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Paper-1

Understanding Political Theory

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SCHOOL OF OPEN LEARNING
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Paper-I : Understanding Political Theory

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What is Politics?

Shalini Singh

Theorizing the 'Political'

Politics is used as the science and art of Government. It deals with the issue of public affairs and governance. Two words that are used in correlation with the word and are also instrumental in shaping the meaning of the world are government and public affairs. The two in turn are themselves related, where the government has to deal with the public affairs. This understanding is a very broad notion and does not give a concrete and compartmentalized understanding of the word politics. Politics as a term has been widely discussed and debated upon. A common understanding of 'What is Politics' has not been agreed upon. However, it is a realm that has been understood in some way or the other, by every individual. One cannot be devoid of an opinion on the essence of what is actually politics. There can be diverse opinions and often opinions that are at loggerheads, but by the essence of being a human, one is bound to think about the realm of politics. The expanse of politics is wide and can range from one's existence, to its nature of being a human, a social being, and a political creature. The expanse goes beyond the virtue of existence to one's social and political identity. Politics has been defined by various scholars. Harold J Laswell defines Politics as the idea of Who gets what, when and how? His idea advocates the rights of citizens and institutional procedure of the state in granting the rights of the people. David Easton describes Politics as the 'authoritative allocation of values for a society'. His conception of values talks about a set of values that is broadly agreed upon by the state to adhere to. The idea of core values that guide the state is inherent in the idea of politics. The idea of value, Easton talks about can be anything that is valued by the society, ideology, goal, social ranking or any core essence that is deemed as the benchmark for carrying out governance. The term value is a dependent variable and can be allocated a character as per the requirements, demand or preferences. Bernard Crick defines politics as a distinctive form of rule where people come together through institutional mechanism to deliberate and resolve differences to articulate public policy for the common good. The proposition of Bernard Crick, lays emphasis on the idea of reconciliation, bargaining and shared understanding. The culmination of the aforesaid understanding is manifested in the policies formulated by the State. Seemingly, Politics comes across as an idea that falls within the juxtaposition of state and society. The state often resonates with the government and the society with the group of individuals. The two are linked by the idea of governance, which in turn is linked by the aspects of politics. However, the idea of politics disintegrates the basic concept of State and Society. The cardinal distinction between the two is usually overlooked and draws one's attention to the relationship between the two that in turn underlines the realm of political. As per the distinction, the intra state affairs fall under the ambit of politics, but the intra-societal affairs

that are concerned with the sanction of reallocation and legitimation of power are extraneous to the idea of Politics. What is Politics is often defined by a null hypothesis. It is the absence of a variable that validates the presence of the politics.

The Political is not Social

The variable whose absence validates the presence of politics is 'social'. Before examining the interdependency of the two variables, let us look at what is political? Is it different from Politics? The word politics comes from Aristotle's classic work 'Politika', which means 'affairs of the cities.' Political is the nature that politics imparts. It is the characterization that comes from the virtue of politics. Politics can be defined as a static term, but political is dynamic and reinventing because it imparts attributes and characteristics to an individual and institution. The notion of how the society has been perceived and understood over years, has often tried to envelope the social into political. The origin of the word social comes from the Latin word 'socius' meaning friend. The perception of the word social lies in being amicable, empathetic and enduring. It has the virtue of coexistence and thus is about the idea of people coming together. The idea of Aristotle of man being a social being, has delved on the understanding of the social nature of individual as a cooperative entity who has shared purposes and meanings of existence. The identity of a human does not arise from the state but from the virtue of being a social entity. The political institutions, its attributes and functions are inherently social in its tendency. However, the claim is that the political is not social. But can the political have certain attributes of social? If it has characteristic features of social, then does it become social? These questions lie at the helm of understanding what is essentially political?

Does citizenship confer the identity to the members of state? Does the idea of membership and citizenship differ in its orientation? The basic rights of an individual by the virtue of a citizen are enshrined in the constitution, whereas the interpersonal approach of an individual emanate from the consciousness of being a social being. The attributes of social membership are distinct from the rights an individual imbibes as a citizen of the state. A citizen is a member of a community but a citizen of the state. Membership is acquired whereas citizenship is granted. There is an external authority granting the sanctity of citizenship. It is the state that regulates citizenship but community that one is a member of. Community is a collective conscience but state an authoritative position.

Contributing in the well-being of the society through benevolent act of charity, donations, or any other form of physical help. Nurturing a peaceful, habitable and tolerant society by assimilating people from various caste, colour and culture. Maintaining amicable relations in the society by respecting one's neighbour and pursuing social justice. Spreading a sense of responsibility by spreading environmental awareness and nurturing an eco-friendly and sustainable way of life. These attributes come by the virtue of being a good human and not by the identity of being a law-abiding citizen. A citizen can adhere to the duties enshrined by the state and avail his rights. However, citizenship is not a precondition for being contributing to the social enrichment of a group of people. Not every section of the society

was citizen of Aristotle's State, but everyone did imbibe a sense of belonging to the land they inhabited.

The discourse on nationalism has blurred the boundaries between social and political. The discourse of Nation and State in itself a question of social and political. Nation is the feeling of belongingness. It has the element of race, religion, ethnicity, caste. It is submerging of identities in a unanimous umbrella of Nation, whereas State is the territorial boundary bound by an authority of Government. Nationalism as an idea takes the orientation of a state towards that of a community where the individuals are united by a bond of togetherness and knit by a sense of belongingness to a common set of beliefs and ideas. The more the state expands its realm of functions and takes over the attributes of a voluntary association like a community or a family, the weaker the society will become (Etzioni, 2003). The difference between citizenship and membership can be demarcated and realized if an analogy is drawn between the relationship of a state-society and state-individual.

The difference between the social and political, if built upon leads to a larger dialogue in the society culminating into social welfare policies. Public policies that go beyond the administrative concerns, and provide a safety-net to the people by being a benefactor of the marginalized, downtrodden and weaker sections of the society. This idea of reaggregation and convergence of interest of individuals has been brought forth by Bernard Crick, in his famous work 'In Defense of Politics'. The idea of policy making actualizes the politics of the state. Assimilating of the social context in the political underpinning, resulting in the formulation of a public policy is the premise on which Crick has built up his idea of politics. However, the demarcation between the social and political also indicates a line where the distinction between the two is transgressed. The Political and social are distinct in its orientation and approach but are reinstating condition for each other.

The Conception of Moral

Moral rests on the idea of conception of 'good'. The idea of good is subjective but in the moral paradigm, there is only universal good that forms the base of morality. The acceptance that comes with the good is the idea of morality the state and society practice. If there is no subjective good in morality, can the state and society be good at the same time or do they differ in their orientation of good. Social Conservatives consider it as the prerogative of the state to go beyond the idea of citizenship to inculcate social virtues to make a good society. The state harbors the potential to regulate the human behavior, and bring out a moderation in the attributes of an individual. The people are self-indulgent by nature and have a tendency to exploit their liberty and become insensitive towards the needs of others. A belief that has been endorsed by social conservatives is the need of a 'strong national government' that will mould the attributes of an individual and counterbalance the weaker aspect of the citizens. (Brooks/Kristal 1997). The idea of virtuous behavior has come to be shaped by the state in the conservative discourse.

A dilemma that comes across in the conception of good is also prevalent in the idea of a good law-abiding citizen and a good person in general. Social Conservatives view the state as an institution, that imparts the orientation of being good to its subjects. The idea of ‘good state’ does not focus on containing the state to undermine individual liberty. Communitarians perceive society as an agency of promoting moral behavior. The conduct morally good behavior goes beyond the stipulated permissibility of an agency, into the personal realm. The moral attribute of behavior transcends beyond the apparatus of state. It moves beyond the fiduciary relationship of state and its citizens, to a relationship of trust, harmony and camaraderie between the members of the state. Societal orientation of a just and equitable society, where not the state but the citizens extend their hand to the weak, vulnerable and deprived sections of the society. The good society, reaches the private realm but with only a limited set of core values. It is not as expansive and holistic as in a liberal state or a government centered society. The scope of good is limited and particular in the societal perception of good. The formulations of good may differ in the outlook of political and society respectively. However, what shapes the dynamics is that if there is a contestation between the formulation, how is the gap counterbalanced in maintaining an unequivocal idea of good.

The Political is Moral

Every political action has a moral underpinning. There are no political deliberations devoid of moral pretext. The usage of ‘moral’ is related to a broad range of moral social values that are imbibed in the normative considerations of justice and equality. The idea is not restricted to a limited and personal understanding of morality. According to the Liberals understanding of political theory, the ambit of morality should not pervade the realm of public and political. The moral deliberations are more confined to the private realm. Liberals fear that the intrusion of morality in the public domain can trigger a cultural war. The public arena falls in the ambit of the State, where the orientation of state and the idea of politics should essentially remain neutral. The endorsement of morality in the public forum is likely to be perceived as coercion and propagation of shared values.

The conception of the extent of ‘neutrality’ and the essence of ‘autonomy’ of the state differs among liberals. A section of liberals believes that individual virtues like critical thinking upholds the merit of the state (Gutman, 1987). A counterpart of liberals also upholds the premise of what Isaiah Berlin followed, a limited set of values that are deliberated, discussed and agreed upon in the public forum form an underlying idea of morality that the state professes and propagates. For instance, Stealing, Rape and Murder being reprimanded in any society. The nature of punishment however, can have a discrepancy in the acceptance by a particular society. State can either believe in capital punishment, or it can be neutral about it. Euthanasia or mercy killing is another issue that has been a point of contention and differs in how the different states have perceived it. The most contemporary example of acceptance is evident in the LGBT Rights, where different states have a different take in the various aspects of the community. However, endorsing different values is not divided into watertight

compartments. Subscribing to divergent and irreconcilable values does not lead to a political deadlock. Public Policy is formulated in accordance, to reconcile the difference of opinion and adopt a middle path for optimum suitability.

Communitarians come from a vantage point that politics should rearticulate shared values and understanding of morality. Contemporary politics of free and democracy societies rests on the pillar of demand aggregation and articulation. The absence of broad consensus and common ground of values, beliefs and demands leads to turmoil and discontent, as visible between Jewish and Arabic citizen of Israel. The consensus between the communities in a state plays a vital role in maintaining the peace and sanctity of a democracy. The reasons for conflict arise from difference in opinion and the lack of consensus in the governing the different group of citizens defined by their caste, class, caste, region and language. The law acts as a neutral arbiter and acts as a conscience of the state apparatus by upholding the essence of morality. The law can never be morally neutral but it has to be unbiased and wise in adjudicating the matters of state. The law has to be neutral in terms of its preferences and affiliations. It does not have to impose the will of majority on the populous but uphold the prerogative for a just and equitable society.

The Political is State

The question that arises is that are there two conceptions of morality, one for the society and one for the state. If they are different, do they ever converge? What are the repercussions of the differences? Which notion does the citizen abide by? Are there major differences between the conception of a 'good society' and a 'good state'? A good society harbours a moral voice, where individuals have a sense of morality and behave in pro-social manner. The pro-social sense can emanate from either an innate or an acquired sense of morality. An innate sense of morality that arises from the virtue of being human. The role of parenting and education thus play a pivotal role in shaping the moral attributes of an individual. Communitarians emphasize on the fact that the idea of morality needs to reinforced, which comes from the environment in which an individual thrives. The validation and approval of humans, one holds in great regard and is significantly attached to is of great reverence, thus community acts as an agency that does not only harbours but also instils a value system. The significant role is not only played by how the values are enforced but how the values are fostered.

As put forth by John Locke, man is a rational being, who can logically apply a deductive reasoning and determine the sense of morality, that has been granted by God. Locke's moral rationalism is based on the empirical understanding of idea. He believes that human mind is a tabula-rasa, it is the sensory understanding that builds up the idea of morality. We, as humans construct complex moral proposition from the simplistic perception of what we imbibe and perceive from our sensory and reflexive experiences. Locke has knit an interrelation between reason and morality. According to Locke, the state of nature was pre-political but not pre-moral. There was already a sense of morality that existed; thus, a political state needs to have a basic conception of morality.

The point of intervention in understanding morality is to assess if there is a difference in what the society considers as morality, what the state considers as morality and what an individual considers as morality. There are contentions between compliance with moral voice and what an individual truly wants by the virtue of his freedom and entitlement. If an individual deserves to be free from state control, does he not deserve to be free from the social pressure that emanates from the conceptualisation of societal morality. This dilemma has been discussed by Jon Stuart Mill, in his work *On Liberty*. The dealings of the society with the individual can be understood by the way of compulsion and control, either in the form of physical punishment or moral coercion that the state asserts. The morality that the state endorses can differ for various sections. It can be manifested as the popular will, or the dominant public opinion. The multitude of numbers in a democracy has the power to coerce by the will of majority. Public disapprobation leads to alienation and despair of the people whose demands have not been assimilated (Tocqueville, 1991). However, the distinction lies in the force of coercion, a state can be morally coercive but a community endorses internal moral voice that is not to be feared but inculcated. The moral choice resonates with individual liberty and the free choice of man. The internal moral choice is not different from the self. It is a part of one's existence and is borne from the roots of one's being. It defines and shapes one's moral character. The external moral choice is community driven and is imbibe from the societal orientation and construct of 'good' and 'bad'. The external moral choice lays the onus on an individual to select or reject the moral construct being advocated. The final call is with the individual acting. Society has the tendency to cajole, persuade and censure but it is up to the individual to adhere to the conception being emphasised upon. However, in case of a state undertaking the responsibility of morality, it has the force of coercion because of the sanction of legality. The sanction of the state might not be binding in nature. The state may use the tools to persuade and educate the masses through other institutional mechanisms that are not coercive by nature and do not require allegiance from the people. However, the actor does not have a choice but to comply to the state by the virtue of being a law-abiding citizen. The last recourse of state could be driven by force to command allegiance. A follow up question that arises out of the proposition is that if the moral voice coercive or the agency enforcing the voice? The moral voice by the virtue is not coercive but enforcement of the voice can be coercive if has to command allegiance. The command can have a force of authority which makes the state vociferous because of the legal and economic sanctions attached to it. It is not the morality but the agency endorsing the same that comes around as coercive.

The contemporary liberal democratic set up offers the liberty and freedom to manoeuvre the space an individual holds. An individual has the liberty to choose and reside in a state he aspires to. He has the reasoning and moral voice to succumb to a state authority he feels entrusted to.

Adhering to the societal pressure also emanates from a vantage point of moral understanding an individual has. His actions are socially, culturally and morally placed under an ambit because he is a part of the society, a state and owes allegiance to at least a limited

set of people. In case of parents taking care of their children, the decision is not led by moral coercion that the state enforces but by a moral voice that the community propagates. The elderly parents being abandoned by their children is a question of moral voice and personal choice.

The voluntaristic nature of moral voice paves the way for reconciliation of a good society with idea of liberty. This idea should form the core essence of liberal state and society. Social Institutions play a pivotal role in characterizing the difference between a good society and good being promoted by the state. The institutions are not value-neutral, they are embodiment of a particular set of people. Every social institution has a set of attributes imbibed in it. For instance, a family being a primary social institution is an evident example of a value-laden entity. A prominent understanding correlates the freedom of the institution with the quotient of morality that it imbibes and prophesies. Institutions that are politicised are instruments for serving the state promoted notion of good.

The outcome of deliberations is manifested in public policy. The policies voice the concerns of society and the outlook of the state in promoting the general well-being of the people. The policies are deemed to be rational choice of the policy makers to voice the concerns of the citizens in the public forum. It is perceived as a reasoned outcome for resolving the political conflict (Johnson, 1994). Deliberations and democracy walk hand in hand and are vital for upholding the moral conscience of the state. Moral dialogues engage the values of the participant and deduce a rational and logical discourse for shaping a due course of action. The entire process is substantive and not merely procedural. The values are not stagnant, they are reorienting and adapting to the advent of time. A shared consensus is reached for adjudicating the law and order of the state. The consensus is transformed into policies that form a part of governance. The moral dialogues can pertain to deliberations about human rights, gender rights, sexual harassment and other important discourses in democracy. The dialogues occur at a preliminary level in the family, and then it follows at the level of community. How a society comes together to renegotiate a renewed and reinvigorating set of values at various levels determines the openness of the society. The deliberations occur in a chain reaction and have the potential to lead a change in the perception of values. It starts in small groups across millions of populations. The groups can be of a family, caste, religion, common ethnicity or common language. The process is carried forward by interlinking of various such groups, that transforms into shared public forums and think tanks. The chain of deliberations converts to a wide-net by networking in the form of meetings at the regional and national levels. The contemporary scenario has aided to the interconnectivity because of the world being knit by digital infrastructure. The world is not only digital connected but the agendas of discussions are digitally curated. Media has been instrumentally not only in voicing the opinion but also discovering voices across sections of society.

The dialogues need not be orderly and precise focussing on a particular change, core value or social intervention. It need not have a clear pattern or beginning, it only needs a

dialogue to trigger a discourse. An example of changing orientation of values is evident in the environmental awareness across the continents in the contemporary world. The environmental concern was not a part of the mainstream discourse. It had underlying issues and concerns being raised by various individuals, groups and communities but was not considered a shared core value in Western Societies. A nationwide megalogue was triggered by the famous work on environment by Rachel Carson, named The Silent Spring. It was further talked about at various forums and upheld by citizens as a prime cause of concern and was included in the normative agenda. From the proclamation of Earth Day, observation of Earth Overshoot Day to the various protocols and conventions on environment like the Kyoto Protocol and Montreal Convention, the environmental degradation and control of Greenhouse Gas Emissions has become an utmost concern across countries of the nation. The countries often do not come to standard conclusion and have a difference of opinion in adhering to shared consensus on the measures to be taken. However, the differences do not differ from the view that environmental concerns have become a shared core values that needs to be included in the policy making. It is not just the legislative bodies that form a part of the dialogue in case of established core values, but is undertaken as a distinct social process that are nurtured in the social realm. The realm can fall under the political realm, but it certainly has a deep and profound implication on the political discourse of the State.

The law is catalyst in achieving societal change. It is a core outcome of political processes. Moral dialogues take place in the political realm but do not mature and harbour in the same. It is the society that nurtures the dialogue and the law that helps in achieving the outcome. The law of the land leads the social change. However, the nature of morality defines a good society. The law is required to be in accordance with the moral culture. The law if not in accordance can also the nature of state to an authoritarian state, or in the worst form a totalitarian state. The law is the first step for ensuring social change and preserving the order of the state. Law also needs the will and force of moral voice to be enforced. It is not coercion alone that can prohibit an immoral act. It is the inner moral conscience that acts a guiding star in directing an individual's action. Prohibition can regulate moral behaviour but not imbibe moral etiquettes in individuals. For instance, corruption in the bureaucratic order can be prohibited, and thus it can be regulated but it is the inner conscience or the moral voice that will guide an individual's actions in making the society free of corruption. Fear can command and not demand morality. It is the force of moral voice that is to be reckoned with even in adhering to the law of land.

Conclusion

The political and moral though cardinally different are interlinked in myriad ways. The two cannot be confused to be the same but cannot be compartmentalised too for understanding the two individually. A free democratic liberal order governs by the sanctity of law. The law is reinforced by the State apparatus. The political governs by a shared understanding of morality. The state is a part of the political. The actions of the State have a moral dimension because they also operate on a shared understanding and a broad consensus of values. The

contemporary political understanding is a reinstatement of morality writ large in the form of social consensus. The idea of state vs community is now visualised as a political community instead because of the interdependence of the nations, which has enlarged the ambit of shared understanding to a more holistic, comprehensive and cohesive understanding of governance. The idea of governance also has a paradigm of social governance. The various actions of the State are to be understood in nexus with each other rather than in isolation. The outcome of the moral dialogues have matured and the idea of shared values has also reinvented itself to be more conclusive in its approach. The sanctity of state emanates from the people because it is the people that authorise the state to govern. The people are themselves guided by a moral voice and thus the power of moral deliberations reflects at the level of Government as well. What is political will never have a compartmentalised understanding because politics in itself is a sum total of attributes of social, economic and moral virtues that guides the governance of the State.

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Critical Perspectives in Political Theory: Feminist and Postmodern

Meena Kumari

As per the critical perspective the primary aim of the philosophy is to understand the social structures by which people are dominated and oppressed, also helping them to overcome. With the advancement in science and the arrival of enlightenment it was believed that it will lead to human emancipation. But in oppose to the universal common view critical perspective believes that science like other forms of knowledge has also been used as an instrument of oppression. Thus they warn against the blind faith in scientific progress and knowledge.

Critical Theory was established as a school of thought by the Frankfurt School Influenced by Western Marxist philosophy. It has been largely drawing upon the ideas of Karl Marx and Sigmund Freud. The primary development took place in 1930s in Germany. Major personalities and advocates of critical perspective were Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Walter Benjamin and Max Horkheimer. Among them Max Horkheimer was the first and foremost as he defined critical theory for the very first time in his essay "*Traditional and Critical Theory*". For him a traditional theory is one which only understanding or explaining the society but a critical theory is oriented toward the critiquing as well as changing society. So a theory can be understood as critical as far as it tries to liberate human beings from the enslaving situations. In that sense critical theory have emancipator tendencies.

Feminist theory and postmodernist theory have challenged the ongoing norms and tries to rescue people out of the illusion of science and erstwhile established knowledge system. Feminist at the one hand tries to the break the male dominance over the knowledge system and society, postmodernists challenge the modernist claim over about the universality and homogeneity of truth.

Feminist Perspective

How many political theorists do you come across while reading your political science text books? Probably very less number or sometimes no female at all, may be that is the reason some feminist claimed that the history of political theory is the history of male theorist. Not only political theory but most of the fields are male dominated and male managed. The term feminism first came in use during the period of 1890s. But the origin of modern feminism can only be traced back to late seventeenth century surely not in its present form. Initially feminist started in its liberal form and the first full expression of liberal feminism came in Mary Wollstonecraft's book "*Vindication of the Rights of Woman*" (1792). Here she claimed that like men, women are also rational beings, hence they should be entitled to the equal rights as per men. She challenged her contemporaries who excluded the women from enjoying the full citizenship rights. She argued that women have the same potential for rationality that men have and thus there is no reason why women should not enjoy the same status that men enjoy. Nurture, not nature, argued Wollstonecraft, is the cause of gender

distinctions. Wollstonecraft criticized such appeals to the 'natural' differences between men and women.

Not only women like Wollstonecraft was concerned with the equal rights for men and women but some enlightened men like John Stuart Mill was also advocated for the same. In the "*Subjection of Women*" 1869 Mill came up with full scale analysis of women's situation and advantages to society of giving them full legal and political equality as per with men. He advocated this because he believes that what is now considered as the nature of women is completely spurious and a result of a forced suppression and fabricated incitement.

Schools of Feminism

Feminist movement as a whole was concerned with the women rights and advocated for equality of sexes Vis a Vis challenged male dominance. But did not prescribed a universalized single path, different feminist have advocated different roots for women cause. Broadly speaking there can be three varieties of Feminist traditions namely liberal, socialist and radical feminism.

Liberal feminism emphasizes upon the equal worth of all individuals whether male and female. The main focus is on achieving gender equality through political and legal reforms within the liberal democratic framework. Liberal feminism has a great admiration and belief for the respective laws, the political institutions and the education. As they are among the most relevant factors of human development, the major source of inequality is the denial of equal legal and political rights. Unlike other major brands of feminism, liberal feminism did not undermine the existing institutions of power in liberal democratic societies thus seems more inclusive and socially progressive. They also believed that men can be an active participant in female struggle. As both are rational, they should be treating alike; both can complement each other in their fight. As some of men like JS Mill, have successfully done by advocating equal rights for women. The major feminist associated with this theory include Mary Wollstonecraft, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, John Stuart Mill, Helen Taylor, and Gina Krog, Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, Simone de Beauvoir, Rebecca Walker and many more. The primary concern for feminists is the liberation of women and liberal feminists believe that an enlightened version of liberalism can inspire a public philosophy that will help in counter the present social injustices.

Many feminists believe that liberalism is the source of the problem and not the solution. Liberal feminists initially wanted equal right as per men but treating men and women equally leads to two problems. This sameness approach denies the very particularities of male female difference. First while taking men as standard it undermines the idea of femaleness. A female and male are two different categories; women's identity cannot be compromised to attain an equality built on the male parameters. Secondly in the process of treating female and male as equals it fails to accept that women and men are actually different and so their problems. For example it is women who suffer the menstrual pain, carries the physical qualities to bear a child. Equal treatment here can be harmful to women and denied them of the maternity relief benefits and other such policies.

Socialist feminism focuses upon the interconnection between capitalism and patriarchy as both capitalist system of production and a gendered biased institutionalized system of patriarchy is collectively responsible for the women's condition. Between 1960s and 1970s this variant of feminism has spread widely. Socialist feminists believe that financial dependence over males is a major cause of women's oppression and discrimination. In capitalist system of production unequal ownership of wealth between women and men further give a boost to male domination. In this sense subjugation of women to men is a result of economic dependence. Gender equality can only be established by eliminating this economic and social structure. Women's liberation here is imperative to larger quest for economic, social and political justice. Some of main socialist feminist are Barbara Ehrenreich, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Johanna Brenner, Silvia Federici, Clara Fraser, Donna Haraway, Emma Goldman and so on.

Though it did not repeat the mistake of liberal feminists who consider both men and women equal but they too were subject to certain criticism. Alexandra Kollontai criticized the feminists to neglect the poor working class women at the expense of upper-class bourgeois women who were still oppressing the poor working women. So, feminist movement is actually a movement for the so cold upper class women's dominance over the poor lower class women.

Radical feminism as its name suggests is a perspective which advocates for radical reordering of a male dominated society. The male dominated society is characterized by the male supremacy in all social, economic and political sphere of life. Radical feminism advocated the elimination of male's supremacy and women's experiences should also be count along with other divisions like race, class, and sexual orientation. They proposed that the society is basically patriarchal based upon the women oppression by men. For this they wanted to abolish the patriarchy to liberate women from existing social norms and institutions. Janice Raymond, Andrea Dworkin, Catharine MacKinnon, Germaine Greer, John Stoltenberg, Monique Wittig, Mary Daly and Robin Morgan are some important radical feminist.

They collectively struggled against the sexual objectification of women; oppose the violence against women in form of rape and other such crimes. They are challenging the prescribed traditional gender role like limiting women to the household. Patriarchy is the fundamental reason of systematic oppression and marginalization of women, it make women other.

Besides having divergence of opinion about the gender discrimination, it's causes and the possible routes to improve the condition, there are certain points upon which all feminists agree. Three common points all feminist supporting are:

1. **Entrenchment of Gender**—Gender inequality is widespread in all societies in all times. All feminist are in one voice confirmed that the unequal bifurcation of individual roles on the bases of gender has been a major and common issue of concern as this gendered division lead to long term inequality in society. Assigning gender roles like private sphere for women (the household responsibility) and the public sphere to men (the breadwinner of household) is problematic to all feminists.

2. **Existence of Patriarchy**—Patriarchy literally means ‘rule of father’. Normally it signifies towards a condition where all necessary and relevant decisions in a family are taken by the male member. Feminists have consensus over the existence of patriarchy in society. Kate Millett who wrote the “*Sexual Politics*” (1970) portrays patriarchy as a ‘social constant’ running through all the political, social and economic structures. It according to her is grounded in and operates from the family which works as a fertile ground for patriarchy. She has suggested a radical solution to patriarchal oppression, and the solution is the abolition of conventional family system along with consciousness-raising. Existence of patriarchy restricts women’s reasoning and chances to participate in the decision making process, devoid them of the basic facilities in life.
3. **Need for Change**—All feminists believe that there is a deep need of change in the attitude and the manner hitherto society is running. Different path can be adopted for the betterment of the women. It can be through revolution the idea advocated by the revolutionary feminist or the through strengthening laws as the liberal feminist wanted. Shulamith Firestone in her best known work “*The Dialectic of Sex*” (1970) advocated an entirely different kind of solution to alter the status quo. Unlike socialist feminist she believes that society cannot be structured through the process of production, but through the process of reproduction. She argued that women can only be emancipated by outdo their biological roles either by the use of modern technology like test tube babies or through other routes. This is more a kind of individual change she was talking about, but a collective change in the existing institutions, policies, values and practice is required.

Waves of Feminism

The present form of feminism did not develop gradually and overnight. It rather took a long period to systematize feminist thought. The period of its development can be seen in different waves.

First wave This wave of feminism was emerged in the 1840s and 1850s and closely associated with the women’s suffrage movement. Feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft Sylvia, John Stuart Mill, Emmeline, Christabel Pankhurst and Sojourner Truth have advocated for women rights in political and economic sphere. The major argument they presented to strengthen their claim over women rights was equality of sexes. So one group claimed that women were equal to men, other group argued that women were superior to the men. The major demand in this wave was women’s interest cannot be sacrificed and not subject to any reductionism. Women should be able to vote and represent themselves and not politically dependent over their husbands or other male members of their family. The result was a partial success in building consciousness regarding women rights in Europe.

Second wave came in 1960s with more radical and sometimes revolutionary vigor. Women’s Liberation Movement. It is associated with the resurgence of feminist activism, specifically the radical feminism, in 1960s and 1970s. Germaine Greer, Shulamith Firestone, Andrea Dworkin and Mar Daly are some key feminist in this wave. During this wave

feminism, prime concern was male violence toward women particularly sexual violence. Major focus was on attacking this kind of violence, rejected the feminine norms like the sexual submissiveness and participation in beauty practices. Oppose those practices considered as common norm is society such as gendered distinction of work and do favor female solidarity and sisterhood.

A wide range of changes have taken place and many more laws have been initiated for the betterment of women but the radical and tragic change is still a far cry.

Post Feminism

It is characterized by the resistance towards the themes of second wave feminism by feminists like Katie Roiphe, Camille Paglia, Natasha Walter and Pat Califia. Feminists during this wave demanded that women must not see themselves as victims, rather consider themselves as active agents. Sexuality should be thought as liberating and consensual sex should not be treated as a taboo. Feminism should focus on women's material equality rather than symbolic aspect of gender.

Throughout the different waves of feminism, the phrase 'personal is political' was used widely particularly in the second wave. The phrase was popularized by the Carol Hanisch through her article "*The Personal is Political*" in 1969. Let's discuss what it denotes.

Personal is Political

It means that unlike common belief personal is not so personal in fact it is very much political as what happens in household is a reflection of the political decisions. In "*Justice, Gender and the Family*" Susan Molar Okin argues that there are four major respects in which the personal is political. These are:

1. Power, a distinguishing feature of the political but private sphere is also a sphere of power. Power exists within the family, among the gender relations between husband and wife, sister and brother and so on. For example domestic violence is clear reflection of the use of power within family.
2. The domestic sphere itself is the result of the political decisions taken in other sphere. In that sense political sphere infiltrates private sphere. State interference in family matters and the institution of marriage reveals this infiltration. Marriages are sanctioned by the state; the state is the supreme authority to decide who can be marrying and whom you cannot marry. Every state has their own marriage criteria such as a particular age of marriage, guidelines about homosexual marriages and other such laws.
3. Domestic life is where most of individual's early socialization takes place. Private sphere creates the psychological conditions that can govern public life. The social construction (gender division of labor) and patriarchal surrounding (where key decisions are taken by the male member in family) work as an initial setup.
4. The division of labor within majority of families raises psychological and practical barriers against women in all other spheres. The household responsibilities cause

women's underrepresentation in most relevant public institutions like government, judiciary and economy (Okin, 1989: 128–33).

The slogan 'the personal is political' shows how deeply entrenched sexual differences are in society and requires us to consider closely the role of the family perpetuating the social inequalities. Feminists reject the liberal idea that the family is part of a 'private' realm where principles of justice cannot be actualized. Okin advocated the creation of a genderless society through the changes in education curriculum and the institution of marriage. She actually brings out the practical significance of the feminist idea of 'the personal is political'.

To remove the difference between personal and political, difference of sex and gender must be abolished first.

Sex and Gender

Simone De Beauvoir in "*The Second Sex*" (1949) argued that women's sex is defined relative to maleness, a woman is a 'not-man'. Men on the other hand are defined independently of their sex and of women, as autonomous and rational beings. This imbalance resulted in the inequality between male and female. Women needs civil liberties, economic independence, removal of passive femininity and sexual submission in order to achieve gender equality. Further women identity must be redefined independent and autonomous of the male.

Feminists have confirmed the fact that gender and sex are two different things and gender distinctions are socially constructed. It means that it is the result of political arrangements and is acquiescent to social and political analysis. Since the seventeenth century, some feminist have argued that the women's nature which is characterized as natural and universal is actually artificial and distorted, a product of constructed societal upbringing. In the words of the Simone de Beauvoir, a French writer, 'One is not born but rather becomes a woman'. In the later period this statement starts formalized into the sex/gender distinction. As per this distinction, *sex* is about the biological characters of males and females, mainly those associated with reproduction. These differences are also seen in physical size and shape of men and women, the organs and functions of reproduction. It is distinct from the gender, which are socially constructed attributes of masculinity and femininity, and the social roles and arrangements prescribed by them like what should women do and what should men do. Gender refers to those differences that are imposed only by social norms such as girls should wear pink and boys should wear blue or the norm that women should be kind and emotional and men should be tough and rational.

Sex/Gender difference became quite relevant because constructed gender division forced women to sacrifice their careers for parenthood, do the majority of unpaid domestic work and are made vulnerable through the institution of marriage. These differences between men and women do not stem from biological differences but from unequal power relations between male and female. All feminists are united in their concern for liberating women and adopt diverse theoretical positions for identifying these injustices. In accordance with their findings they present different prescriptions of what needs to be done to create a more equal society.

But some feminists oppose the sex/gender distinction. They believe that biological categories of male and female are not as distinct as they seem. It is society, not the biology which makes these categories so significant.

Conclusion

Feminist political thought has been primarily concerned with at least two issues.

First, it analyses and explains the processes, institutions and practices through which women have been subordinated to the men. The women have been marginalized through a set of constructed societal norms. Second, feminism is not limited to the analysis of the problem but it also tries formulated the most appropriate and effective ways to challenge this subordination and domination. Feminists have a firm belief that the gender is a political construct, normally based upon stereotyping of 'feminine' and 'masculine' idea about the gender behavior and their social roles.

To be a political theory as a 'feminist' theory it should be emphasizes upon the eliminating of oppression of women by men and also by women in all forms. Feminism should not be misunderstood as against the men as it is not against by but the male dominance over the women or for that matter any such domination either by men or women. It is characterized by its political stance and the attempt to advance the social role of women. They have highlighted the problem of unequal political relationship between the sexes, the supremacy of men in every sphere and the subjection of women in most the societies.

There is a famous saying of Karl Marx that 'the philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways but the point is to change it'. The Feminism has not merely reinterpreted the contribution of major theorists and shed new light upon established concepts such as power, domination and equality, but also introduced a new sensitivity and language into political theory related to ideas such as connection, voice and difference. In "*Sex and Social Justice*" Martha Nussbaum defends a kind of feminism that has the following five features. First it should be internationalist not limited to a particular region or nation, second humanist humanity should be the highest consideration, third liberal means advocating equal rights for all, four the concern with the social shaping of preference and desire and finally the concern for sympathetic understanding.

Post Modernism

Post modernism is a product of modernism and modernist values, a late 20th-century movement outlined by broad level of skepticism, relativism and subjectivism against the prescribed and established set of knowledge. Other features include the suspicion towards the reason and a deep sensitivity for the role of ideology in avowing and nourishing political and economic power. It opposes the modernist statement that there is an objective reality. It believes that the explanatory statement of scientists and historians can be objectively true or false. It dismisses modernist idea of objective natural reality and dubbed it as a kind of naive or immature realism. They reject the viewpoint of objectivity, they elucidates that there is no such thing as truth. The term is associated with Jean Francois Lyotard as it first came in 1979 with the publication of his "*Postmodern Condition*". Unlike common belief and collective

claim of modernists, post modernists have denied the faith in science and technology as the instruments of human progress. Many postmodernist in oppose assured that the misguided objective of scientific and technological knowledge led to the development of destructive technologies. It was widely used evil weapon for killing on a massive scale in World War II and other consecutive wars.

Post modernism is not a single unified perspective or a systematic universal philosophy. It includes a range of theoreticians like Francois Lyotard, Mikhail Bakhtin, Paul De Man, Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, William E Connolly, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, Gaston Bachelard, Richard Rorty, Herbert Marcuse, Luce Irigaray and others.

Defining Postmodernism

Martin Heidegger a German philosopher and post modernist thinker along with Lyotard have popularized the term postmodern. They define it as ‘incredulity (disbelief) towards meta narratives’. It means that postmodernism is about the distrust towards all those theories and ideologies which claimed them to be the universal theories. Friedrich Nietzsche another German philosopher and also one of the postmodernist rejected all the moral and political principles as a mere nihilism. He also used the phrase ‘death of god’ widely to denote the triumph of reason, enlightenment and scientific reasoning upon the moral values in the west. Michel Foucault was mainly concerned with the forms of knowledge. He believes that truth is always socially constructed. Derrida’s deconstruction is another approach to understand the postmodernism. He opposed the claims of a single truth and knowledge. Like Derrida, Rorty also rejects the conception that there is an objective point of view.

The wide range of discussion between these thinkers suggests that it is very difficult to arrive at unanimous and agreeable definition of postmodernism. Scholars themselves involved in this process of understanding post modernist idea denies the possibility of attaining any clear meaning and definition of the concept. In actual there is some kind of confusion and chaos linked to the term. Francois Lyotard in his book, “*The Post Modern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*” (1979) rejects all grand narratives. He also rejects the claims of enlightenment, the progress of the world, the all know ability of the science, and the possibility of absolute freedom as such. In a way he challenged the supremacy of science and technology as a final source of knowledge and truth.

According to Jane Bennett the term postmodernism can be understood in three ways.

First as a sociological designation for an epochal shift in the way collective life is organized (from centralized and hierarchal control towards a network structure). Second as an aesthetic genre (literature that experiments with non-linear narration, a playful architecture of mixed style, an appreciation of popular culture that complicates the distinction between high and low). Finally third as a set of philosophical critiques of teleological or rationalist conceptions of nature, history, power, freedom and subjectivity.

Postmodernism in participates in all three ways, but most intensively in the third way (Bennet: 2004 p 46).

Difference between Modernism and Postmodernism

Postmodernist thought was the result of opposition and repudiation to the modernist thought. It challenged most of the modernist ideals but there were several points where modernism and post modernism are completely contradictory. This distinction can be understood through the following table. Table-1

Modernism has a deep faith in the idea of grand narrative as it believes that there can be a grand theory. In oppose postmodernist are tend to challenge this idea and they always seen it with skepticism. With the arrival of scientific experimentation and stress upon the factual knowledge modernism start claiming the existence of universal objective truth but for postmodernism there is no such thing as universal knowledge and there is always multiple truth. There cannot be a linear logic and reasoning, rather knowledge is decentralized. For postmodernist, subjective experience and diversity has its own place as uniformity and homogeneity is a clear myth.

Table-1

Modernism	Postmodernism
Grand narrative	Skepticism against grand theory
Universal objective truth	Deconstruction/ multiple truth
Linear logic and reasoning	Decentralizing of knowledge
Uniformity and homogeneity	Subjective experience and diversity

Source: Singh, Pushpa. (2014). Traditions in Political Theory Postmodernism.

Opposition of Modernity

The difference between modernism and postmodernism and emergence of post modernism in modernist antipathy is evident. Modernist political theorists like Machiavelli, Montesquieu, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire and others have contributed toward the idea of representative democracy, rational stature, formal equality and other relevant concepts. Immanuel Kant's assertion about individual's autonomy was further strengthened the emancipator quest of modernity. Scholars in this period all around the world have continuously defend the void promise of emancipation through modernity. In this way modernist, also seen as rationalist have superadded their power and continue to maintain themselves.

One of the vehement critique of this conception of modernity, Alasdair Macintyre who was not a postmodernist though, in his book "*After Virtue*" argues that it was only in the later part of seventeenth and dawn of eighteenth century that Northern European culture started projecting the modernity as unquestioned discourse through the Enlightenment assignment. Later, postmodernist confront the Universalist approach as there cannot be a universal answer

to any question. No single theory carries the transcendental truth because there is no single and simple way to interpret the historical process.

The claim of postmodernist was simple that there is no objective value, no established reality an off course no universal truth. Rather, there are numerous realities, diverse of truth and variety of people with their own set of values and realities.

Postmodernists attacked all such modernist projections and questioned existing established styles of understanding. It interrogates the universality, certainty and objectivity linked to modernism and any such mode of thinking. It also challenges all those system of knowledge that suggests that society's up gradation towards any kind of development, progress or coherence.

It is characterized by straight repudiation of the common philosophical viewpoints that were not much challenged during the 18th-century enlightenment age. Postmodernist roots are developed on the denial and opposition of the modernist land.

1. At the very first place it challenged the modernist claim that there is an objective natural reality. Postmodernists called this idea as a kind of void realist ideal.
2. Unlike modernist claim reason and logic are not universally valid like laws and domain of knowledge are the same for everyone or let's say apply equally. Instead for postmodernists whether it is reason or logic they are merely conceptual constructs and only valid within the established set of intellectual traditions in which they often used.
3. Modernist believes that the human nature is derived from the birth itself rather than learned or induced through social forces. Postmodernists rather insist that almost all aspects of human psychology are wholly socially determined.
4. The explanatory and descriptive statements of historians and scientists can be objectively true or false in the principle. But the post modernists have denied the possibility of any such truth.
5. Modernists believe that human beings for the better are likely to change themselves and their societies through the use of reason and logic, and through more specialized scientific tools. For them it is reasonable to anticipate that subsequent societies will be more just full, more humane, more enlightened and more prosperous, in away somewhat better than from what they are now. But postmodernists have no such faith in science and technology as a tool of human progress and an enlightened society.
6. It is possible for modernist to construct general theories that can explain several aspects of the natural and social world within a given realm of knowledge for example a general theory of human history in form of dialectical materialism. Postmodernists have denied any such possibility.
7. Human beings are capable of acquiring knowledge about natural reality, and on the basis of evidence and certain founded principles, this knowledge can be ultimately justified. Postmodernists reject this kind of philosophical foundationalism.

Foucault and Derrida

Though Michel Foucault has declined, he is considered as one of the important postmodernist. He defined the post modernism through two guiding concepts: the power and the discourse. For example, the criminality discourse reflects the people's view in a certain society about crime and this is the discourse through which the power works. Power as per him is knowledge; means in whole, discourses are ultimately shaped by knowledge.

In his book "*Discipline and Punish*" and "*The History of Sexuality*" he discussed about the emergence of disciplinary and regulatory bio powers. He argued that societies have devised creative ways for excluding those who do not fit in their already prescribed categories like the sick, poor, disable and insane in the name of cognizance. Modern institutions viz the hospitals, schools, mental asylum, sanatoriums and prisons are disciplinary tools of power to make people disciplined.

Foucault seeks to uncover and denounce the ways and the process through which human beings are normalized. It is important to understand that this normalization is not forceful rather the state or society has trained people in a way that they became the willing subjects, who themselves participate in their own oppression. This willingness takes the form of legitimating state. In this sense modern liberal societies are still oppressive and exploitative but the domination is not as overt as in previous times. He severely challenged this legitimization of modern society as it increases the surveillance which is a result of progress and development in science and technology. This modern science and technological advancement are the major tools of modernization.

His idea of surveillance better reflected in the concept of panopticon that fulfils the desire of state and other institutions to monitor, control and do the surveillance over the subjects. So Foucault challenged the whole purpose and argument of modernism and was nearly demolished it.

Derrida the other important figure in post modernism whose writings are full of skepticism, tries to challenge the argument and constructed character about the truth of knowledge by examining various oppositions and called it deconstruction. He argued that in attempt to establish a conclusion through logical means ultimately 'deconstructs' (logically erode) itself. As e believes that any text can be interpreted in numerous ways, it is despairing to search for a 'correct' interpretation hence objective truth is unfeasible. According to him all attempts to represent reality produce not knowledge or truth. But are different representation, none of which can be proven to be better/truer than any other. All social phenomenon and forms of human experience like revolutions, wars, relation between sexes and so on exist only through their representation.

Derrida's idea of deconstruction signifies his approach of challenging the foundations and hierarchies on which the western political tradition and culture have been based. It questions the entire process of accreditation or assigning of meaning to any phenomenon or thing.

Critique of Postmodernism

Postmodernism established itself by critiquing modernism, further it also part to certain criticism. The drawback of the relativism and the anti-foundationalism advocated by postmodernists is that it completely undermines the possibility of a truth or ideas that may qualify as universal political values. But the real problem with this is the acceptance of this premise compels us to believe that the entire history of injustices and its opposition by the weak and marginalized is just absurd. Many small movements driven by enlightenment are under postmodernist threat. Postmodernists themselves are not able to sustain the very same objective of emancipation that it intended to adhere to.

Secondly postmodernism lack the coherence and a common understanding that can be shared by all. The de-centered understandings of all categories that make the world meaningful to us make postmodernist discourse appear as incomprehensive and ambiguous. Post modernism is routinely denounced as nihilistic, immoral or politically irresponsible.

Conclusion

Thus postmodernists regard their theoretical position as uniquely inclusive and democratic, because it allows them to recognize the unjust hegemony of Enlightenment discourses over the equally valid perspectives of non elite groups. In the 1980s and '90s, academic advocates on behalf of various ethnic, cultural, racial, and religious groups embraced postmodern critiques of contemporary Western society, and postmodernism became the unofficial philosophy of the new movement of "identity politics."

Postmodernist believes that there is no absolute or universal truth and the truth changes with the advent of new events and discoveries. It means that scientific events that took place historically on one side of the world have influenced political and social events that are now taking place on another. It embraces and encourages individual expression, the cross-cultural dialogue and debates as a necessary factor.

Possible Questions

What is feminism? Discuss different schools of feminism.

Discuss the idea of feminism. Explain the different waves of feminism?

Explain 'the personal is political' with reference to the understanding of Susan Molar Okin.

Differentiate between sex and gender.

Define postmodernism. How it is different from modernism?

Discuss Foucault and Derrida's postmodern approach.

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