

“PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY; CONTRADICTION AND DISCOURSES IN MODERN TIME-AN ANALYSIS”

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ABSTRACT

Political philosophy reflects the political maturity of a nation. It mirrors its political thinking and viewpoint. It gives a peep into its social, economic and political set up. It reveals these problems. The Greeks were undoubtedly the first important political thinkers who established that man is a social animal both by the nature and necessity. They discussed such complicated and politically sensitive issues, as to what is the relation of an individual with the state? What are the duties and responsibilities of an ideal ruler? Has an individual a right to hold family and property? Under what circumstances the citizen has a right to rise in revolt against the state? These issues raised by Greeks were discussed by European philosophers. New issues came to the front such as the political origin of the State and its relation with the church, or how an individual gradually came in the state and began to accept the command of those whom he once consider as his equal.

Key words: *Philosophy, Ethics, State, Religion, Moral values.*

INTRODUCTION

Political philosophy, as the terms indicates, is the philosophy of politics. Thus, in order to understand the meaning of political philosophy, we must clarify the meaning of the terms political and philosophy. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, the term political means concerned with government, politics, politicians or political parties. While political science is the science of the principles, organization and methods of government, political philosophy is the philosophy concerning political problems, method, conclusions etc. As V.P.Varma has rightly said, "A historical study of the evolution of the fundamental concepts, methods and theoretical propositions relating to the political universe as found in the writings of philosophers and thinkers of the past is a major component of political philosophy." Clarifying the meaning of political philosophy he writes, "Political

Philosophy is the rational synthesis of political speculations, maxims and postulates, norms, opinions, information and generalizations, into coherent knowledge. From philosophy it adopts a rational or a thoughtful approach to political problems. From philosophy again, it takes a synthetic or comprehensive orientation and standpoint.”

RELATIONSHIP OF INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY:

According to political philosophers man is a rational as well as a social animal, with an inner and natural instinct of understanding himself and the world around him. This enables him to discover and study social and physical sciences. Man is a member of a society, heterogeneous and complicated, in which there are many problems, which require deep penetration and detailed study for arriving at reasonable and rational solutions. Gradually, it was realized that obedience to laws is a condition precedent for man’s progress and fullest expression of his personality. It was also realized that in society alone man can progress, society itself requires that political problems may find proper solution. It was found that many have fully wrapped himself in social fabric. Hence he learnt to obey laws and respect the feelings of others. It was by now fully realized that the institution of state is as old as the history of mankind itself. At the same time it was accepted as an undisputed fact that society existed prior to state. Therefore the former has precedence over the later. Only after passing through various transitory stages the state has assumed its present character.

FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE:

The scope and field of the activity of the modern state and its relation with the individual has always been one of the very ticklish and controversial problems. Every civilized state is supposed to ensure proper development and protection of its subjects. State was also held responsible for adjusting and maintaining harmonious relations between different institutions existing within it. It was also supposed to govern mutual relations of the citizens. As Phyllis Doyles in his History of Political Thought says a state has three subjects to deal with, namely. “The nature and functions of man, his relation to the rest of universe which involves the consideration of meaning of life as a whole; emerging from the interaction of actual practice.” The states laid stress only on two of the above aspects leaving the third one, which practically remained untouched.

ETHICS AND RELIGION:

A good and healthy state ensures moral development of its citizens. It cannot afford to be either immoral or unmoral. However, it is the question of laying stress on moral aspect of life which is the most important problems. An immoral state has no place in the family of nations. Though theocracy established in the world of

today, a healthy state should believe in the doctrine of religious freedom of the subjects. It should normally allow freedom of conscience.

NECESSITY OF STATE:

The nature and character of the state has always been a serious problem for the political thinkers. In Greece, Sophists held that state is an unnatural and artificial arrangement. It should be obeyed only when absolutely necessary. It should be avoided as far as possible. But Plato and Aristotle believed that the state is natural and exists not only for the sake of life but also for the sake of good life. The state should be obeyed by all in their own interest. Still other philosophers believed that the state is necessary to a limited extent only. It should perform only limited functions and deal with general subjects such as defence, external affairs and finance etc. it should leave all other functions to the care of individuals since the individuals will look after them in a better way than the state. The Anarchists stand for a stateless society. They believe that the state is an evil institution which hinders the development of common man. It always stands with the powerful. Whether state authority is accepted in the self interest or on account of general desire of man to have collective happy life is still an open question.

ORIGIN OF STATE:

Not only the necessity of the state but its origin is also an unfolded mystery. Some thinkers believed that the state is the handiwork of God. Others maintained that it is the product of social contract. According to it state is a growth of family while for others it is the product of brute force. Rationalists cherish the idea that the state is a product of evolution or gradual growth or outcome of steady evolution. The evolutionary theory about the origin of state is the most acceptable theory today. It implies that in its present form the state is the evolute of various social factors brought together with the passage of time.

AUTHORITY IN THE STATE:

Another taxing and confusing problem is about the authority of the state. What right has the state got to tax the people? Should the subjects claim any natural rights such as those of life, liberty and property? Should they simply treat the state as a great Leviathan and humbly bow before it? What are the factors which are inductive and conducive to the subjects in the obedience of laws and the authority of the state? Can an individual be allowed to challenge the state and if yes then to what extent? What are the ultimate aims, objects and ends of the state? What is the legitimacy of the authority of the state?

IDEAL FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

An important problem of the political philosophy is about the ideal form of government which could be most acceptable to majority, if not to all the states of the agency through which the will of the state is expressed. Thus the Government is only means to an end and not end in itself. What is the best form of government? How should it be constituted? What should be the relation between the three organs of government namely the executive, the legislature and judiciary? How should a government promote harmony in the state so that the subjects do not conflict? Which is the real form of government: Theocracy, Aristocracy, Monarchy, and Democracy?

SOVEREIGNTY IN THE STATE:

An important problem for political thinkers has been about the location of sovereign authority in a state. Who should be treated as sovereign? Whose commands should be obeyed? What right has the sovereign authority got to execute and make laws? How far should the subjects be expected to bow before that sovereign authority? What are the rights and duties of a citizen in a state? What principles should govern the relations of the individuals with the sovereign?

CODE OF INTER-STATE CONDUCT:

Interstate relationships and the principles governing their code of conduct is an important problem about the state. Machiavelli believed that a state should not care for treaties and conventions. It should know how to play a fox and a lion, according to the needs and circumstances. There is no special importance of the international treaties and obligations. These should be respected by a state only as long as these were useful for collective welfare of the subjects. Grotius believed in the development and promotion of inter-national laws and in their codification. He laid the foundations of the International law in the modern sense of the term. Inter-state code of conduct, however, still remains a developing issue.

NATURE OF LAW:

The will of the state is expressed through the laws enacted and executed by the government. What should be the nature of laws, however, remains a complex problem. Is law simply a will or command of the ruler? It is a passionless reasoning? How should law and liberty be mutually adjusted so that both do not work at cross purposes? How should law protect the rights of citizens? Where lies the authority of the law?

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The many fold problems have been replied by the political thinkers and philosophers in their own way according to their own times, environment and conditions. They have discussed them in their own way. Thus, their philosophies were the product of their social environments. Machiavelli would not have been as much a practical thinker as he became, had he not seen the poor conditions of Italy with his eyes. Similarly, Hobbes would not have been as much despotic as his philosophy depicts him had he himself not seen bloodshed. His gloomy picture about the nature of man was direct reaction of environments in which he was brought up. Similarly, Rousseau's love for democracy was due to his life in Switzerland, the land of democratic institutions. Karl Marx supported the working classes since he personally saw the naked exploitation of the poor by the rich. Therefore, every political philosopher and his philosophy should be studied after taking into consideration the environments in which he expounded his ideas and philosophy. In fact both are inseparable.

CONCLUSION

Greatness of a political philosopher and soundness of his philosophy lies in his foresightedness and correct imagination of the future events. This foresightedness alone makes a political philosopher immortal. It along gives him repute, name as well as fame. History is a witness that only those philosophies were studied seriously who had broad vision and sound ideas. If the world still remembers Plato and Aristotle, even after centuries have passed since they gave their philosophy, this is only because of the soundness of their ideas which still provides solution to many of our own political problems.

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