparison to individual power. The supporter of the Elite theory also propounded that organization plays an important role in society behind the acquisition of power. In democracy political organization especially political parties play a pivotal role in acquiring power in state.

(c) Skill and Knowledge:

According to Lasswell the main source of power are skill and knowledge. A tactful person is more powerful than an ordinary person. Knowledge is considered as the most important source of power in present time. Knowledge helps a person in investigating, learning, thinking and development of mind and soul. A well-informed and skillful person can easily influence others. Michel Foucault also admits that those who have knowledge become powerful automatically.

(d) Money and Property:

Money and property is always considered as one of the sources of power. Robert Dahl rightly says that an individual with better resources will capture more power than others. In present time also a rich man can put pressure even on the legal authority getting thing done in his own way. At present, in almost all states most of the development plans and policies are drafted on influenced of capitalist by virtue of his economic status.

(e) Law:

Law is also considered an important source of power. In democracy constitution (fundamental law) is considered as the sole source of political power. So those who have legal sanction they are powerful in democracy.

(f) Personality:

Personality of a person is considered as a source of power. That personality may be due to wisdom, beauty, courage, oratory, organizational capacity to take quick and proper decision. A person who possesses charismatic personality is always more powerful than an ordinary man.

(g) Tradition and Spiritual Dominance:

Some People enjoy power in society due to the customs prevailed in that society from the very ancient time or for the religious belief. In India the priests and maulana acquires a dignified status in society due to the religious belief and customs.

Besides these there are some other sources of power which are varied from society to society.

1.5 Different types of Power:

Like the concept of power, there is no agreement among scholars regarding the types of power. As the concept of power is multilateral so scholars have classified power from their own perspectives. However generally, power is said to have three forms. These are-

- A. Political Power
- B. Economic Power
- C. Ideological Power

Space for Learner

A. Political Power:

Political power means the power of state and government. The state through its agencies especially through the government exercises power over the individual and associations in its territory. E. P. Allens defines political power “is evidenced by the ability of those who control the instruments of government to secure obedience to their decisions.”

In general political power is exercised by the formal organs of the government: executive, legislature and judiciary. Executive and legislature, together make laws, policies and decisions regulating the allocation of values in a society. They impose taxes, issues licenses, permits and regulate a large variety of citizens’ actions. There is also police force for maintaining of laws and orders, judiciary to settle disputes, military to deal with foreign aggressor. Apart from these formal organizations there are a lot of informal organizations, who also enjoys and exercises political power. Political parties, different pressure groups, public opinion, popular movements also exercise political power.

Antony H. Birch has identified four form of manifestation of political power-

- a. The most popular form of manifestation of political power is coercion. In many times government uses force to make its presence felt. Through Police force and military government uses some coercive measures like lathi charge, imposition of curfew, demolition of encroachment in public property to maintain law and order and run development project.
- b. According to Birch the second manifestation of political power is enactment and execution of law. The law making function is performed by legislature, the executive and bureaucracy, implement them and the courts interpret and adjudicate them.
- c. Another way of manifestation of political power is influence. Influence is exercised by various political parties, pressure groups to fulfill their demands and redress the grievances.

Lastly is the political manipulation. It is defined as the activity of shaping the public opinion, values and behaviour of others without latter realizing that this is happening. Using mass media for political interest of a particular

political party, teaching biased political ideology by a teacher in the classroom are some example of political manipulation. The basic function of political power is to maintain law and order and dispense justice. However at present political power has been used in a wide range of issues and problems eg. reconciliation between conflicting interest, look after common good etc.

B. Economic Power:

Economic Power is the power emanating from the material resources. It can also be known as power of wealth. Economic power denotes dominance in the material and non material property. As a result dominant economic group always plays an advantage role in political arena. Even in many societies economic power governs political power. In other way political power also influences the economic power. In socialist state, economic power is in the hands of people who control political power. Here the entire economy is handled directly by state, from the ownership of means of production to the distribution of goods and services. In liberal democracy the possessors of wealth exercise their influence on politics through various means. Here economic power is vested in the hand of capitalist. They control the means of production as well as the distribution of goods and services. In Welfare state economic system is highly regulated by the political power for the greater interest of the subaltern group.

C. Ideological Power:

The main basis of ideological power is ideology. Ideologies are fundamental vehicle of power as they serve to control the positive and negative ways of how individuals and groups adapt to master their environments. Ideological power does not itself helps in acquiring or using power in society rather it indirectly helps in accepting or sustaining in political power. Ideological power is the rationalization of any system in terms of ideas and beliefs with the desired objective of justifying that system. The sanction behind the ideological power is religion, belief, custom, culture, way of living etc. Ideological power with the help of those ideas and beliefs designed to

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

legitimize and maintain a particular political and socio- economic system in its totally. The ideological power propagated through the family environment, education system, culture, ethics etc. At present the mass media also plays a substantial role in moulding and planting the ideologies into peoples' mind.

Check Your Progress

1. What are the sources of power?
2. What is Ideological power?
3. Write about Political power?

1.6 Different Perspectives of Power:

Like the other domain of political science, power has been discussed by different scholars from different perspectives. Some of these are discussed bellow—

1.6.1 Class Perspective of Power:

Class perspective of power developed by Karl Marx and his followers. According to them political power is the product of economic power. Economic power is controlled by the owners of the means of production. This particular group by using the political equipments specially the state exploits the other sections of society. For them in each society there are two classes- haves - have-nots, master-slave, landlord-serf, and capitalist-worker.

This theory recognized class as a unit for exercising and mobilizing power. Those who are able to grab the ownership become dominant class and rest are forced to work in accordance to their order. At one stage of history the dependent class will be able to organize themselves and launch a struggle against the dominant class. This would lead to the emergence of class struggle. But the dominant class does not give an opportunity to organize the dependent class. It is only under the capitalist system the dependent group will get an opportunity to form a strong organization to fight against the

capitalist, the dominant class of capitalism. Marx and Engels believed that the overthrow of capitalist class was not only imminent but also inevitable. The followers of Marxism believe that the class struggle led by the working class would eliminate the exploitation of dominant class and will bring a new socio- political system where each and every person will get equal economic and social status.

1.6.2 Feminist Perspective on Power:

The feminist thinker analyses the domain of power from gender perspective. Like the Marxist thinker, feminist also recognizes the division of society into two broad groups. For Marxist the base of division was economical, whether feminist considered the division on the basis of culture. The feminist thinkers urged for the reconstruction of society on the basis of gender equity. For them, reconstruction of society means restructuring of power sharing mechanism on the basis of gender. Feminist criticizes prevailing patriarchal system based on male dominance and addresses the domain of power in three ways- as a resource to be (re)distributed, as domination and as empowerment. Those who conceptualize power as a resource understand it as a positive social good that is currently unequally distributed amongst men and women. For feminist who understands power in this way, the goal is to redistribute the resource so that women will have equal power to man. A group of feminist thinkers conceptualize power domain from the view point of domination. They criticize the prevailing power structure of the society which is biased towards male. Another strand of feminist who conceptualize domain of power as empowerment, have tended to understand power not as power-over but as power-to. This group of feminist urge for transformation of power structure towards woman. For them by using the new structure women should empower themselves to compete with male in every field.

1.6.3 Group Perspective of Power:

Group perspective of power is related to the pluralist approach. According to this theory power is not concentrated in one group or area. Power is dispersed in different social, economic and political groups. Each of the

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

groups has a share in power in accordance with the contribution to society. Those groups are largely autonomous and almost independent centre of decision. However they are more or less interdependent within the social organization as they operate in same society. It thus tends to balance each others' power. Public decisions are largely result of the outcome of these balances.

1.6.4 Elitist Perspective of Power:

Elitist theory considers power as a property of superiority or the elite. According to them, all people in society do not possess that superior quality required to be ruler. Only few people of society have such type of qualities. Hence power rests on only those people and the rest of the society is ruled by the elite or the superior. Thus the supporter of elitist theory like the Marxist and Feminist also recognizes the division of society into two broad groups: ruler and ruled or elite and masses.

1.6.5 Gandhian Perspective of Power:

Gandhi, the father of the nation of India gives an alternative perspective on power. For him power resides within the people. Gandhi stated that power is of two kinds. One is obtained by fear and other by acts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment. The main three sources of power according to Gandhi are: nonviolence, truth and love. Through these three sources one can transform himself to transform the world. Gandhi recognizes importance of political power. For him political power means "swaraj". The literal meaning of swaraj is: *swa* means self and *raj* means rule. Gandhi stated that swaraj is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority. Here Gandhi defines power from the view point of ruled. It implies that rulers should never gain absolute authority over its' citizen. If the ruled feels that their authority is becoming too powerful, they would use their moral power to challenge the authority of the rulers.

Stop to Consider

There are different perspectives on power—

- Class perspective believes political power is the product of economic power. For them, in each society there is seen presence of two classes. Power is held by the dominant classes at the expenses of the rest of society.
- Feminist perspective considers power as the construction of culture based on gender. They believe, through different arrangements and construction of culture male people keeps power in their hand. For an equitable society transformation of those cultural role based on gender must be achieved.
- Group perspective advocated that power is not a business of single organization diffused in different social and political groups. Power arises from the activity and services done by those groups towards the society.
- Elitist perspective considers power as the product of superior quality. On the basis of quality society is divided into two groups: ruler and ruled or elite and masses.
- Gandhi considers power from a different angle. For him power does not mean controlling others, rather it is product of self transformation for acquiring virtue of love, nonviolence and truth.

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress

1. What are the different perspectives on power?
2. How Gandhian perspective of power is different from other perspectives?

1.7 Authority: Meaning and its' Nature:

Authority is also another central concept of the domain of political science. The word authority is derived from the Roman word “auctor” or “auctoritus” which meant advice, opinion or influence. There was a roman custom that

Space for Learner

the senate had the power to judge the decision of popular assembly. During that time senate was considered as the house of ‘men of reason’ or ‘elders with experiences’. This custom was called as ‘auctoritus’ by the Roman. From this view point authority denotes legitimization of power. Generally authority means power given by the state in the form of government or different officials. In the opinion of Maciver By authority we mean the established right within any social order to determine policies to pronounce judgment or relevant issues and to settle controversies or, more broadly to act as a leader or guide to other men.” D. D, Raphael offers a very precise definition of authority. He says ‘To have authority is to do something is to have the right to do something.’ Raphael used the word right in two senses. An authority or a man has right implies that he may do something or he is permitted to do something. It signifies that the person has been licensed to do the job or take an action. In the opinion of Raphael right has another meaning to. This meaning proposes that right means to receive something. Here an individual can claim to have something. So for Raphael authority is used in both the senses. An individual can do something and when he is challenged by others he will meet the challenge by saying that he receives to do this either from established law or from the consent of the people. Thus authority is called as institutionalized and legal power inherent in a particular job, position or function that is meant to enable its holder to successfully carry out his or her responsibilities.

● **Nature of Authority:**

There are certain characteristics of the concept of authority. These are—

- **Legitimacy:** Authority is a legitimate power. It is the legitimate, recognized and accepted power of the authority holder. It is backed by the constitution of the state or laws of the state or custom or traditions. It is legitimacy which make authority just and effective.
- **Relationship:** Authority is relationship. Authority involves a minimum presence of two actors, one who has the recognized power to use power over others and the other upon whom this power is exercised.

- **Reason:** The basis of authority is reason or logic. We accept authority because it is based on logic. Fredrick writes, ‘ the man who has authority possesses something that I would describe as the capacity for reasoned elaboration, for giving convincing reason for what he does or proposes to have other to do.’
- **Responsibility or Accountability:** Another characteristic of authority is responsibility or accountability. The man or the group who possesses authority is always responsible or answerable to some higher authority. In democracy, authorities are answerable or responsible to the general public.
- **Dominance:** An authority holder enjoys dominance over his subjects. He can command obedience.

Stop to Consider

Some important points:

- The word authority is derived from the Roman word “auctor” or “auctoritus” which means advice, opinion or influence.
- Authority is that form of power which is legalized and legitimized.
- There are certain characteristics of the concept of authority. These are– legitimacy, relationship, reason, responsibility or accountability, dominance etc.

1.8 Different types of Authority:

Max Weber, a German sociologist and political economist explained in his book ‘The Theory of Social and Economic Organization’ . Weber divided authority in to three types: Traditional Authority, Charismatic Authority and Legal Rational Authority.

(a) Traditional Authority:

Traditional authority is that which is based on ancient customs or traditions and conventions. Traditional authority is closely related to hereditary system of power. According to Weber, the power of traditional authority is accepted

Space for Learner

because that has traditionally been the case; its legitimacy exists because it has been accepted for a long time. Britain's queen Elizabeth for instance, occupies a position that she inherited based on the traditional rules of succession for the monarchy. People adhere to traditional authority because they are invested in the past and feel obligated to perpetuate it.

Traditional authority can be intertwined with race, class, varna and gender. In most societies, for instance, men are more likely to be privileged than women and thus are more likely to hold roles of authority. Similarly members of dominant racial groups or upper class families also win respect more readily. In India the Brahmins win an upper hand respect from all other groups due to the hierarchical varna system. However the acceptance of traditional authority is declining day by day due to the growing acceptance of democracy.

(b) Charismatic Authority:

Charismatic authority based on charisma. Charisma denotes personal qualities. Max Weber says, 'Charismatic authority rests on the devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person.' Followers accept the power of charismatic authority because they are drawn to the leaders' personal qualities. Charismatic leaders usually emerge in times of crisis and offer innovative and radical solutions. They may offer a vision of new world order.

Charismatic leaders tend to hold power for short durations and according to Weber they are just likely to be tyrannical as they are heroic. Diverse leaders from different backgrounds are considered as charismatic authority e.g. Hitler, Napoleon, Jesus Christ, Caesar, Margaret Thatcher, Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Mother Teresa etc. All of them were able to make a huge number of followers by their exemplary character.

(c) Legal Rational Authority:

Legal Rational authority is that which is used in accordance with the law. Such kind of authority exists only in democracy. In this type of authority, power is vested in a particular rationale, system or ideology and not necessarily in the person who implements the specifics of that doctrine. A nation that follows a constitution applies this type of authority.

Comparison Table:

| SI No | Particulars | Charismatic | Traditional | Legal Rational |
|-------|------------------------|--|------------------------|---|
| 1 | Type of ruler | Charismatic leader | Historic personality | Functional Superior or bureaucratic official |
| 2 | Position determined by | personality | Established traditions | Law |
| 3 | Ruled using | Extra ordinary quality and exceptional powers | Acquired or inherited | Rationality or established norms, rules and regulations |
| 4 | Loyalty | Interpersonal and personal allegiance and devotion | Traditional allegiance | Authority/rules |

Weber noted that legal rational authority is the most advanced one. Societies try to evolve from traditional and charismatic authorities to legal rational one because the feudal standard of traditional authority and instability of charismatic authority automatically force it to routinize into a more structured form of authority.

Check Your Progress

- 1: What do you mean by Authority?
- 2: What are the different characteristics of Authority?
- 3: What are the three types of Authority?

1.9 Relative meaning of Power and Authority:

Power and authority are two important terms of political science. For some scholars authority is a species of power. Weldon analyse authority as ‘power exercised with the general approval of the people concerned.’ There are also some scholars who use these two terms interchangeably. As a result of this fact many scholars ignore authority in their discussion or theoretical analysis. For example Machiavelli and Hobbes devoted considerable space in analyzing how power is used to regulate human life but said practically

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

nothing about authority. Normative theories reject the attempt to analyse authority in terms of power. C. J. Friedrich observes ‘authority is not a kind of power something that accompanies it.’

Power and authority are two ways of regulating social behavior and conduct. A man with power may regulate those conduct and behavior either by consent or by force on the other hand a man with authority can do this only by the consent of people and social norms. That is why authority is always considered as legitimate whereas power may be legitimate as well as illegitimate. Power is generally based on force, whereas authority is based on consent. In this sense authority is more democratic than power. In the words of Lasswell ‘power becomes authority when it is legalized. Capacity to issue order is power, whereas authority is that point where the decisions are taken.’

Although, there exist many differences between power and authority yet both the terms are related to each other. Authority cannot exist without power. The exercise of authority always means exercise of power. Power to be effective and stable must be accompanied by authority. Gauba analyses this relation with a meaningful quote; ‘If we think of power as a naked sword, authority may be envisaged as a sword in its scabbled.’

1.10 Meaning and Basis of Legitimacy:

The concept of legitimacy also has acquired a significant place in modern Political theory. Although the significance of these terms can be seen in the writings of ancient Greek thinkers but its systematic exposition have been carried only by modern political thinkers.

The term legitimacy derived from the latin word ‘legitimus’ which means lawful. Cicero used the term legitimus to denote the power constituted by law. Later, the word legitimacy was used for traditional procedures, constitutional principles and adaption to tradition. During that period consent was also considered as the essence of legitimate rule. The meaning of legitimacy has changed from age to age. During the middle age it was used to express the feeling against usurpation. But in the present age, all revolution

or coup cannot be considered as illegitimate. For example the revolution of Bangladesh against Pakistan to secure freedom cannot be termed as illegitimate. Thus new principles of legitimacy replace the old principle.

Different thinkers have define legitimacy different way. For example-

According to S.M. Lipset, 'Legitimacy involves the capacity of the system to engender and maintain the belief that existing political institution are most appropriate for the society.'

According to Jean Blondel, 'Legitimacy can be defined as the extent to which the population accepts naturally, without questioning, the organization to which it belong.'

According to J.C. Plano and R. E. Riggs, 'Legitimacy means the quality of being justified or willingly accepted by subordinates that converts the political power into rightful authority.'

Though there are many views regarding legitimacy we may conclude that legitimacy means the capacity to produce and maintain a belief that the existing political system is most suitable to the society. The citizens must obey it unreluctantly and accept its sanctity and consider it worthy of respect and reverence.

● **Basis of Legitimacy:**

Like power and authority, Legitimacy has also its own grounds. According to max Weber there are three sources of legitimacy-

- (i) **Tradition:** Legitimacy may rest on an established belief in the sanction of immemorial traditions and on the need to obey leaders who exercise authority according to tradition.
- (ii) **Exceptional Personal Qualities:** The second basis of legitimacy is Charismatic quality of a leader or a person. This is based on 'devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity or exemplary character of an individual person and the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by him.'

Space for Learner

(iii) **Legality:** According to Weber, the third important source of legitimacy is law. Legitimacy may rest on the belief that power is wielded in a way that is legal. What is done legally is regarded as legitimate.

Robert Dahl refers to another three kinds of the basis of legitimacy. These are: Personal Choice, Competence and economy.

G. A. Jones has described seven sources of legitimacy in the context of British system viz., Continuity with the political and social system, tradition of non-violence, religious belief, belief in values, electoral process, liberty and unanimity, continuity of its tradition and adaption of political culture.

From the above analysis it is evident that legitimacy is not merely a moral feeling. It is a belief which leads the people to accept that it is morally right and proper for the officials or leaders of government to make binding rules.

Stop to Consider

Some important points:

- The term legitimacy is derived from the Latin word ‘legitimus’ which means lawful.
- Legitimacy means the capacity to produce and maintain a belief that the existing political system is most suitable to the society.
- There are many sources of legitimacy: tradition, personal quality, legality etc.

1.11 Types of Legitimacy:

David Easton refers to three forms of legitimacy viz., ideological, structural and personal.

- (i) **Ideological Legitimacy:** When legitimacy comes from the ideology prevailed in the society than it is termed as ideological legitimacy. A political system is also an articulated set of ideals, ends and beliefs which help the members of that system to interpret the past explain the present and offer a vision of the future. These set of ideas may

be deceptive myths about political life or they may be realistic appraisals and sincere aspirations. But these always have the potential to capture popular imagination. However all kinds of ideologies do not contribute to the growth or maintenance of legitimacy. Those sets of belief that go to the heart of the regime and help in sustaining the system are called legitimating ideologies.

- (ii) **Structural Legitimacy:** The principles which motivate the members of a system to accept their authority holders as legitimate can also contribute to the justification of structures and norms of the regime. Every system has some rules through which authority is wielded and there are always some rules which govern the exercise of power. The fact of occupying these roles and of abiding by the rules applying to them normally places the seal of moral approval upon the authorities. This basis of validation of authority is called structural legitimacy
- (iii) **Personal Legitimacy:** If the behavior and personality of the occupants of authority roles are of dominating importance and if the members consider this authority as trust worthy this is known as personal legitimacy. David Easton is of the view that a large class of leaders, regardless of any conviction of being called, or outer recognition as such by followers, manage to build up a belief in their legitimacy. The belief in the validity of authorities is based on their personal qualities.

Check Your Progress

1. Mention the differences between Power and Authority.
2. What is Legitimacy?
3. What are the sources of Legitimacy?

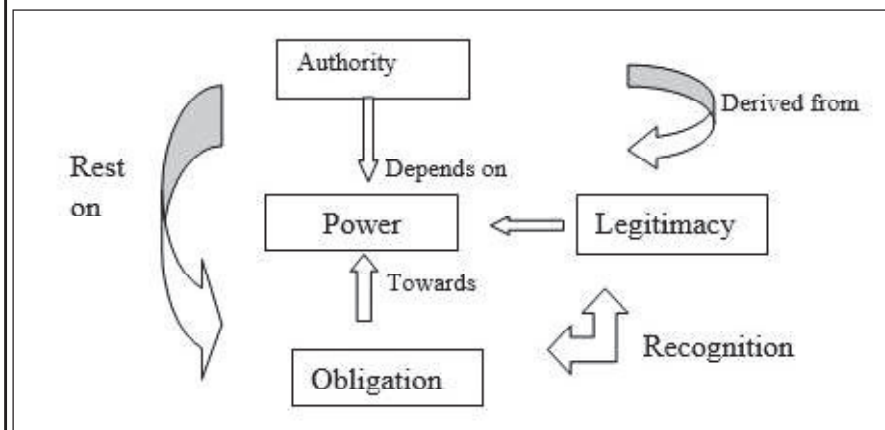
Space for Learner

1.12 Relationship among Power, Authority and Legitimacy:

Power, authority and legitimacy are inherently linked concept. Power is an entity of individuals' ability to control or direct others, while authority is influence that is predicted on perceived legitimacy. Power is necessary for authority, but it is possible to have power without authority. In Other words power is necessary but not sufficient for authority. Authority consists of two important components: power and legitimacy. Power becomes authority when it is legitimized. Without legitimacy, power also cannot sustain for a long period. Through legitimacy, power gets recognition and become authority. Even without legitimacy authority cannot exists.

$$\text{Power} + \text{Legitimacy} = \text{Authority}$$

In reality none of the concept is completely independent of each other. The following diagram depicts inseparable relation among them.



Check Your Progress:

1. What do you mean by power? Discuss the characteristics of it.
2. Mention the elements/ Sources of power.
3. Write a comprehensive note on different forms of Power.
4. What is Authority? Discuss different forms of Authority as put forward by Max Weber.
5. Define the relationship between Power and Authority.
6. Define the concept of Legitimacy. What are the different types of legitimacy?

SAQ:

Write a note on different perspectives of power. Examine how elitist perspective of power is different from group perspective of power.

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

Space for Learner

1.13 Summing Up:

After reading this unit you have learnt that Power, Authority and legitimacy are three important concepts of political theory. Power refers to the ability or capability of a person or a group to control the behavior of others as their wishes. There are many sources and types of power. Like power, authority also denotes capacity but it rests on consent and norms of the society. Without those norms and consent authority cannot exist. Legitimacy basically means consent. All these three terms (power, authority and legitimacy) are interlinked. Authority is the outcome of power and legitimacy. Through legitimacy power becomes more effective and stable. O.P. Gauba analyses this relation with a meaningful quote; ‘If we think of power as a naked sword, authority may be envisaged as a sword in its scabbard.’

1.14 References/Suggested Readings:

1. Arora N.D. Awasthy S.S. Political theory, Har Anand Publication, 2004
2. Ball. A.R. Modern Politics and Government, Macmillan Press, 1975
3. Das, P.G, Modern Political Theory, NCBA, 1996
4. Gauba, O. P. An Introduction to Political theory, Macmillan, 2010.
5. Heywood, A. Political Theory: An Introduction, Macmillan international, 2015.
6. Mahajan, V.D. Political Theory, S Chand & Company LTD, 2001
7. <https://egyankosh.ac.in>
8. <https://www.tandfonline.com>

× × ×

UNIT: 2
DIMENSIONS OF POWER

Unit Structure:

- 2.1 Introduction**
- 2.2 Objectives**
- 2.3 Meaning and Definitions of power**
 - 2.3.1 Different thinkers on power**
- 2.4 Characteristics of power**
- 2.5 Kinds and Forms of power**
- 2.6 Dimensions of power**
 - 2.6.1 Power as decision making**
 - 2.6.2 Power as agenda setting**
 - 2.6.3 Power as thought control**
- 2.7 Methods of exercising power**
- 2.8 Summing Up**
- 2.9 References/Suggested Readings**

2.1 Introduction:

One of the most discussed topics in the arena of politics is the issue of power. Power is one of the central themes of politics and hence in today's time many regards politics as the struggle for power. Power is crucial for each and every state in this world and it is the most essential element of each and every state. All countries tries to acquire power. In-fact the desire to acquire more power is inherent in all human beings. Power is the essential characteristics of the state system. One of the most eminent political scientist, Robert A. Dahl, said that power is synonymous with politics. According to V D Mahajan "power is the key concept because if politics is the resolution of conflict, it is the distribution of power within a community that determines how the conflict is to be resolved and whether the resolution is to be effectively observed by all parties". It may be stated here that power is

unevenly distributed. Not everyone is having equal amount of power. Eminent political scientist Hans J Morgenthau said that politics is a struggle for power. In the arena of political science there are views that political relationships are actually power relationships. However, one must keep in mind that though power is an important concept within politics, but politics is not all about power. Within politics there are so many other aspects. One must also note that though the desire of acquiring power is an important characteristics of human beings, but human beings are not exclusively a power hungry animals. In this unit we will learn various ideas regarding power with special reference to the dimensions of power.

2.2 Objectives:

After going through this unit you will be able to—

- *understand* the meaning and definitions of power,
- *know* the characteristics of power,
- *discuss* the kinds and forms of power,
- *examine* the dimensions of power,
- *explain* the methods of exercising power.

2.3 Meaning and Definitions of Power:

There is no agreed definite meaning of power. Different scholars have defined in different ways. In simple terms, power refers to a person's ability to influence the behaviour of another person or a group of people in accordance with his or her own desires. According to Robert A Dahl power is a special case of influence involving losses for non-compliance. According to David Easton power is a relationship in which one person or a group is able to determine the actions of another in the direction of the former's own end. People's relationships are marked by subordination and super-ordination when they have power. Many social scientists, especially sociologists, are primarily concerned with the repercussions of power dynamics in social relationships. This unit begins with a discussion of the definition and notion of power before moving on to important theoretical approaches to

Space for Learner

understanding power in sociological texts. We analyse the perspectives of six sociologists who describe the various characteristics of power in this article. Later in the Unit, we'll look at how power is articulated in two very different contexts: the elite on the one hand, and local communities on the other.

“Power may be described as the power of a person, or group of individuals, to alter the behaviour of other individuals or groups in the manner that he desires, and to prevent his conduct from being modified in the manner that he does not”, writes Tawney (1931: 229).

At least two actors must have a social relationship in order for power to exist. It can't be attributed to a single person. It is nonsensical to assert that an individual has power unless it is indicated over whom this authority is exercised. An individual or group of individuals in positions of power can persuade others to do what they wish. Those who are subjected to the exercise of power are punished in one way or another if they oppose or refuse to obey the powerful. Power always creates asymmetry in relationships. Those with better access to limited resources, such as financial control, ownership or control over means of production and/or distribution, are more powerful than those who do not. Power is the ability to exert control over such resources. The use of sanction in imposing one's will is an important component of power, and it is on this point that power differs from influence.

When power gains legitimacy or justification, it is referred to as authority. It should be noted that authority receives voluntary submission. A person with authority has the ability to command or control others. Consider a senior bureaucrat who assigns tasks to his or her subordinates and may even transfer some of them to another city. This is because the bureaucrat has the authority to do so due to his or her position and status within the government machinery. In formal organisations, authority is clearly defined and distributed through the organization's rules and laws. At this point, it is possible to understand that the exercise of authority does not always imply the superiority of the person who commands. A teacher may be a better scholar than the Principal of the school who dismisses him/her. The Principal may suspend a

teacher solely because of the authority that the Principal possesses. Power can thus be exercised as institutionalised authority in formal organisations and as institutionalised power in informal organisations. b) Status and Power E.A. Ross (1916) drew attention to prestige as the immediate cause of the location of power. It was said that the class with the most prestige would wield the most power. Prestige, therefore, is an important source of power. It is incorrect to associate prestige with power because prestige is rarely associated with power. Power itself becomes the basis of prestige, i.e., when a person has power, he or she has prestige, but when a person has prestige, he or she may not have power.

Space for Learner

Stop to Consider:

Power and Influence:

There is a strong link between power and influence. Influence is persuasive rather than coercive; power commands obedience and submission. Power implies intended control, which is usually carried out through sanctions, whereas influence does not involve the use of sanctions or punishment. Influence does not necessarily imply power. For example, Newton was a man of influence but not power. A police officer may be powerful, but he has no influence. Similarly, the Prime Minister of the country is a person with both power and influence.

2.3.1 Different thinkers on power:

A. Max Weber: Weber gave particular attention to those forms of power that involve stable and enduring relationships, and when power is structured in this way he learned it 'domination'. He referred to this structure of power as "domination." Power is structured into distinct forms of dominance through rationalisation processes: power relations that were previously unreflective custom and habit become more conscious and deliberate social practises. The rationalisation of action entails replacing unreflective patterns of customary and habitual action with actions oriented toward self-interest calculations and commitment to ultimate values. Weber appears to imply two types of rationalisation, which can be labelled 'instrumental

Space for Learner

rationalisation' and 'value rationalisation.' Customary or habitual forms of social order evolve into forms of social order that are sustained by calculations of expediency through instrumental rationalisation. They become forms of social order that are sustained by the concept of legitimacy through value rationalisation (Weber, 30, cited here from Scott 1996: 22-23).

B. Class and Power in Karl Marx Marx: He is well-known for his ideas on class and class conflict. In the capitalist society, he distinguishes two classes: the bourgeoisie (or ruling class) and the proletariat (or working class). He claims that the proletariat rules and commands the bourgeoisie's obedience. The bourgeoisie's power is founded on control over capital on the one hand, and control over military force and idea production on the other. Bottomore (1964: 24-25) states that "the lines of conflict are most sharply drawn in modern capitalist societies, because in such societies the divergence of economic interests appears most clearly unobscured by any personal bonds such as those of feudal society, and because development of capitalism brings about a more radical polarisation of classes than has existed in any other type of society by its unrivalled concentration of wealth at one end." The proletariat, on the other hand, seeks to increase the ruling class's capital. The relationship between the two classes is one of exploitation, with the ruling class profiting at the expense of the wage labourers who make up the proletariat. Workers produce commodities for the bourgeoisie in exchange for wages. Their wages are barely enough to cover their basic needs. Certainly, there is a large disparity between the value of the commodity that workers produce and the wages that they receive, and this disparity is appropriated by the ruling class. The proletariat class is perpetually at odds with its employers over wages and working conditions. Previously, the conflict was disorganised and ineffective. Modern industry and factory system of production ushered an era of political organisation of class struggle. The class conscious political organisation arose. Marx believes that the proletariat will one day overthrow the bourgeoisie and be free of the long-standing domination and exploitation.

C. Robert Michels: The Oligarchy's Iron Law Michels believed that the desire for power is inherent in the nature of humans. Those who acquire power seek to maintain it. Against this backdrop, he contends that

democracy necessitates organisation, which leads to oligarchy. The Iron Law of Oligarchy refers to the trend toward oligarchic rule in party organisations. He agreed that “democratic currents of history” frequently “break on the same shoal.” However, they are “ever renewed.” One of the reasons for the revival of democracy is that oligarchies were perceived to be oppressive and were overthrown. Michel is adamant that democratic currents will always violate the Iron Law (Michels 1959). It is understandable that a large group of people in an organisation cannot govern or administer their common affairs. Over time, specialisation develops and the division of labour evolves. Organizations are becoming more complex. Some people are chosen to represent the masses and carry out their wishes. According to Michels (1927), every organisation, no matter how democratic at first, develops an oligarchic character. He was convinced that the masses expect leaders to govern them and address their concerns. In the domain of political life, leaders derive power from the masses’ incompetence. The inept masses submit to leaders whose expertise they are convinced of. Oligarchies preserve leadership stability and longevity. More importantly, oppressive conditions do not cause unrest in and of themselves. The awareness of these conditions is what sparks class conflict. Struggles and revolts are frequently suppressed. Power Conceptual and Theoretical Issues 106 Michels believes that determining the limits imposed by oligarchies on individuals is appropriate. He claims that decentralisation does not necessarily lead to increased liberty in the hands of individuals, nor does it increase the power of the rank and file. Typically, it serves as a mechanism through which weak leaders seek to escape the dominion of the stronger ones. However, weaker leaders may establish centralised authority within their own domains. One oligarchy gives way to a slew of smaller oligarchies, each powerful in its own right. He focused on instilling in the masses a spirit of free inquiry, criticism, and control over the leaders. It should be noted that these are necessary steps in the process of strengthening democracy (Zeitlin 1987).

D. Steven Lukes: Human Agency and Power: Lukes affirms that all power is attributed to individual or collective human agents. Human agents frequently have several options or alternatives from which to choose their

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

course of action. “Human agents exercise their characteristic powers when they act voluntarily on the basis of wants and beliefs that provide them with justification for doing so.” Such an exercise of human agency implies that the agent at the point of action has the power to act otherwise, that is, at least the ability and opportunity to act or not act, it is in his power to do either; there is ‘an openness between performing or failing to perform the action,’ and there is no set of external circumstances such that the agent will necessarily act in those circumstances (Lukes 1977, rpt. 1982: 159). Two conclusions emerge from this viewpoint: the one who wields power had the option or alternative to act differently; and those over whom power was wielded had the option or alternative to act differently if power was not wielded over them. Luker’s power proposition accepts that, despite the fact that actors operate within “structurally determined limits,” they have a certain degree of autonomy and can act autonomously and differently. In other words, power would have no place in a world of total structural determinism and imposed constraints that limit the options of human agents. He cites the example of an employer who declares some of his workers redundant because he wants to cut costs. In another case, an official government liquidator declares an insolvent company bankrupt, putting workers out of work. While the first case is a straightforward exercise of power, the second is not because we assume that the liquidator had no other options. According to Lukers, social life can be properly understood as a dialectic of power and structure, a web of possibilities for agents to make choices and pursue strategies within given constraints.

E. Anthony Giddens: Power as Domination and Dependency: Anthony Giddens’ concept of power in the context of interaction is founded on dominance. He distinguishes between power in its broadest sense and power in its narrowest sense. Power is defined in a broad sense as the transformative capacity of human agency. The term capacity refers to an individual’s ability to change the course of a series of events through intervention. Power, on the other hand, is largely relational in the narrow sense. It is the ability to influence outcomes when those outcomes are dependent on the agency of others. The primary distinction between the two is agency. While use of power in the broad sense Understanding Power is grounded in an individual’s

ability to directly effect outcomes, whereas power in the narrow sense is grounded in the ability to effect outcomes in situations where they rely on others (Stewart 2001). More specifically, power in the narrow sense implies reliance on the agency of others and the ability of an individual to prevail upon them. The emphasis is on dominance on the part of the individual who is said to wield power and compliance on the part of those over whom the individual exercises control. This relationship can thus be understood as one of dominance. 'It is in this sense that men have power over others; this is power as domination,' writes Giddens (1976: 111). Giddens' fundamental conception of power is concerned with the acquisition and application of resources or capabilities manifested in struggles and subordination. 'Power, in either the broad or restricted sense, refers to capabilities,' writes Giddens (1976: 111). Power, unlike meaning communication, does not come into being only when it is 'executed,' even if there is no other criterion by which one can demonstrate what power actors possess. This is significant because we can speak of power being "stored up" for future use. Later, Giddens (1984) proposes that reproduction of dominance structures leads to the generation of power. Thus, power is determined by the distribution of resources and the ability of individuals to make the best use of them. He maintains that in actual situations, everyone has the ability to exercise power. An individual in a subordinate position is never completely dependent and is frequently able to convert available resources "into some degree of control over the system's reproduction conditions" (Giddens 1982: 32). According to Giddens, power is not always oppressive. In fact, power may be best defined as the ability to achieve results. In fact, power flows smoothly in processes of social reproduction within the larger matrix of domination structures. More importantly, despite the fact that power's constraints cannot be ignored, power is frequently used to achieve freedom or emancipation.

F. Michael Foucault: Domination as Power: In conceptual, methodological, and political terms, Michael Foucault associates power with dominance. Within the framework of dominance, he distinguishes between the characteristics of modern and classical power. Disciplinary power as a modern form of domination contrasts sharply with sovereign power as a pre-modern form of domination. For starters, whereas

Space for Learner

disciplinary power is constant and completely pervasive, sovereign power is periodic (and thus not constant) and has a low social penetration (therefore not allpervasive). Second, whereas dominance in the disciplinary model is expressed through political rationalities and seemingly insurmountable technologies of power, dominance in the sovereignty model is expressed through prohibition, and if that fails, punishment for the action that should not have been performed. Third, while the disciplinary model has a contrasting actor constitution (subjectivisation in the sense of control and dependence), the sovereignty model is based on the given ness of the actors involved (Stewart 2001). According to Foucault (1982:212), “this (modern) form of power applies itself to everyday life, categories the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognise and which others must recognise.”

Power Conceptual and Theoretical Issues 108

in him It is a form of power that subjugates individuals. The word subject has two meanings: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings imply a type of power that subjugates and subjects. This implies that the law of truth is the defining criterion of modern forms of power. Furthermore, modern forms of power are based on dominance, hierarchy, asymmetry, and control. He maintains that new forms of dominance emerge, and he contends that liberation or freedom from constraints (at both the individual and collective levels) is impossible. He believes that global public-oriented emancipatory politics are not possible. Certainly, Foucault has been accused of a kind of fatalism inherent in the concept of power.

Stop to Consider

Sources of power:

It may be stated here that there are many sources of power namely- knowledge, organisation, status of an individual, skill of an individual, faith or belief, authority, mass media, personality etc.

2.4 Characteristics of Power:

One important characteristics of power is the issue of capacity. Power involves the capacity of an individual or a state to get things done according to the wishes of the individual or the state. Another important characteristics of power is that power don't exist in vacuum, i.e power must be exercised in relation to others. Power is also situational, i.e it is very much dependent on situations/circumstances. Power is also very much dependent on its use. Power is backed by sanction because power often involves coercion. Power is also dependent on time. Time can really change the power-relations. The two important aspects of power are "actual" and "potential". Actual power means the power actually used by a person or a country or a group. Potential power is the power that someone can exercise but someone may not use it also.

Stop to Consider

It may be stated here that the concept of power and various discussions regarding it can be traced backed to the times of Aristotle. According to Montesquieu power is the central point of political science.

2.5 Kinds and Forms of Power:

There are many kinds of power namely legitimate, illegitimate, direct, indirect, manifest, unilateral, bilateral, centralised, decentralised, etc. Legitimate power is that power which is backed by law, constitution, or traditions. Constitutional power, traditional power, charismatic power are some examples of legitimate power. Illegitimate power is the opposite of legitimate power, i.e, the power not backed by law, constitution or traditions. When someone is using power directly, i.e a person himself/herself is using the power directly, is known as direct power. When someone is using power with the help of subordinates or others, it is known as indirect power. When power is used openly, it is known as manifest power (e,g Army etc). When someone is using power over someone who don't have power, is known as unilateral power. Bilateral power is the opposite of unilateral i.e both sides

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

are using power. When power is accumulated at one place, it is known as centralised power. When power is divided, it is called decentralised power.

According to Crespigny, there are six forms of power relationships namely coercive, inductive, reactional, impedimental, attrahent, persuasive. Coercive relationship involves threats and coercion. Inductive relationship involves attractive offers. Reactional relationship involves hopes and expectations on the part of the subordinates. Impedimental relationship involves creating obstacles. Attrahent relationship involves willingness to do. Persuasive relationship involves persuasion based on rational and non rational arguments.

SAQ

Explain the kinds and forms of power in brief.

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

2.6 Dimensions of Power:

2.6.1 Power as Decision Making :

A decision must appear reasonable, have face validity, and include built-in justifications and excuses if the outcome is unexpected (Keeley 2001: p.154).

The decision-making process is a series of interactions that transform demands into outputs (Pettigrew 1972). Decision makers are expected to produce outcomes that are consonant with their own system's goals, and the decisions are influenced by power in the organization and by corporate communication. Decision makers strive for mutually acceptable solutions when confronted with conflicting values, personalities, and backgrounds. The potential for conflict grows with organisational size and diversity, and the likelihood of conflict varies with decision-making patterns across cultures.

Eastern and Western cultures have distinct worldviews that are frequently compared. And existing cultures can be classified and compared using the Collectivism and Individualism scales. Individualistic societies have an independent social orientation, with the characteristics autonomy and self-

expression being highly valued. The societies of collectivists are interdependent, with the characteristics of harmony, relatedness, and connection. Interdependent societies are found among Eastern nations, while independent societies are found among Western nations. Many empirical studies (Ali, 1989; Tayeb, 1988; Mann et al., 1998; etc.) have confirmed the importance of cultural background in decision-making style selection. According to N. J. Adler (1991), decision-making styles must be linked to the corresponding national culture, values, and norms.

Model of Decision Making:

It has been well quoted and researched that culture plays an important role in decision-making.

1. The Universal Model: This model assumes that there is little difference in how individuals from different cultures make decisions and that the results obtained from one group can be attributed to people in general.
2. The Dispositional Model: This approach recognises that there are cross-cultural differences in decision-making, and it is argued that whatever differences found in studies indicate that the omnipresence of cultural inclinations in individuals' minds is bound to emerge under all circumstances and in all situations.
3. The Dynamic Model: This viewpoint holds that there are cross-cultural differences in decision making. Higgins and Bargh (1987), who studied several decision-making models, discovered that culture, which they called filters and simplifying mechanisms, aids people in processing information and interpreting their surroundings.

Hofstede's (1984) research identifies four cultural dimensions: a. power distance, b. individualism, c. masculinity, and d. uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede (1984), power distance is the extent to which less powerful individuals in a society accept and accept power inequality as normal. Although inequality exists in all cultures, the degree to which it is accepted varies from one to the next. There are two types of ethical theories: deontological and teleological (Murphy and Laczniak 1981). The deontological theory focuses on specific actions and behaviours of an individual, whereas the teleological theory focuses on the consequences of those actions and

Space for Learner

behaviours (Hunt and Vitell 1986). They proposed that cultural norms influence perceived ethical situations, perceived alternatives, perceived consequences, and stakeholder importance. However, Hunt and Vitell did not elaborate on how cultural norms influence ethical decision making.

Many people have conducted extensive research on decision-making theories and contributed to the body of knowledge in order to compare cross-cultural differences. The findings indicate that choice and behaviour are core characteristics of decision-making phenomena that explain cognitive patterns of reactions with judgments, expectations, and evaluation styles of the situation. The descriptive, psychological decision theory focuses on how individuals make decisions, whereas the normative, rational decision theory elucidates how decision makers should make decisions. Psychological theories have revealed basic principles that people use when dealing with problems, and rational methodologies explain how decision makers analyse a number of outcomes from each alternative scenario in order to make a final decision. The existence of special mechanisms through which people process information and interpret their surroundings is referred to in the body of psychological decision-making models. Such cognitive processes are based on the idea that people's beliefs and values can influence how they process information. More research is now being conducted on the decision-making process across cultures. According to the findings of the study, there are cross-cultural differences in behaviour and decision-making strategies in particular.

2.6.2 Power as Agenda Setting:

The second face of power i.e agenda setting generally involves controlling the parameters of a discussion. Someone may want to do this because that someone don't want the participants of the discussion to address things that are in the benefits of the participants. Bachrach and Baratz (1962) describe this form of power like this: 'To the extent that a person or group—consciously or unconsciously—creates or reinforces barriers to the public airing of policy conflicts, that person or group has power'. It means that I might be able to prevent someone else from making a decision, or discussing a decision. In doing so, I am demonstrating my power over them

2.6.3 Power as Thought Control:

Now let us think of some other situations. It will be even easier if rather than preventing somebody discussing something, if we can prevent someone from realizing what is in their real interests. Many times it has happened in reality also. Throughout history it is happening all time and is one of the most important issues to address in the current times also. Through ages because of the patriarchal nature of the society woman were not able to realize their true interests. According to Lukes ‘The most effective and insidious form of power is to prevent ... conflict from arising in the first place’ Steven Lukes (2005).

SAQ

Explain power as decision making.

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

2.7 Methods of Exercising Power:

There are many ways or methods of exercising power. One of the most important and effective method is the method of persuasion. Many statesman around the world, international organizations are using the method of persuasion to get things done. Another method is the method of reward. There are different kinds of rewards like economic, psychological, political etc. Another method is the method of punishment. Punishment generally involves force or coercion.

Stop to Consider

According to Robert Bierstedt, force means manifest power. According to V D Mahajan, force is power in action or force is power exercised.

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress

1. Power always creates asymmetry in relationships. (True/False)
2. When power gains legitimacy it is referred to as — (Fill in the blank)
3. What is iron law of oligarchy?
4. According to Giddens, power is always oppressive. (True/False)
5. Discuss Michael Foucault's concept of power.
6. Explain the characteristics of power.
7. What are the methods of exercising power?

2.8 Summing Up:

After reading this unit, you will understand the concept of power. In simple words, power is the ability of someone to influence others. You will also have an idea on the characteristics, kinds and forms of power. You will understand that the concept of power is having many characteristics, forms and kinds. After reading this unit you will also understand the dimensions of power namely power as decision making, power as agenda setting, power as thought control. You will also know the various methods of exercising power.

2.9 References/Suggested Readings:

1. Political Theory by V D Mahajan, S Chand & Company Ltd, New Delhi, Reprint, 2009
2. An Introduction to Political Theory by OP Gauba, Macmillan, Delhi, 2009

× × ×

UNIT: 3
IDEOLOGY AND POWER

Space for Learner

Unit Structure:

- 3.1 Introduction**
- 3.2 Objectives**
- 3.3 Definition of Power**
 - 3.3.1 Theories of Power**
- 3.4 Meaning of Ideology**
 - 3.4.1 Role of Ideology**
- 3.5 Relation between ideology and power**
- 3.6 Summing Up**
- 3.7 References/Suggested Readings**

3.1 Introduction:

Power, authority and ideology have occupied predominant position to the study of Political Sociology. In short, every phenomenon of politics revolves around these three concepts. We have already studied the basic concepts of these phenomenon. Let us again discuss these concepts very briefly. We know that sociology determines the relationship between people and the society. In this context, power plays an important role in determining one's position. Again, authority denotes ones legitimate power and ideology helps us to examine ones attitudes and opinions towards his socio-political system. In short, power gives us the ability to control others behaviour and authority makes it legitimate, while ideology provides the way to find out the solutions. Here in this unit we are going to discuss various aspects of power, authority and ideology.

Space for Learner

3.2 Objectives:

It is well known to you that power is the central theme of political science and authority makes it legitimate while ideology provides a concrete way to achieve ones desired goals. After going through this unit you will be able to:—

- *discuss* the meaning, concepts and various theories of power,
- *examine* the meaning and role of ideology.

3.3 Definition of Power:

The term power has been derived from the Latin word ‘potere’ meaning ‘to be able’. Power simply means one’s ability or capability to control others behaviour and it is generally said to be the capacity of an actor to affect the actions of others in accordance with his own intentions. We can also define power as a tool of measurement of one’s ability to control its environment, including the behaviour of other people. We can find a comprehensive account of power in Steven Lukes’ (2005) *Power: A Radical View* where he discusses the three dimensions of power. According to him, power can be seen as various forms of constraint on human action, but also as that which makes action possible, and basically, power would be addressed in abstraction like a social construction. In this context, we can point out some factors that determine the power’s jurisdiction such as behaviour, decision-making issues, observable conflicts, subjective interests. However, it is very difficult to find out a precise and universally applicable definition of power. It is because scholars have forwarded various views regarding the concept of power. For example, for Eric Wolf, political power is composed of three basic elements:

- a) individualism and ambition for some persons over others,
- b) an ability for a psychological ego to impose the proper desires to “an external alter” unidirectionally,
- c) an outstanding capacity in centralizing specific strategies (Wolf, 2004:3). Here in this section we are going to quote some important definitions of power as prescribed by some prominent scholars.

- According to Herbert Goldhamer and Edward Shills ‘power is the ability to influence the behaviour of others in accordance with one’s own ends.’
- Hans Morgenthau defines politics as a struggle for power, as a psychological relation between those who exercise it and those over whom it is exercised. It gives the formal control of certain actions of the later. To quote him, ‘by power we mean the power of man over the mind and actions of other man.’ Power is a possession but not in a tangible form like money.
- MacIver writes, ‘by the possession of power we mean the capacity to centralize, regulate or direct the behaviour of persons or things.
- According to Samuel Beer, ‘one person exercises power over another when he intentionally acts in such a manner as to affect in a predictable way actions of others’.
- Lasswell and Kaplan define power as participation in the making of decisions.
- M.G. Smith says that ‘power is the ability to act effectively over people and things using means ranging from persuasion to coercion’.
- In the words of George Schwarzenburger, ‘power is capacity to impose one’s will over another by reliance on effective sanctions in case of influence involving losses for non- compliance. If A confronts B with the prospects of shifting his behaviour, A is attempting to exercise power over B’.
- David Easton defines power as the ‘relationship in which one person or a group is able to determine the actions of another in the direction of the former’s own ends.’ On the basis of these definitions we can say that in social terms, power, involves the rule by the few over the majority. By power we also mean the ability of individuals or groups to make their own concerns or interests count, even where others resist. Power sometimes

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

involves the direct use of force, but not always Politics, in this sense, is a concept that can be defined as a process involving the “exercise of control, constraint and coercion in society”. However it needs mention here that Power which is derived from social positioning lacks legitimacy. It is dependent upon individual strength and competencies.

Stop to Consider

Types of Power:

Depending upon situation, there are several kinds of power, some of which are described below: —

- **Reward power-** When a person holds power to bestow rewards it is called reward power. These rewards may be of any form like job assignment, benefits, time off, gifts etc.
- **Coercive power-** When a person is in a position to punish others and when the power relationship is based on coercion, it is called coercive power.
- **Legitimate power-** If the power holder exercises power in compliance with the law of the land or the constitution or the accepted tradition, it is called legitimate power.
- **Expert power-** Expert power refers to the expertise of a person. This expertise comes from education and experience.
- **Referent power-** Referent power is exercised by a person who has the ability to attract others. For example- the strong personality of a sport person helps him in endorsing products.

3.3.1 Theories of Power:

Though power manifests itself in three forms viz, political, economic and ideological, we have various theories of power. Let us discuss some of them in this section. Class theory of Power This class theory of power is put forwarded by the Marxists. According to this theory, since the inception of the institution of private property, power belongs to the economically

dominated class of the society. In other words, class theory of power holds the view that power is concentrated in the hands of those classes of the society, which control the means of production. They are of the view that state legalises their actions. According to them, state is the tools in the hands of rich class to exploit the weaker sections of the society. We can find a systematic analysis of class theory of power in Das capital written by Marx and Angels. They wrote, “political power, properly so called is merely the organised power of one class for suppressing another.” They argue, in different phases of time various dominant classes emerged in the society to exploit the weaker sections, for example, in the ancient society the masters dominated the slaves, in the feudal society the nobility dominated while in the capitalist society the industrialist class dominates the workers. Marxists are of the opinion that only through a revolution we can change such kind of societal system. Gramsci, a notable Marxist writer is of the view that the domination of class is achieved not only through economic structure and coercion but also through the active consent of the weaker or propertyless class. He suggests that the consent of propertyless class is achieved through the use of intellectual, moral and political persuasion and leadership. Again a twist came to the class theory after the Second World War. This period led to the reduction in the economic burden of the working class and enhanced the legitimacy of the capitalist system in their eyes. But the economic growth has benefited the capitalist class rather than others. Though in recent years, welfare state system has acquired popular support, still it by and large serves the interests of the owners of the means of production. In short class theory of power holds the view that in the society mode of power is the power of economically dominant class in the society.

Space for Learner

SAQ

Do you think that the class theory of power is sufficient to explain the present power structure of the Indian society ? (100 words)

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

Space for Learner

A. Elitist Theory of Power:

In the Class Theory we have learnt that in a society, power belongs to the property holder. Like this theory, the Elitist Theory of Power holds the view that every society is dominated by a group of people and power belongs to their hands, but they are minority. According to this theory, this minority group is known as elites, which can take all the major decisions of the society and all power is concentrated in their hands. We can find the roots of this theory in the writings of our classical writer, but in modern sense the theory is developed by Pareto, Mosca, Michels and the sociologists of USA. (10) In the writings of Pareto we find that he is of the view that in all societies people are divided into a. a small governing elite and non-governing elite, and b. mass of population. He says that the small elites consist of administrators, dictators, warriors, wealthy men, religious priests or any other group of men in the society. Again he says that depending on circumstances and nature of the society the composition of elite class may differ but they are always present in any form of society. Pareto also rejects the Marxist concept of power as power is determined by the economic class structure and declares that only skilful political man can exercise power. In favour of his opinion he has forwarded the following two reasons: a. the elites, unlike the commons can organised themselves better b. they possess some attributes superior to the common people of the society. Again, in the writings of Mosca we find a different view of elitist theory. He has said that the superior organisation and calibre of the elite ensure their rule over society. He like Pareto also believes that though elites are minority in nature, due to their organised nature their rule or domination over the society is inevitable. On the other hand Michels has propounded the rule of “iron law of oligarchy”. It means rule by few. According to him, “one of the iron laws of history, from which the most democratic modern societies and within those societies, the most advanced parties have been unable to escape”. In short the rule by few is applicable to all types of society. Thus it is seen that elitist theory of power argues for rule of few. According to this theory political, economic and ideological power is concentrated in the hands of a minority group so they enjoy more powers. Moreover in democracy, although powers rest in the hand of people, practically all the decisions are made by a few people or elites.

SAQ

Do you think that Indian democracy represents elites rule? Give reasons in favour of your answer. (80 words)

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

Space for Learner

B. Pluralist Theory of Power:

The theory rose as a reaction against the Marxist and Elitist theory of power. We have learnt that elitist theory makes minority as power holder while Marxist theory makes capitalist class as the ruling class of the society. On the other hand, pluralist theory makes majority as power holder of the society. According to this theory, in modern democracies power does not belong to a single elite group, rather it belongs to the different groups and interests which compete for influence and share power at different levels. It views politics as a struggle among different societal groups to control the decision making process. Hence, policy-making is a complex process and is not influenced by only a single elite class due to the bargaining of different institutions. Thus, the decisions in a society are the result of agreements and compromise among different groups. It clear that the theory holds the view that power is not the property of a single class; it involves various organisations attached with everyone's emotions. 4. Feminist Theory of Power: Since the inception of human civilisation, the male always controls society and women are always treated as second-class citizen. As against male hegemony over decision-making process of the society, Feminism emerged. Feminist theory of power views the gender difference as an elaborate system of male domination and try to end this system. According to this view, politics and society can be understood as a power relationship where one group of person i.e. women is controlled by another group i.e. men. Feminist theory of power argued that the gender differentiation has resulted in number of inequalities and discrimination against women in the

Space for Learner

family and occupation, unequal educational opportunities and devaluation of their works. They argue such kind of discrimination is only end through the transformation of the society. It is worth mentioning here that the struggle of women for justice and transforming society is quite old and manifests in various forms as suffrage movement. But all of them are directed towards the establishment of a just social order based on equality.

3.4 Meaning of Ideology:

We have already discussed the concept of ideology. Now let us discuss the concept of ideology in this section briefly. It is known to you that, ideologies offer the most useful guidance and new values or ideas to examine social phenomenon properly. You have also learnt that ideology may be defined as a body of moral beliefs and social prescriptions aiming radical change in the existing political structure for the creation of an Ideal Society. (17) In terms of power and authority, we can find a useful analysis on authority in the writings of Shill. He comments that ‘ideologies are always concerned with authority, transcendent and earthly, and they cannot therefore avoid being political’. We can also define ideology as an ideal political system that prescribes the rules for achieving and maintaining it. Those in power preserve and promote the ideology. Ideological principles are a source of law. In contemporary world, ideology is inseparable from the study of political behaviour or expression of nation-state. Since the beginning of modern nation-state, ideologies play a crucial role in moulding the behaviour of the nation. Though, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed in his book *The End of History* that the close of the Cold War marked the world’s turning away from ideology. With the exception of Maoist beliefs that continued to guide rebel groups in a few far-flung countries like Peru and Nepal, the age of ideology did seem to be at an end. But still it is ideology through which we can logically examine the true nature of one nations activities. Again a close analysis of an ideology helps us to explore the hidden ideas behind the policies and programmes of a nation. Again like all other concepts of political science it is also very difficult to define ideology in a word. Many scholars put forwarded various opinions regarding the concept of ideology. Let us examine some of them. To Alan Ball, ideology is the mechanism to legitimize the political structures and distribution of political power within that system

and it serves to legitimate the political process. Preston King, one of the prominent scholars of modern political analysis discusses ideology as an actual application of one nations policies and programmes which may involve the entire political ideas to a political system. Thus it is seen that political ideologies are seen as set of fundamental ideas that are only permissible to a political system. Political ideologies are same as the common ideologies which represent the beliefs, values and attitude of a nation. With the following diagram we can illustrate political ideology very clearly.

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress

1. What do you mean by ideology?
2. Examine the relationship between power and authority.
3. Choose the correct one
 - a. Francis Fukuyama/ Marx/Aristotle wrote the book The End of History.
 - b. Weber said about 3/4/5 types of authority.
 - c. Das Capital was written by Marx/Marx and Angels/Marx and Lenin

Stop to Consider

Types of ideology:

Form the above discussions we have an idea that ideology consists of our beliefs and values towards our political or social system. However, ideology may differ depending on one's attitude and their needs of time. In this context we can point out the classification of Prof. Morgenthau who divided the various ideologies into three categories. They are—

- a) ***Ideology of Status Quo-*** This ideology emphasises the concept of self preservation. By applying this ideology in international politics, Morgenthau opines that the existence of this ideology can guarantee peace in international sphere.
- b) ***Ideology of Imperialism-*** This ideology refers to the extension of the empire through the development of moral ideology. It is just opposite to the ideology of status quo.

Space for Learner

c) **Ambiguous Ideologies-** Sometimes the nations do not make clear which ideology they are going to follow. It is called ambiguous ideology.

However, the scholars of Political Science forwarded mainly three types of ideology. These are as follows:

- **Ideology of Liberalism/Democratic ideology-** The ideology of liberalism promotes the values of freedom, democracy and humanism. It is characterised by three assumptions- limited government, pluralistic society and unlimited scope for human choices.
- **Ideology of Communism/Marxism-** According to this ideology, behind all the historical changes, there is only one factor i.e. the economic factor. If there is a change in the means of production, it will lead to changes in the relations of productions. For eg. hand mill is a product of feudal society whereas steam mill leads to the emergence of industrial capitalists.
- **Ideology of Fascism-** Totalitarianism and anti- Marxism are the two most important characteristic features of the ideology of fascism. Fascism emphasises the protection of the interests of the bourgeois class.

3.4.1 Role of Ideology:

No one deny the fact that in a society, ideology is probably the most important factor that affects the activities of the leaders and common people. Again, it is believed that ideology is both a means to an end and an end in itself. In other words we can say that ideology determines the external behaviour of the society or a nation. In this context, we can put forward the arguments of Prof. Norman Hill, who opines that ideology is the readymade package of ideas on the basis of which we can simplify the relationship among the nations. In other words, we can say that our society revolves around the concept of ideology for its proper explanations of incidents. However, in terms of ideological elements or impact of ideology in politics there is a difference of opinion among scholars. As we mentioned earlier ideology is

regarded as a body of ideas reflecting the social needs and aspirations of an individual, group, class, or culture. The major international incidents are the reflection of ideological differences. For example, In the course of World War I, a new element has been introduced. By 1916 the Allies were being urged to think of their endeavour as a war “to make the world safe for democracy,” and the Germans, on their side, were correspondingly encouraged to visualize the war as a struggle of “culture” against “barbarism.” Hence, it is clear that ideological elements are the basic cause behind the War. However it is not true to accept this, because there are also some other causes which are responsible for the war. However, ideology has tremendously influenced the relationships between the countries in the international arena. During the period between the First and Second World Wars, Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany had considerably influenced the foreign policies of these countries. Policy makers of various countries try to mould the public opinion in support of their policies. Particularly in the totalitarian states, the rulers justify their actions through ideologies. On the other hand it can be said that ideology is a set of doctrines or beliefs that form the basis of a political, economic, or other system. And we know that one country’s foreign policy is the reflection of its international and external behaviour and composite desire and beliefs of its people. Through foreign policy one country tries to adjust its relationship with other nations. From this standpoint ideology enables us to discover the lines of differences. For example during the Cold War period we may easily point out that due to the ideological differences the then two super powers moved against each other. Again the rise of Communism marked a corresponding increase in the role of ideology. and, Fascism helped to speed the process. The Spanish Civil War of the 1930s was an almost clear-cut confrontation between the ideologies of left and right. The balance of power in today’s world is a balance weighted by ideological commitment. In the contemporary period it is believed that ideology has transformed international relationships from traditional to a modern one. Earlier centuries experienced dynastic wars, national, civil, and imperial wars, and diplomacy designed to further national security or national expansion or to promote mutual advantages and general peace. Such factors, indeed, appeared to govern international relations until

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

recent times. International relations today are seemingly dominated more often than not by the exigencies of“-isms”: wars are fought, alliances are made, and treaties are signed because of ideological considerations. Hence it is seen that the balance of power in the contemporary world is a balance weighted by ideological commitment. Thus it is seen that, almost all incidents of politics constitute a belief system of one kind or another. However, some such belief systems are more structured, more ordered, and generally systematic than others, so they are still prevalent. For example, ideology of democracy or liberalism. Hence it is clear that ideology plays an important role in our society. Ideology plays both divisive and co-operational role. While common ideology may unite different countries, differences in ideology may divide them. It provides rigid framework for foreign policy makers. Ideology is also closely related to struggle for power.

SAQ:

Do you think that contemporary world depends on ideology in its policy making process. Give arguments in favour of your answer. (50 words)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3.5 Relation between ideology and power:

Dominant groups use these sets of cultural beliefs and practices to justify the systems of inequality that maintain their group’s social power over non-dominant groups.

Capitalist ideologies give an inverted explanation for market relations, for example, so that human beings perceive their actions as the consequence of economic factors, rather than the other way around, and moreover, thereby understand the market to be natural and inevitable. For instance, the values

of freedom and equality present at the level of the market are ideological in that they conceal un-freedom and inequality at the level of production and thus force workers to go back time and again to the labour market. Ideology thus becomes a kind of distorted consciousness that masked the contradictions of society and so contributed to the reproduction of the system.

Space for Learner

3.6 Summing Up:

After reading this unit you have already understood that power plays an important role in determining one's position. power gives us the ability to control others behaviour and authority makes it legitimate, while ideology provides the way to find out the solutions. You have also learnt different theories of power like elitist theory of power, class theory of power etc. this unit has also familiarised you with the concept of ideology. Again, it is believed that ideology is both a means to an end and an end in itself. In other words we can say that ideology determines the external behaviour of the society or a nation.

3.7 References/Suggested Readings:

1. Arora N.D. Awasthy S.S. Political theory, Har Anand Publication, 2004
2. Das, P.G. Modern Political Theory, NCBA, 1996
3. Gauba, O. P. An Introduction to Political theory, Macmillan, 2010.
4. Heywood, A. Political Theory: An Introduction, Macmillan international, 2015.
5. Mahajan, V.D. Political Theory, S Chand & Company LTD, 2001

× × ×

PLURALIST AND ELITIST NOTION OF POWER

Unit Structure :

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Objectives

4.3 Pluralist notion of Power

4.3.1 Pluralism: Meaning

4.3.2 Pluralism and sources of power

4.3.3 Different Perspective of Pluralism

4.3.4 Characteristics of Pluralism

4.3.5 Criticism of Pluralist notion of power

4.4 Elitist notion of Power

4.4.1 Meaning of Elite

4.4.2 Main features of elitist notion of Power

4.4.3 Variants of elitist notion of power

4.4.4 Limitation of Elitist notion of Power

4.5 A comparison between Pluralist and Elitist notion of Power

4.6 Summing Up

4.7 References/Suggested Readings

4.1 Introduction:

There are numerous schools of thought who have been analysing the notion of power from different perspective. Pluralist and Elitist are two important schools of them. In addition to comparing and contrasting these two techniques, this chapter will provide an analytical perspective on both.

4.2 Objectives:

The main objectives of this chapter are–

- *to understand* the pluralist notion of power,
- *to understand* the Elitist notion of power,
- *to make a comparison* between pluralist notion of power and elitist notion of power.

4.3 Pluralist notion of power:

Pluralist school of thought is one of the dominant schools in terms of analysing the nature and distribution of power in society. Pluralist believes that power does not reside in one hand or one group. This theory gives a description of actual distribution of power in society as well as its justification. Power is distributed among different groups of society according to their contributions or responsibilities. The main advocates of this theory are Harold Laski, Barker MacIver, Truman, Dahl, Pollitt and others. Pluralism as a concept has its root in American history and it is in the United States of America that it developed and took a concrete shape.

4.3.1 Pluralism: Meaning:

Pluralism as a political philosophy recognizes diversity within a political system or body. They believe that political power is fragmented and dispersed. The existence of social classes, political parties, interest groups, pressure groups, status groups, and other types of societal organisations and associations attests to the distribution of power. There is no sole source of power. Power arises from the contribution and responsibilities performed by different associations towards the society. These groups cannot be classified as dominant and dependent groups. They have their share of power in their respective sphere of operation. These groups are more or less autonomous and independent within the social organization. The larger the groups the more influence it will have. Policies are the product of bargaining and compromise will tend to be moderate, fair to all and conducive to social stability. The state is neutral between these competing groups and

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

acts like a referee between them. Arrora and Awasthy analyses the meaning of pluralism in following points:

1. Pluralism represents interest of numerous organised groups.
2. These organised units are voluntary, competitive non hierarchical.
3. These units or groups do not play or play the least role in the selection of the state mechanism
4. The state assumes upon itself the role of an arbiter in adjudicating and reconciling conflicts and promoting common interest as against the particular interest of such groups.
5. These groups are basis and not the engines of power'

4.3.2 Pluralism and sources of power:

The pluralist considers group as the prime unit of power. For them individual shares common interest through groups. Latham in his book 'The group basis of politics' views that group is the basic political form and that the political process is essentially a struggle between such groups. Power does not reside in an individual, but exists in the relationship between the individuals and the group it forms. The pluralist says that power is not hierarchically and competitively arranged. It exists as a part of the endless process of bargaining and competition between groups with relative interests. Pluralists also make differences between actual power and potential power. Actual power means the ability to compel someone to do something and is the view of power as causation. While potential power refers to the possibility of turning resources into actual power. For example cash, one of many resources is only a stack of bills until it is put to work. A billionaire may or may not be politically influential; it all depends on what wealth is spent.

According to pluralist Power can be understood in terms of resources. The list of special sources of power is endless: money, authority, prestige, skill, knowledge, legitimacy, etc. However resources are limited. Therefore competition is inevitable. So, for pluralist it is the competition which ultimately decides things. As competition prevails in each and every time no one group

is able to establish himself as dominant. As a result power relation among groups is never permanent and they keep shifting with the change in the claims and demand of numerous groups.

Space for Learner

4.3.3 Different Perspectives of Pluralism:

There is no specific Pluralist theory of power. Scholars from many branches of the pluralist school of thought have presented their ideas from various angles. Mention may be made about at least three perspectives of pluralism. These are—

- (i) Classical Pluralism
- (ii) Elitist Pluralism
- (iii) Neo Pluralism

A. Classical Pluralism:

Classical pluralist emphasises on the role of numerous organizations in society. It seeks to explain that there are many organization and association in society and perform many important functions in state. However politics and decision making are located mostly in the framework of government and all other associations exert influence on that. The basic question for the classical pluralist is how equilibrium exists in society. According to classical pluralist, all these groups in society are competing with each other by their performance and contribution towards society to make an influence on state. For example Greenpeace has dramatically changed the way we view the environment. They play an intermediary role between government and individual. These organisations have direct ties to the public. As a result they are able to articulate the problems of the people and influence the government to solve those problems. French writer Alex de Tocqueville observed that the absence of these intermediate groups in French was responsible for French revolution (1789) whereas the United States was able to maintain democracy due to the presence of such groups. Tocqueville suggests that in order to protect democracy these intermediate groups should be kept free from state interference. Hewitt and Robert Dahl are two further proponents of this

Space for Learner

theory. Robert Dahl in his article 'A preface to Democratic Theory and 'Who Governs?'' expressed his views based on the assumption that there was a widespread distribution of political resources and that different interest prevailed in different political disputes and at different times. Dahl in his model 'polyarchy', postulates that society is controlled by a set of competing interest groups, with the government as little more than an honest broker in the middle.

B. Elite pluralism:

Over the period, Sociologists and political scientists have recognised the many flaws and shortcomings of traditional pluralism. Even Dahl himself conceded that the unequal distribution of wealth in the US makes equality and plurality impossible. As a result of it David Marsh created the theory of elite pluralism to discuss the real nature of power distribution.

Elite pluralist also admits with the classical pluralist that there is plurality in society. However this plurality is not pure. Because some people have got an advance position than others due to their resources. This group of persons has a greater ability than others to pressure and influence the government. So inequality arises because society has 'elites', people who have more power, perhaps through money, inheritance or social tradition than others.

The proponent of elite pluralism argues that although if all societies are plural in nature and many associations have a significant impact on government through their performance, elite nonetheless play a significant influence in decision-making.

C. Neo Pluralism:

Neo pluralism is the recent and third shade of pluralist approach. It admits that numerous pressure groups competing for political power and in which political system is biased towards corporate power. Neo pluralist does not consider state as an umpire mediating and adjudicating between the demands of diverse interest groups but relatively autonomous actor that forges and looks after its own interest.

4.3.4 Characteristics of Pluralism:

The key characteristics of pluralism are–

1. Pluralist believes that state or government is not dominated by a single group but by a multiplicity of relatively small groups. Some of which are well organized and some are not. Although a few are larger and more influential than the others.
2. The groups are politically autonomous and independent. They have all right and freedom to do business in the political marketplace.
3. Intergroup competition leads to countervailing influence: the power of one group tends to cancel that of another so that a rough equilibrium results. Sometimes the group membership overlaps as well. Overlapping memberships reduce the intensity of conflicts because loyalties are often spread among many organizations. Pluralists foresee a type of equilibrium which maintains the whole fabric.
4. Like the Marxist, Pluralist does not consider that political power and control of the state are linked with the dominant economic groups. Rather, Pluralists are of the view that both political power and economic power stands distinct from each other.
5. Pluralists are of the view that state is neutral actor. State controls the conflicts of numerous groups impartially.
6. Pluralists uphold a political system which is suited to a pluralistic society. A pluralistic society is that society in which power and authority are not concentrated in a particular group but they are spread to various centre of decision making.

Space for Learner

Stop to Consider

Some important points:

1. Pluralism as a political philosophy recognizes diversity within a political system or body.

Space for Learner

2. The pluralist considers group as the prime unit of power. For them individual shares common interest through groups.
3. Pluralist believes that state or government is not dominated by a single group but by a multiplicity of relatively small groups.
4. There are at least three perspectives of pluralism. These are- Classical Pluralism, Elitist Pluralism, Neo Pluralism.

4.3.5 Criticism of Pluralist notion of power:

There are some limitations of pluralist notion of power. These are–

1. Critics points out that pluralists focuses only on the decision making process. It gives less importance on the other parts of society. Steven Lukes in his ‘Power: A Radical View’ has pointed out three dimension of power: **Decision making, Agenda setting, Thought control**. According to him Pluralist theory failed to address the issues of agenda setting and thought control.
2. Though pluralist considers state as a neutral organization but in reality state is not neutral. According to Marxists, the powerful classes run the government. According to feminists, men control the government. According to elitists, an elite faction controls the government. So it is incorrect to claim that the state is neutral in every community.

The pluralist theory of later development has been modified in response to some of these criticisms. Apart from this criticism, Pluralist theory of power has opened a space for each and every associations of the society in the arena of state power. Consequently, this approach may be viewed as a means of democratising society.

Check Your Progress

1. What do you mean by Pluralism?
2. Who wrote the book ‘who Governs?’?
3. Mention three characteristics of pluralist approach of power.

4.4 Elitist notion of Power:

Space for Learner

Another popular paradigm in power analysis is the elitist notion of power. While pluralism deals with how power is distributed, elitism deals with how power is concentrated. Elitist theory of power was advanced in early twentieth century by three famous thinkers: Pareto, Mosca, Michels and Mills. This theory's core principle is that a small group of people control every society. They have outstanding qualities that allow them to control power.

4.4.1 Meaning of Elite:

The term 'Elite' was derived from the French word 'elite' which means something exceptional. Vilfredo Pareto used the term 'elite' for the first time in his book 'The mind and society'. The term "elite" refers to a select group of people who, due to their wealth, superior knowledge, or any other quality, have a superior position in society. The elites are therefore always in minority yet they take all major decisions and ensure that these are implemented.

4.4.2 Main features of Elitist notion of Power:

There is no single elitist theory of power, but there are a number of them. Different scholars have analysed elite theory from different perspectives. However scholars of elitist theories admit consensus on certain issues. These are—

1. In every society, power is exercised by a small group of people who have high prestige and widespread influence. They are known as elites.
2. The decision-making process is under the influence of elites who hold influential positions..
3. Elite theory postulates a division of society into two groups: the elite and the masses, the former governs and the latter is governed. Elites are not permanent. They are subject to change. This has been

Space for Learner

described by many as the 'circulation of elites'. Elite theory admits that elites have some superior qualities than the masses.

4. Elite theory further holds that what we call majority rule is in reality a minority rule. There is no society or system which is ruled by majority.

4.4.3 Variants of Elitist notion of power:

There are different variants of elitist theory as scholars have analysed elitist notion of power from different viewpoints. Some of them are—

A. Vilfredo Pareto's theory of Elite:

Pareto, an Italian sociologist believe that men are unequal in terms of physical, intellectual and moral ground. In other words there are biological differences which resulted inequalities of men and thus it makes inequality in society. Some people are superior in quality whereas some are inferior to them. Those who are superior they are known as elites. The main qualities of elites are intelligence, talent, courage and cunningness. The other parts are known as masses. Masses are characterized by the lack of qualities of leadership and the fear of responsibility. They feel that it would be safe to follow the elite.

According to Pareto there are two types of elite in society. One is governing elite and other is non-governing elite. Governing elites are those who are directly involved in decision making process and non governing elite are not connected with administration but occupy such a position in society that they somehow influence the system.

Pareto considers that governing elites are not permanent. There is a continuous competition between governing and non-governing elites to control the state. Here he mentioned about rise and fall of elites. In some point of history the non governing elite becomes more influential than the governing elites. This results in what is called **Circulation of Elites**. Circulation of elites refers to a process in which one elite is replaced by other This is an uninterrupted process of history and thus power revolves in the hand of elites.

B. Elite theory of Mosca:

Mosca, an Italian sociologist also gives an analysis on Elite in his work 'The Ruling Class'. Like Pareto, Mosca views that in any type of society at any point of history, there are two classes of people - a class that rule and a class that is ruled. Instead of Pareto's 'elite' class, Mosca regarded the dominant class as 'ruling class'. While Pareto regards intelligence and talent as the quality of elite Moscas' ruling class is distinguished by its capacity of organization. The ruling class controls all the sources of power like wealth, prestige and others in society while the ruled are not competent to replace it. The former contains a few numbers of people whereas the latter consists of a large number of people.

Mosca says that whatever form of government might be adopted, it is always the minority which exercises all power in society. So the ruling class comprises from the dominant minority group of society. The logic of ruling class, for Mosca is simple: the ability to organize easily and effectively. Minority is always organised, therefore it has the ability to overcome unorganized majority. Members of the ruling minority always enjoy high degree of esteem in the eyes of the people because of their superior qualities.

In fact ruling class of Mosca, like aretos' elite strata consist of two: the upper strata and the lower strata. The upper strata are core of the ruling class but it could not work sufficiently unless the lower strata help. Like Pareto, Mosca also held that there is a constant competition between the two strata and this will lead to circulation of elites. Weakness of dominant group (upper strata) and isolation of lower strata of ruling classes can lead to political upheaval in the society and as a result of this upheaval the ruled classes representatives can have place in the ruling class. Because when isolation takes place, another ruling class emerges among the subject classes. Thus Mosca admits that ruling classes can be emerged from the subject classes also.

C. Elite theory of Robert Michels:

Robert Michels, the German sociologist gives a significant contribution towards elitist notion of power. Michels in his book 'Political Parties: A

Space for Learner

Sociological Study of the Oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy' explains his views on elitist notion of power. Like the other two contributors (Pareto and Mosca) of elite theory of Michels also believes in rule of minority. For him elites are the product of professional quality of leadership. Through his term '**Iron Law of Oligarchy**' he defined how professional leaders of the society are able to keep power in their hands. He proceeded to demonstrate that every organization- whatever its original aims- is eventually reduced to oligarchy. He asserted that majority of individuals are uninterested, idle, and mindless. They are incapable to self government. So they are dependable on the leaders for their social objectives.

Michels also noted that due to their increasing size and complexity, all organisations, regardless of how democratic they may be at first, will inevitably have oligarchic inclinations. The management of organization becomes very complex for the masses and it is possible for the professional experts. In due course these professional experts will become indispensable for the organizations. They become so prominent that it becomes impossible to replace them at periodical election. As a result, these professionals become the permanent decision maker of society and the original aims of the organization are left aside. Thus Iron law of oligarchy completely makes circulation of elite invalid. Thus Michels, through his elite theory gives argument in favour of rule of professional leadership (Oligarchy) and completely denied the democratic nature of organizations.

D. Elite Theory of C. Wright Mills:

C Wright Mills, an American sociologist developed a different perspective on elitist notion of power in his famous book 'The Power Elite'. Mills used the term power elite instead of ruling class or elites. According to him in our present day society social structure was such that all powers got institutionalised. Mills examined his theory of power elite on the basis of American society. His concept of Power elite is combination of several groups who exercises all power due to their high status in every sphere of society. Mills used the term power elite to refer to his theory that the United States is actually run by small groups representing the wealthiest, powerful and influential people in business, government and the military. The great

masses of people are largely unorganised, ill informed and virtually powerless; they are controlled and manipulated from above. Mills in his elite theory believes that neither psychological nor superior qualities make elite powerful, rather the structure of the institution in a society in such that those occupying positions in institutional hierarchy have the levers of power in the society.

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress

1. Who first used the term Elite?
2. What is the meaning of 'Iron law Of Oligarchy'?
3. Who wrote the book 'The Ruling Class'?
4. Discuss Mills concept of Power elite.

4.4.4 Limitation of Elitist notion of Power:

There are some limitations of elitist notion of power. These are–

- i. Elitist theory opposes democratic values in society. For the elitist, it is only the elite who are able to control and manage power in society. Elitist lacks faith in common people.
- ii. The elitist theory is a conservative theory because it gives a theory of democracy to justify the prevailing social, economic and political inequalities in several societies. It builds up a strong thesis, though partial and subjective, in favour of traditional existing malpractices.
- iii. This theory is based on the institutional and not the ideological aspect of democracy. It believes in end of ideology and maintains that ideologies are meaningless because every political system is bound to be governed by iron law of oligarchy.
- iv. Elite theory violates the natural equality principles and gives a bias judgement towards elite that elite are more capable than others.

Space for Learner

SAQ:

How Paretos' Elite theory is different from Elitist theory of C. Wright Mills?

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

4.5 A Comparison between Pluralist and Elitist notion of Power:

Pluralism and Elitism are two different theories that are used to explain how power is spread between individuals and groups in society.

Pluralism suggests that power is spread amongst different groups in society and that it is the pushing and pulling between these different groups that explain how decision are made and how governments are influenced. In general terms, it can be said that the Pluralist theory is one where all those who participate have an equal status whether it concerns possession, power or rights. Pluralist theory believes in equal footing of masses or under privileged class with privileged or upper classes. The key principle of the pluralist school is that power is not concentrated in one hand or in one group rather it is distributed among different associations of society. So there is no privileged and underprivileged group. All are having equal status.

Elitism is exact opposite to pluralism. Elitist believes that power is not property for all. Only few groups are able to control power. Elitist believes in unequal society. For them all men are not equal. Some are more capable, wealthier and more skilful than others. So, the whole decision making mechanism should be run by the few. Elitist argues that some are born to be rule and some are to be ruled. So Power is possessed by only few that are upgraded, superior to others.

Elitism accepts that, in every society and political system, there are certain individuals and groups who are powerful and their decisions are taken on the basis of consensus. On the other hand pluralism refers to acceptance of diverse views and opinions and decisions are taken on the basis of consensus.

Elitism is closer to the aristocratic political system while pluralism is closer to the democratic political system.

However, in reality no political system follows either of the two exclusively in pure form. Rather, both of the notions of power co exist in most of the political society.

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress:

1. What is Pluralism? Discuss pluralist notions of power.
2. What is Elitism? Discuss Elitist notions of power.
3. Make a comparative study between pluralist notions of power and elitist notions of power.
4. Write a note on Vilfredo Pareto's theory of Elite.
5. Write a note on Elite theory of Robert Michels.

4.6 Summing Up:

After reading this unit you have learnt that both Pluralism and Elitism analyses the domain of power from different perspectives. In the pluralist theory, there are multiple groups and people who are in power. On the other hand for elitist, there are only a noble few who have power. Both the perspectives justify their argument from their own viewpoint. Both of them are opposite to each other. However both of them have their own pragmatic values also.

4.7 References/Suggested Readings:

1. Arora N.D. Awasthy S.S. Political heory, Har Anand Publication,2004
2. Ball. A.R. Modern Politics and Government, Macmillan Press, 1975
3. Das, P.G, Modern Political Theory, NCBA, 1996
4. Gauba, O. P. An Introduction to Political theory, Macmillan, 2010.
5. Heywood, A. Political Theory: An Introduction, Macmillan international, 2015.

Space for Learner

6. Mahajan, V.D. Political Theory, S Chand & Company LTD, 2001
7. Hans Raj, Comparative Politics, Surajeet Publication, Delhi, 1985
8. <https://www.shareyoureassays.com/knowledge/10majorlimitations-of-the-elite-theory-of-society/112501>
9. <https://egyankosh.ac.in>

× × ×

UNIT: 5

POWER AS SUBJECT: FOUCAULDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Unit Structure:

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Objectives
- 5.3 Michel Foucault: a brief note
- 5.4 Foucault's alternative views on power
- 5.5 Power as subject
- 5.6 Limitations and Criticisms
- 5.7 Summing Up
- 5.8 References/Suggested Readings

5.1 Introduction:

Power as a concept is interpreted differently in different disciplines. In Political Science or Political Theory, power is a central concept, thought of as a relationship, as exercise of control by one person over another (Heywood: 1994). Etymologically, power is derived from the Latin word "*potere*" which means "to be able." Power is however, a contested concept. There are numerous definitions of power. Bertrand Russell defined power as "the production of intended effects". Robert M. MacIver defined power as "the capacity in any relationship to command the services or compliance of others". The significance of power in the political phenomena is brought out from traditional thinkers to modern and post modern thinkers. Traditionally, power is considered as a centralised concept of the state apparatus. Power is exercised in numerous capacities like by the ruling government as a capacity to make formal decision for the entire society, imposing one's decision over other is also a power. Influence, is another attribute of power to seek others consent through lobbying or rational persuasion. As there is no agreed definition of power different scholars have adopted different approach to

Space for Learner

Space for Learner

analyse power. The liberals thought power is based on legitimacy and consent whereas, the Marxists, socialists etc. describe power as an oppressive and exploitative mechanism. Later, power has been reconceptualised by different schools of thought like structuralism, post-structuralism etc. Such reconceptualisation disagree the conventional notion which equates power with rule of law, violence, wealth etc. Michael Foucault is one of the prominent scholars who have interpreted power in different ways and has given a new meaning to it. In this chapter, we shall discuss how Michael Foucault reshapes his views on power.

5.2 Objectives:

This unit is an attempt to analyse Michel Foucault's ideas on power. After going through this unit you will be able to -

- *describe* briefly the political philosophy of Foucault,
- *explain* Foucault's views on power,
- *understand* Foucault's view on power as subject,
- *analyse* the limitations in Foucault's view on power.

5.3 Michel Foucault: a brief note:

Michel Foucault (1926-1984) is a 20th century radical French philosopher and historian. He has diverse interest in different areas like history, philosophy, psychology, psychopathology etc. Although, Foucault has his own distinct political philosophy but he was very much influenced by Marxist, Freudian and Structuralist schools of thought. He was a critique of bourgeoisie front and therefore, started analysing how power work in the capitalist society. He has been influenced by different scholars. He interpreted history after reading the book '*Untimely Meditation,*' authored by Friedrich Nietzsche. In this book there is an essay 'On the Uses and Abuses of History for Life' where Nietzsche criticized different intellectuals who misinterpreted history and demotivate us in reading history or the past. Nietzsche argued from history we should learn ideas and concepts that help us to lead a good life. This essay helped Foucault to be a philosopher cum historian who would

interpret history to find solution to numerous issues of his own time. His works thereafter followed and influenced by this new understanding. Thus, he has analysed and interpreted the relationship between power and knowledge and the way these are used as tool of social control by different social institutions. This is his most influential contribution. He studied about the nature and the modes of power and this overlapped with knowledge and truth. He said that the mechanisms of power have not received much importance in history. So, he addressed the issues of power which has not been considered in history.

Space for Learner

Stop to Consider

Friedrich Nietzsche:

He was a German philosopher. His works has great influence on modern intellectual history. His main interests were aesthetics, classical philology, ethics, philosophy of history etc. He put forwarded critique of religion, morality, and philosophy and developed his own thesis on ‘will to power’ which implies the desire for power is the main driving force of human being. Some of his significant works were- The Birth of Tragedy, Untimely Meditations, The Dawn, The Gay Science etc.

5.4 Foucault’s alternative views on power:

The modern views of importance of power came from the works of Michael Foucault. His famous explanation ‘Power is everywhere because it comes from everywhere’, has actually redefined the very notion of traditional view of power. He has written about Discipline and Punishment as different technologies of power. He said, ‘discipline is a complex bundle of power technologies.’ According to him, power is exercised with certain intention. But rather than analyzing different intentions he focused on intersubjectively accepted knowledge about how to exercise power (Newman: 2005). For him power is an interaction of actions. He does not recur to violence but says that power presupposes freedom in the sense that power is not enforcement but ways of making people by themselves behave in other ways than they would have done (Newman: 2005).

Space for Learner

Foucault while analyzing power has actually criticized the traditional dimensions of power based on sovereignty, commodity and repression. As we have already mentioned that, the traditional thinkers equate power with rule of law, wealth, repression etc. So Foucault attacked these traditional understanding of power where the sovereignty model is based on rule of law or state is the prime institution of power, commodity model is based on wealth and repression model is violence respectively. Power according to him is productive, regulatory and dispersed or capillary in character. He has developed the concept of 'Governmentality' in order to establish the fact that power is not concentrate in one place, like in traditional governance system. He reconsidered the modern notion of governance which is administered by social factors, individual, population etc. It is a process of governance which harnesses the productive capabilities of the individuals so as to govern the entire population. He enlarged the concept of Government and said that it involves in self-regulating activities which aimed at shaping people's thought, actions and emotions. According to Foucault, the word Governmentality comprised of two words – govern and mentality which defines process of governing and mentality of the government respectively. There are four characteristics of Foucault's concept of Governmentality -

1. Governmentality tries to organize one's needs, capacities, energies, desires to make it productive, instead of unproductive, constructive rather than destructive. This separates it from traditional concept where, those who has power, dominates the subjects.
2. Operation and application of Governmentality is not based on discourse of rights, instead it involves diverse discourse like discourse of health, and many other modern liberal democratic discourse.
3. Governmentality works through a number of invisible as well as non-accountable social powers.
4. Governmentality has accommodate divers discourse which were previously not included in the sphere of analyzing political power like- science, pedagogy, criminology, medicine etc.

Stop to Consider

Major contribution of Foucault:

In his first major work 'Madness and Civilization' (1961) he explained how change of social attitude led to the birth of asylum which segregated from the normal society. In a similar way he tried to explain the genesis of clinic and prison in his work 'The Birth of the Clinic' (1963), Discipline and Punishment (1975). His other influential writings are 'The Order of Things' (1966), 'History of Sexuality' (1976) etc. (Heywood: 1994).

Thus Foucault's concept of governmentalisation indicates 'internal configuration of the state by the project of administration and its links to external knowledge, discourses, and institutions that govern outside the rubric and purview of the state.' (Dryzek, John. S, Honnic B, and Phillips, A: 2006).

Space for Learner

Check Your Progress

1. What is Governmentality? Discuss the main features of Governmentality provided by Foucault.
2. Why Foucault did criticized the traditional understanding of power?
3. Discuss on the reconceptualisation of power by Foucault.

5.5 Power as subject:

Power is a central concept of Political Theory. The modern notion of power is reflected in the Foucault's interpretation of power. Discarding the traditional notion that power is repressive or coercive which restricts one from doing what one wants to do, Foucault said, power today produces identity and subjectivity. Power emanates from everywhere rather from a single source i.e. the state or sovereign authority. Power is understood to construct and organize subjects in a variety of domain and discourses, including even those subjects which were initially thought to be free from power like Science, Arts, sexual desire etc. He talked about those forms and operations that

Space for Learner

categorize the individual and mark him by his own individuality, attach him to his own identity, impose a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others must also recognize in him. So he is talking about the kind of power that makes individual subject (Foucault: 1982).

According to Michel Foucault understanding power relation is a very complex subject. The power relationship itself constitutes the subject. In his text "*The Subject and Power*", Foucault explains the ways through which power and power relationship develops and that results in subjugation and subjectivity of the individual. The kind of subjugation that he is talking about itself manifests in the form of power through resistance. In this chapter we will discuss this critical notion of power as depicted by Michel Foucault.

Unlike human relation of production in economics or human relation of significance in linguistic which offer good instrument there is no such tool to study the power relation. We have to rely on certain way of thinking or model like legal model which seeks to explain what is legitimate power? or institutional model which tell us what is state. Foucault in his famous seminal work "*The Subject and Power*" said power is a kind of action upon other action. He does not explain the phenomenon and foundation of power rather he analyses different modes that transform human beings into subject. He elaborates his position from three standpoints- 1) the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences. 2) divided practice 3) sexuality. Subjectivity has a dual meaning- 1) to subject someone else through control or dependence 2) bound by one's own identity. Foucault talked about close relationship between power and subject and also highlighted the power struggles which purpose was to form a power that makes individual subjects by marking one by their own individuality, categorizing them, imposing laws of truth which one must recognize and other must recognize as well. All forms of subjection according to him are the consequence of socio-economic phenomenon of the society. (Foucault: 1982).

Foucault challenged the traditional notion of power as a 'capacity to act' and said it is not a centralized act or use of force by an individual or institution. Rather power he said is diffused and decentralized which can be present in mental asylum, prison or can be operated through sexuality. So, power

carries several attributes operating through varied social network. As Foucault says, 'Power is everywhere...because it comes from everywhere.' (Newman: 2005) power is neither static nor concentrate only on political actors or state which Foucault termed as 'juridico-discursive' paradigm. Foucault's observation on power operates at various levels was previously unnoticed by other theorist of power. He rejects the dominant notion that power is associated with the sovereignty of the state instead power has to be understood as inter-subjective relationship. Power relationship must have follower or other. The follower or other must acknowledge power which is being exercised on him in order to make power relevant. However, here though power involves a kind of control, nevertheless power relation must also allow the subject to act on his freedom. Power is only exercised over free subjects. But there are contradictions as on the one hand he said freedom is a pre condition to use power, on the other hand freedom disappear whenever power is exercised. He said, identity is not fixed but rather a discourse mediated by our interactions with others. It means he talks about a form of power which makes individuals subjects. How subject is produced by power he said that the way a prisoner whose marginalized identity is constructed through disciplinary and normalizing techniques of power in the prison, and the discourses and bodies of knowledge that supports them produces subject. The subjectivity of the prisoner thus constructed at the intersections of power/knowledge. (Newman: 2005) Subjectivity is itself an effect of power. This according to Foucault is 'ruse of power.' Power is productive and it is no longer repressive or prohibitive.

Violence no longer constitutes the basic nature of power. Social, religious, ethnic domination which symbolize violence is part of power. But Foucault rejects this established notion and developed a new economy of power relationship which focuses on different types of resistance to different forms of power. He was of the view that in order to understand the power relationship one needs to understand this resistance to different forms of power. Such resistance ultimately leads to power struggle which attach not the institutions of power, group or class, rather the forms of power itself. The struggles are to fight a form of power that makes individual subjects.

Space for Learner

These struggles create individual identity and ultimately create the individual subjectivity. His form of power marks the individuality, identity, the laws of truth etc which are associated with everyday life of the individual. Subjectivity that Foucault discussed has two fold meanings–

- 1) to make one subject through the use of force or control.
- 2) bound by one's own identity, conscience or self-knowledge (<https://www.ukessays.com/essays/sociology/analysis-of-foucaults-views-on-power-and-subjectivity.php>).

But both these meaning of power subjugates individual. So, subjectivity is very much inherent in his concept of power. He further described that the whole idea of subjectivity is determined by different forms of subjection as well as consequence of economic and social phenomena, forces of production, class struggle, ideological struggle etc. Power is thus related to subjectivity arises from power struggle. And such power struggle is not confine to a particular government or economic system rather these struggles or opposition to power are immediate, situational and emerge from common activities like men domination over women etc. So power struggle produces subjectivity and recognize individual's right to be different with different identity. But in 16th century when the 'state' emerged as a new political structure it starts using power of domination, exploitation against individual which actually subjugate the individual. To counter state's regressive nature of power the individual resist, this constitutes subjectivity as Foucault said. Foucault delivers a new economy of power relation where the resistance from the individual and their role and responsibilities forms the subjectivity. Human being, being the subject of power relation must know their specific position in the power relation.

Check Your Progress

1. What does Foucault mean by Subjectivity?
2. How power is related to the concept of subjectivity?
3. Why did Foucault say power is productive? Justify.

5.6 Limitations and Criticism:

Foucault’s power as subjectivity has been criticized by numerous scholars. Charles Taylor is suspicious of the fact that Foucault’s idea of subjectivity would be incoherent as he wanted a space for both freedom and resistance. He even did not mention about relative or perpetual power which would limit freedom or subjectivity. Again, Foucault fails to give any sense of inter subjective and collective nature of social agency. Moreover Foucault’s concept often ignores the pluralistic character of power which enables actors to seek consensually agreed upon, publicly criticised, and limits what kind of subjectivity may be possible in a given socio cultural situation or historical knowledge. (Lewandowski: 1995). As Foucault’s concept of power diverts from agencies and structures so it limits its practical utility. Moreover, like he said if power is to emerge from everywhere then it automatically losses its identity and in order to establish itself as separate identity, it must be recognized in the public domain. And if it emerges from everywhere then there is no question of resistance.

Space for Learner

SAQ

Is Foucault’s concept of power as subjectivity a realistic concept?

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

Check Your Progress:

1. Critically discuss Foucault’s view on power and subjectivity.
2. What are the differences between traditional concept of power and Foucault’s concept of power as subjectivity?
3. What is Governmentality? How did Foucault interpret this concept?

Space for Learner

5.7 Summing Up :

After reading this unit you have learnt that Foucault’s famous saying ‘power is everywhere’ and ‘it comes from everywhere’ has actually reshaped the conventional concept of power. It is marked by a sharp departure from the traditional understanding of power. He understands power as a positive force. Scholars like John Goventa appreciated Foucault’s effort to interpret power as a productive concept rather than laying a repressive or negative connotation to it. He diverts from the traditional mainstream idea of power in the sense that power is beyond state and politics and he saw it as a regular, socialized and embodied phenomenon. History has always taken into consideration ‘what’ and ‘why’ with regard to power, whereas Foucault was keen to examine ‘how’ power is exercised by one over other. According to Richard A. Lynch, the purpose of Foucault’s theory of power is to increase peoples’ awareness of how power has shaped their way of being, thinking and acting, and by increasing this awareness making it possible for them to change their way of being, thinking and acting (Lynch: 2011).

SAQ

Do you support Foucault’s concept of power as subject? Justify your answer.

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

5.8 References/Suggested Readings:

1. Analysis of Foucault’s view on power and subjectivity, <https://www.ukessays.com/essays/sociology/analysis-of-foucaults-views-on-power-and-subjectivity.php>
2. Dryzek, John. S, Honnic B, and Phillips, A (2006): The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory, Oxford University Press

3. Foucault, Michael (1982): The Subject and Power, *Critical Inquiry*, Vol.8 No. 4 (summer 1982), pp.777-795.
4. Heywood, Andrew (1994): *Political Theory An Introduction*, Palgrave Macmillan
5. Lewandowski, J.D (1995): Rethinking Power and subjectivity after Foucault, *Symploke*, Vol.3, No. 2 (Summer 1995), pp. 221-243
6. Lynch, R. A. (2011) Foucault's theory of power. In Taylor, D. (red.) *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (pp. 13–26). Acumen Publishing Ltd.
7. Newman, Saul (2005): *Power and Politics in Post Structuralist Thought New Theories of the Political*, Routledge, New York.
8. Power, <https://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in/Home/ViewSubject?catid=qxCgn6i2dJ9uz2O8QM8FcA==>

× × ×