

“शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के युग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्तमान विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।”

— इन्दिरा गांधी

“Education is a liberating force, and in our age it is also a democratising force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances.”

— Indira Gandhi



POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

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COURSE INTRODUCTION

This course aims to introduce the students to some major theoretical debates and concepts in political sociology, while situating these within contemporary political issues. A key thrust of the paper is towards developing a comparative understanding of political relationships through themes such as power, governance, state and society relationship. The course is divided into four themes, which we call blocks. Each block addresses a certain aspect of political sociology.

Block I: Understanding Political Sociology deals two units. The unit 1 of this block is polity and society, which deals the political domain and the relationship between polity and society. The unit 2 deals the nature and scope of political sociology. We discuss the emergence of political sociology, the conflicting notions of political sociology and scope of political sociology.


Block II: Basic Concepts looks at the various concepts of the political sociology. In unit 3, we look at the concepts of the State and Citizenship. We explore the ways in which state has been understood historically and how that affects its relationship with its citizens. We see that understanding of citizenship and the rights accorded to citizens' change with the changing role of the state. In unit 4, you understand the concept of power and authority. In unit 5, we discuss government, governance and governmentality. We look at the interlinkages between government, governance and governmentality. In unit 6, we discuss elites, ruling classes and masses. We begin this unit by pointing out the difference between elites and the masses. Then we will discuss different types of elites and the role of culture, social networks and knowledge in maintaining elitism. Then, we have explained the role of social institutions in the reproduction of elites.

Block III Political System deals three units. In this unit 7, you are going to learn about politics and political organization. You learn about the segmentary societies which generally lack a centralized system of authority. Here, the significance of kinship organisation is dealt with in relation to political control. We have discussed here the political system which is present in segmentary societies. We have also described the segmentary tribes in India. Finally, we have discussed the emergence of government in stateless societies. In this unit 8, we discuss totalitarian political system. We begin this unit Totalitarian: Form of Government, then we discuss rise of totalitarianism (1919-1939), fascism in Italy, Stalin's totalitarian state and Nazism in Germany. After this we discuss major traits of totalitarianism. In unit 9, we discuss democratic political system, origin and meaning of the concept of democracy. A democratic political system incorporates a few elements. While explaining these elements of a democratic political system the unit highlights the ideology, the structure and function, the political processes and the basis of legitimacy of a political system.

Block IV Everyday State and Local Structure of Power deals three units. In unit 10, we discuss the three inter-related concepts, namely, nation, state and society. We, then, relate this general discussion to the emergence of the Indian nation state. We examine the strategies and challenges associated with the task of nation-building in India. Finally, the last section deals with the issue of national integration. In Unit 11, the concept of local self-governance in any society is considered important as it is seen as the mechanism that is taking the democracy

to the grass root levels. Local governance is seen operating at the lowest levels of the society. The term self-governance in the local government more clearly emphasizes on the concept of people's participation in discharge of the functions of their daily life. In Unit 12 we discuss the link between social movements and resistance. We, then, define what a social movements and significance of various social movements' studies. We also focus on the resistance and interface between social movements and resistance.



The image features a large, faint watermark of the Shaheed Suhrawardy University logo in the background. The logo consists of a stylized circular emblem on the left and the university's name in Urdu and English on the right. The English text reads "Shaheed Suhrawardy University" and "THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY".

BLOCK 1
UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL
SOCIOLOGY



UNIT 1 POLITY AND SOCIETY*

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Political Domain
 - 1.2.1 What is Political System?
 - 1.2.2 The Notion of Power
- 1.3 Politics and Society
 - 1.3.1 Sociological Exploration
 - 1.3.2 Anthropological Exploration
- 1.4 State, Nation and Society
- 1.5 Society, Citizenship and Democracy
- 1.6 Globalization, Polity and Society
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Key Words
- 1.9 Further Readings
- 1.10 Specimen Answer to Check Your Progress

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After study of this unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the political domain;
- Distinguish between politics and polity;
- Define and distinguish between state, nation and society;
- Discuss the relations between Society, Citizenship and Democracy;
- Describe inter linkages between Globalization, Polity and Society.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will look at the relationship between polity and society. In this unit, we shall discuss sociological and anthropological experiences of polity and society. In the next section, we will discuss the three inter-related concepts, namely, nation, state and society. We, then, relate globalization, polity and society.

Let us try to explore the basic reasons behind the collective ways of living of humans in the society. Since known history of the evolution of Homo sapiens (humans) - why do they live with each other in small or large groups? To the answer of this we will find few theories explaining the reasons behind it. In the initial period the reasons of physical similarities and the fear from wild animals to form small groups and the stage was called as hunting and gathering societies.

But as soon as the people come together in the groups; the question of creating order and system rises in the group. In other words, who will lead the group and

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who will be the subordinates. We may call this as theory of force. According to this theory; the weak people were ruled by the powerful. But this was not very easy to reach such conclusions that who is weak and who is powerful. So such situation might have led to the condition of war of all against all. To rescue us out of such situation Thomas Hobbes provides his theory of social contract. This theory suggests that all individuals finally gave their consent to a situation where they all surrendered some of their freedoms; leading into the construction of others rights and they will be protected by a governing body. In simple words, people decided not to remain on the situation of war against everyone in the society; where no one felt secure, so they agreed to live together not encroaching the rights of others and this system or social order will be maintained by the ruler. The ruling systems which started primarily from clan or kinship group chieftain, feudal lords, rulers of pocket regions, monarchies (rule of king), aristocracy to gradually into the form of democracies.

Thus, we may infer that, 'state' is an important device which regulates our life today in a comprehensive and multiplicity of ways. Further, the 'state' as an agency - constitutes a system of order and a structure of power relation that control and regulate the whole society. Society on the other hand is a form of social group that bind people together for cooperation and for their existence. But these social groups in the form of different societies are governed and transformed by institutional mechanism of state. Through different rules, regulation and nature of governance it shapes the form of citizenship and social order. Society and individual are much influenced by the state and its different characters. As an institution, state performs to be a well powerful device that forms a kind of citizenship. Now let us discuss the political domain.

1.2 THE POLITICAL DOMAIN

Let us here identify the political domain in our social life. Polity term derived from the greek word "polis" which means an uncorrupted form of government in which a number of people together rule for the common good of the public. Thus, the term 'polity' is refer to the political system (Bealey, 1999: 261). For this purpose, we first discuss that the power dimension of social relationship is recognised as a **political system**. Then, we look at both the wider and restricted meanings of the term power.

1.2.1 What is a Political System?

We find that for establishing social relationships people interact with one another. In doing so, they very often pursue their self-interests. These self-interests sometimes run contrary to the interests of others as also to the interests of the society. To serve their own interests people use the means of power and control the interests of others. This situation invariably leads to conflict. For maintaining an orderly arrangement of social relationships, we need to both resolve the conflict and coordinate diverse activities of people. This is generally done by exercising power and imposing some kinds of constraint on people's behaviour. When social relationships are organised around the dimension of power, we say that we now move from the general area of social interaction to a more specialised area of power relationships. When the power relationships are systematised and ascribed specific functions, we speak of them as a political system. Thus, political systems develop whenever the relationships among individual and groups are organised

according to the exercise of power and its various manifestations. These might range from sporadic meetings of village elders in simple societies to highly organised states. In order to understand the specific manner in which power operates at the national level, it is appropriate for us to first understand the notion of power and its relation to the definition of political system in general. Then we can also look at its link with the specific case of nation-states.

1.2.2 The Notion of Power

The ability to do something or anything, or to act upon a person or things, is the definition of power as given in the dictionary. Viewed in this way, power is a basic concept in social sciences. It implies the influence that any person, group or organisation brings to bear on the actions of others. In this sense, anyone seeking to serve an interest by eliciting a response from others is described as exercising one's power. This means that one has social power, which can be used to make another person do what is wanted. This social power is essentially an aspect of inter-personal relationships.

Let us see what happens if we were to take the use of social power as a criterion to define the political system. This would imply that almost all human actions and interactions would fall in the domain of politics. This would be the widest possible definition of politics. The political scientists do not accept it. Let us see what they have to say.

Delimiting the Domain of Politics: The political scientists argue that this view of politics reduces it to the level of a very common place and broad subject. They, therefore, delimit the domain of politics and reserve the term 'politics' to designate the domain where social power is used in public sphere rather than in private sphere. Thus, for example, what happens within the family, in terms of power relations, is not included in the category of politics. When the family or its representative participates in the affairs of the neighbourhood or the village by influencing others' opinions and actions, it is described as politics. Viewed in this way, power and its various manifestations, such as, authority, coercion, force etc. are the recognised terms for discussing politics.

Concept of Authority: For further delimiting the special field of political relations, it is useful to apply the concept of authority. It refers to the legitimacy of the use of power. When power relationships in the public domain become regularized, and therefore to some extent predictable, they are also closely guided by the appropriate norms. People acknowledge the right of the political authority to exercise power. This implies the existence of a clear system of acceptance of the political institutions through which the authority or the legitimate use of power is exercised. In other words, power becomes authority because the actors involved in this relationship accept (to a greater or lesser degree) the legitimacy of those issuing commands. They are not physically compelled to comply, they do so willingly. Such systematized political relations are generally referred to as political systems

More Restricted View of Politics: Taking an even more restricted view of politics, sociologists, like Max Weber, confine the political relations to an organisation of individuals. For them, this organization is to be territorially defined. Secondly it has to be based on the ultimate sanction of physical force. In other words, Max Weber is referring to the notion of state as it has emerged in

the modern sense. For the purpose of describing political relations at the national level, we need to focus on this restricted meaning of politics.

But as sociologists, we should not forget that political relationships are also present in those societies, which do not have a specialized political institution like the state. In a large number of tribal societies, political authority is not based on territory. For example, the nomadic tribes like the Gujjar in India and the Roma or Gypsies in Europe have councils to regulate the behaviour of deviant members, to settle disputes, to provide social security to their members. Now let us discuss state, nation and society.

Check Your Progress 1

i) What are the two essential requirements for an orderly arrangement of social relationships?

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ii) What is a political system?

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iii) Define power and authority in the context of politics.

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iv) What do we mean when we say there is a restricted view of politics?

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1.3 STATE, NATION AND SOCIETY

While discussing politics in modern times, we generally talk of the state, the nation and the society. In the context of Western European experience, the three terms are somewhat coterminous. This is not so in the case of many other places. It is, therefore, essential that we first define these terms.

- i) **State:** The state is a political association, which is characterized by
 - a) territorial jurisdiction,
 - b) a more or less non-voluntary membership,
 - c) a set of rules which define the rights of its members by way of a constitution and
 - d) claims to legitimacy of power over its members.

The member of a state is usually referred to as a citizen. More often than not, the state is coterminous with nationality.

- ii) **Nation:** The term refers to group of people who have developed solidarity on the basis of common identity of culture, religion, language and state etc. The national identity of any group, which defines itself as such, may be based on any number of criteria, such as the place of residence, ethnic origin, culture, religion and language.
- iii) **Society:** It is the broadest category of social organisation which includes a large number of social institutions, like kinship, family, economy and polity. In this sense, the term society refers to social relationships which are interlinked. In interacting with each other people form social relationships. Repeated and regularised patterns of social relationships become institutionalised and hence as a relational concept society includes the study of social institutions.

On the other hand, as a substantial concept the term society is a general term which may encompass the state or the nation. It can also be coterminous with either or both of them. For example, the Germanic Society may include the German speaking people of East Germany, West Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland etc. Take another example, Hindu society may include the citizens of Nepal, India, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

The state may similarly include a number of societies. For example, the Indian State includes diverse societies based on region, religion or language. The tribal societies, such as the Bhil, the Gond or the Naga, form an integral part of the Indian State.

Having discussed the concepts of state, nation and society, we now turn to discuss sociological and anthropological exploration of polity and society.(ESO 12,BLOCK3, PP73-77)

Check Your Progress 2

- i) What is a society?

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ii) What is a nation?

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iii) Define state? Use about three lines for your answer.

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1.4 POLITICS AND SOCIETY

Sociological Exploration

The concept of state and its role within the society comes through the western philosophical debate, Aristotle, Plato, Tocqueville (1835), August Comte (1851), Morgan (1877) and Herbert Spencer (1884) tried to locate the state system and its relation to the society. Further Hobhouse (1905), Michael (1915), Pareto (1916), Max Weber (1922), Mannheim (1935), Parsons (1969) contributed significantly to understand polity and society relationships. Their analysis comes as a source to understand emergence of society and its role with the state. Political process in society is the result of process of social transformation and its claim of rights. Making of institution that implements their rules and orders, the system of state preserves plurality to connect themselves with different sections of society. In this context, the state often functions as a unit of society, which has responsibility to implement rights of the people. Later Karl Marx emphasize on the role of state to decide political economy of society.

The term “state” denotes the complex of organizations, personnel, regulations and practices through which political power is exercised in a territory (Borgatta and Montgomery; 2000:2996). Therefore, polity emerges in the form of power relation and its exercises; it has responsibility to mobilize resources for service of common people. Thus, the motto of the state and polity is to preserve the notion of welfare and lead the entire society toward progress and progressive

social change. But it has characteristics to make possible space within society for people of different interest and different social and economic background. Nature of the society often determines not just the role of polity but also influence the common public widely. State tries to use its legitimate power in order to fulfill the interest of common people and society at large. But the nature of politics and people's interest generally do not meet together. This becomes a cause of conflict, so the function of state and its polity comes under people's aspiration.

Anthropological Exploration

The relationship between polity and society has been a much debatable subject within the fields of Anthropological studies. Studies in Anthropology have been much excited to analyze the earlier form of state and its relationship to the society. In the subject matter of anthropological studies there are many evidences of existence stateless society (for example Nuers community studied by Evans Pritchard) in which the function of political system was not in organized form. It was in the form of objective rather it was in subjective and perform basis of social relation and shared cultural values. Later on the development of modern society brought a form of state and notion of nation state. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau tried to understand the need of society and social relation within the society in subjective forms.

1.5 SOCIETY, CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

Society is comprised of people who live together in an organized form following a set of norms and regulation. Various traditions in the form of caste, religion, ethnicity shapes the condition of citizenship. Citizenship is a political right of the people within a state territory. State exercises their power over its people by controlling the citizenship through different rules and regulations. The nature of democracy within which the modern idea of has emerged is decided by the kind of rights of an individual enjoys as a citizens of particular state. The tradition democratic has been much rooted in different institutions of society give rights to their citizen. The state through its policies and programme often define time and again that what citizen of a particular country avail rights over their life and resources available for them. But there are many dimension of citizenship at the political levels. We can see that there should be rights to avail citizenship but to living particular region and their claim over particular region does not make that a person avail a kind of citizenship is enjoying a dignified life. Their citizenship is depend on social condition and state intervention to uplift their conations.

Political Institutions: Issues and Perspective

To understand the relationship between polity and society, we need to discover what the issue characterizes political institutions is and make them more socially sensitive? In India various issues like poverty, caste system, ethnicity, regional influences and political institutions. The problem of governance in a diverse society has been attached with various issues. Roles and responsibility of government, judiciary, bureaucracy to deliver justice, equality in resources and opportunities has been a great challenge. In the same way, to make egalitarian society which is bounded by the various orthodoxical traditions and convince them to the modern way of dealing with the problem has been another challenge in India.

Political institutions in India had some extent follow the modern outlook to understanding issues. But nepotism, corruption has made political party corrupt and they by the time loose people's faith so that resulted in polices too where political parties is doing politics on caste and religion line rather than poverty elevation and employment generation. It means political institution has more attention on social issues related with traditions rather than long term issues of social transformation which needs a genuine effort.

Social Issues and Polity in India

Indian society is diverse in nature. Various forms of social categories and embedded in the form of social inequality. We can see it in caste, class, gender and ethnicity and also see the politics of interest in different communities. State through its polity tries to address question of inequality and deprivation.

Indian society is based on the caste system. It is based on the ideological principles of hierarchy and inequality. Indian democracy has developed the questioning of caste based inequality and discrimination in the form of exploitation, humiliation and other forms of deprivation. The caste question is always been a challenge for the government. As the exploitative character of caste is more invisible than visible and many forms of exploitation is yet to come to recognize theoretically it in Indian society. There are many reforms in the society happened that addressed the caste inequality such as reservation policy that have taken the key idea from an affirmative action of American social policy to bring reform in the larger social and economic pattern. The central objective of this reservation policy has been to eradicate social inequality and discriminations exist with Indian social structure. In this context, there are several measures have been taken to the question of social inequality as well as dogmas of different social values. But later on, by the various movements against caste reservation it is generalized within the society that the reservation gives opportunities in jobs for just economic upliftment. This is actually challenges against policy makers that expose a lineal to understand nature about Indian society and its contradictions. Thus, the implementation of such policies at different levels has been a challenging not just for the policy but also for government.

Likewise gender question in Indian society has its own complexities, patriarchy which is known as a root cause of exploitation of women. Many scholars have stated that the patriarchy has its own cultural and social root that still maintain its structure and cultural relation. It is religiously sanctioned and ideologically backed institution exist entire Indian society like other parts of the world. In India various social reforms happened during the colonial period that tried bringing a new social and cultural condition for women. Class is a social category that is based on income. In our society class wise inequality is widespread across social categories i.e. gender, ethnicity, caste etc. in the political discourse class based social position is related to the ruler in all aspects.

1.6 GLOBALIZATION, POLITY AND SOCIETY

The process of globalization is not a new phenomenon but with the increasing use of technology, internet and rapid transformation has given a new character of globalization in which there is cosmopolitisation as well as resistance against global culture. This is also resulted in orthodox movement that form a sense among marginalized to return towards the conservative roots of tradition forms

of development. We can see this in the pattern of mercerization of yoga, pilgrimage and ayurveda. It is said that space of government is shrinking with the new global tendencies emerged in business and migration but at the same time there is an urge for nationalist ideologies.

Anthony Giddens (1990) has suggested that the larger effect of modernity is globalization. With different forms and patterns of Globalization, Time and Space has redefined not just the social life but also cultural practices. This is called time and space distancing. According to Giddens increasing interdependence is globalization. This interdependence is in social and economic relations.

The process of globalization has also redefined the role of state and its all functional devices and reflects through different ways to approach the issue of development. The process of globalization is the result of neo liberal idea of policy based on economic development. This has also changed the nature of governance. We can see it in the increasing role of Non-Government Organization (NGOs) in policies and programmes. On the other side globalization has assaulted local market and social traditions to be replaced by the modern market and cultural practices. On the other side, it has given a global connection to every issue of social cultural development. We can see it in the case of climate change and human rights issues.

In several development programmes led by the central and state government in India, it is observed that there is an increasing tendency to create a global scale of poverty, migration, employment and women exploitation and minority issues.

Here we can see it in the changing nature of governance including the pattern of administration is no more to administer rather than facilitator of policy and programme recommended by the global agencies. Although this has connected to developmental policies at worldwide, but it seems that it is moreover with the economic growth rather than tackling age old social questions. Therefore, several human rights movements going on at different parts of India led strong and militant struggle to save local resources from the big and multinational corporations.

1.7 LET US SUM UP

This chapter dealt with various aspects of the issue of polity and society. Polity and society is linked not only with the policy programme and governance but it is also with the people's struggle for their rights and state responsibility towards addressing the issues. Post colonial period has led new challenges in the pattern of governance. Here societies are not only poor and illiterate and with poor infrastructure but also it has conservatives' social traditions that are main barrier of social progress. We can see it in casteism, discrimination against women, ethnic community etc. Although after India's independence, several programmes started to transform people's life but they fail to reach their goal. Post 1991 era started new character of governance which is more collaborative to private players that make administrator as CEO. There are changing notions of policies and programmes on the one side it has global character on the other side strong struggle for their tradition and local resources is contemporary phenomena that is guiding the relationship between polity and society.

1.8 KEY WORDS

- Nation** : A group of people identifying themselves as such on the basis of political and cultural commonality
- Nation-building** : The process of development of national identity
- Political System** : Those arrangements of society, formal or informal, which are based on power and wherein authoritative decisions are made
- State** : A political association characterised by territorial jurisdiction, non-voluntary membership, definable rights and duties of members and monopoly over legitimate use of power

1.9 FURTHER READINGS

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1.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress

- i) Co-ordination of people's different activities and resolution of conflict emanating from clash of interests are the two requirements for an orderly arrangement of social relationships.
- ii) A political system refers to a system of social relationships among individuals or groups organised around the exercise of power and its various manifestations. The manifestations refer to authority, coercion and force.
- iii) Power is the ability to achieve whatever effect is desired. It implies the influence any person or group or organisation has on the action of others. Authority is the legitimisation of power. Both the concepts are used in the context of politics.
- iv) A restricted view of politics confines the definition of political relations to an organisation of individuals who live in a particular territory. This organisation is also based on the sanction of physical force. This restricted view fails to take note of such political relations, which are not territorially

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Society refers to social relationships that are inter-linked. It is also a category of social organisation, which includes a large number of social institutions like kinship, family, economy, polity and communities and association.
- ii) A nation refers to groups of people who have developed solidarity based on common identity of culture, religion, language and state.
- iii) A state refers to a political association, which is characterised by territorial jurisdiction, non-voluntary membership, and a constitution. It also claims to have legitimacy of power over its members.

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UNIT 2 POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY: NATURE AND SCOPE*

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Emergence of Political Sociology
- 2.3 Meaning of Political Sociology
- 2.4 Scope of Political Sociology
- 2.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.6 Key Words
- 2.7 Further Readings
- 2.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After study of this unit, you will be able to understand:

- Describe the emergence of political sociology;
- Discuss the meaning of political sociology;
- Discuss the scope of political sociology.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the earlier unit of this block, we have discussed polity and society. In this unit we shall discuss the emergence of political sociology, the meaning, nature and scope of political sociology.

Political sociology is sub field within contemporary sociology and political science. It focuses on political organization and institutions, on power and authority, and on the behaviour of the ruler and subject. It is a broad subfield that connects political science and sociology. It is essential to understand the distinction between sociology and political science; and the distinction and relationship between the sociology of politics and political sociology.

Smelser proposed four criteria for scientific discipline i.e. dependent variables, independent variables, logical ordering (cause effects relationships, models and theoretical frame work), research methods. He differentiates between sociology and political science. Sociology is defined as the discipline that “tends to opt for social structural conditions as explanatory variables.” Political science is the discipline that opts for political –structural conditions as explanatory variables. According to Bendix and Lipset, political science starts with the state and examines how it affects society while political sociology starts with society and examines how it affects the state. This distinction will help us to understand the scope of political sociology.

The political sociology may be used as a synonym for ‘sociology of politics’ but it may not. Giovanni Sartori makes distinction between sociology of politics and

political sociology. The scope of political sociology is broader than the sociology of politics. The vision of sociology of politics is narrow; it views only one part of the phenomenon and ignores the rest.

The sociology of politics is a sub field of sociology. It is a sociological appraisal of politics. It treats phenomenon as dependent variable and accepts the underlying social phenomenon as the explanatory variable. It deals with the non political reasons why the people act the way they do in political life. Whereas, the political sociology is an attempt to understand the political phenomenon by necessarily relating it to the social determinants. It is the examination of the links between politics and society, between social structures and political structures, and between social behaviour and political behaviour. Thus, it is born when the sociological and political-logical approaches are combined at their point of intersection. It includes the political reasons why people act the way they do.

According to Giovanni Sartori, “Political sociology is an interdisciplinary hybrid attempting to combine social and political explanatory variables.” It is a connecting bridge between sociology and political science. It believes in a two way relationship between sociology and political science, giving equal emphasis on social and political variables. Let us take example of political party system. Here political sociology does not explain the working of party system only in terms of its reflection of the socio economic scene, but also investigates how the society is as much conditioned by the party system.

2.2 EMERGENCE OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

‘Politics’ was the famous work of Aristotle, which indicated that politics is derived from Greek word *Polis* which means the city-states, that which is concerned with the affairs of state, government and administration. As originated in Greek theory, political science was actually political philosophy based on theoretical interpretations, descriptive ideas, speculative options, abstract and value laden thoughts, or in other words, a ‘normative study’. Political sociology can trace its origins to the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, among others, but it only emerged as a separate subfield within sociology after World War II. Many of the landmark works of the 1950s and 1960s centered on micro questions about the impact of class, religion, race/ethnicity, or education on individual and group-based political behaviour. Beginning in the 1970s, political sociologists increasingly turned toward macro topics, such as understanding the sources and consequences of revolutions, the role of political institutions in shaping political outcomes, and large-scale comparative-historical studies of state development. Today both micro- and macro scholarship can be found in political sociology. While political sociology has often been described as divergent, abstract, and fragmented, it continues to be an important subfield in sociology because a number of themes consistently explored by political sociologists are particularly relevant to the development of a sociological perspective.

At least four trends can be said to characterize the history and development of political sociology. The first trend is the classical period. It existed during Greek and Roman times when man was viewed as primarily a political animal. Later, during the Holy Roman Empire, he was redefined in purely ecclesiastic terms and considered an extension of God. Political philosophers like Plato, Aristotle,

Cicero, St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas are representatives of the classical period of political sociology.

The second trend can be observed during the Enlightenment period. It consisted of a great debate between the political philosophers of two distinct schools. The first school consisted of Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, later followed by Saint-Simon, Comte and Karl Marx. They all made an important distinction between society and the state. The other school consisted of philosophers like Machiavelli, Hobbes, Burke, Hegel, Bonald and Maistre, who did not differentiate between society and politics and favoured the hegemony and legitimacy of the traditional monarchy and Church. In addition, the contribution of Max Weber, Maciver and others towards the emergence of political sociology have been unique.

The third trend in the emergence of political sociology is related to the role of elites in society. The term elite was introduced in the seventeenth century to describe standards of excellence. Later it was extended to refer to superior social groups, such as highly successful military units and upper ranks of the aristocracy. It was extensively used by two Italian sociologists, Pareto and Mosca. Generally, elite theorists argued that history was not created by ideas, or by the masses or by silently working forces but by small groups of individuals who exerted themselves from time to time. Elite theorists maintained that throughout history there always had been a distinguishable stratum of rulers who comprised a small portion of society and, due to their monopoly over critical resources, were able to maximize effective organization and control. The resources they commanded military forces, ecclesiastical rule, economic domination, or political power varied from society to society and from one period to another.

The fourth trend in the emergence of political sociology is the contemporary period. This period is more empirical and analytical. It emphasises on developing empirically verifiable generalisations linking society and politics, with theory building as the central focus of development. Many of the most prominent practitioners of contemporary political theory are leading political sociologists like Lipset, Greer, Inkles, Moore, Kornhauser, Mills, Hunter, Janowitz, Lazarfeld, Eisenstadt, Selnick, Rokkan, Gusfield and Macrae. These political sociologists have been creatively concerned and they have given emphasis as a rigorous and mature social scientific discipline.

2.3 MEANING OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

The sociologists do not agree on the precise meaning of political sociology. There are following conflicting notions related to the meaning of the political sociology:

- 1) It considers political sociology as the science of the state. To define political sociology as the science of the state is to place it in a classification of the social sciences, which is based on the nature of the societies studied? Greer and Orleans, Jellinck and Marcel Prelot are more akin to this notion.
- 2) Political Sociology is the interaction process between society and politics. Bendix and Lipset say "Political science starts with the state and examines how it affects society while political sociology starts with the society and examines how it affects state."

- 3) Political sociology as advocated by Maurice Duverger is more modern. It holds that political sociology is the science of power, of government, of authority of command, in all human societies (including the national societies). Many contemporary writers accept this definition of political sociology with a few modifications; notably among them are Max Weber, Reymond Aron, George Vedel, George Burdeau and Maurice Duverger.
- 4) Political sociology is that it is integration of sociology and political science, which presupposes specialization. Political Sociology, thus, could be styled as the interdisciplinary progeny of the more established parent disciplines sociology and political science and specializes in the interactions and linkages that exist between these two fields. It is more systematic for it is intended to build connecting bridges, i.e. interdisciplinary hybrids, across the various boundaries.

2.4 SCOPE OF POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY

As a discipline, political sociology is at the intersection of sociology and political science: It addresses issues related to politics, similarly to political science. However, it differs from political science in a variety of ways. Political sociologists tend to emphasize the relationships between political institutions and other social institutions and society in general, rather than focusing on political institutions in their own right. Political sociology tends to have a broader and also historical scope. The main focus of the discipline has been on the political processes which take place within human societies. Political sociology deals with the relationship between state and society on the basis of mutual interaction and with power as the ultimate aim of all political processes. Political sociology deals with the study of the social basis of political competition (including social identities), between social and political attitudes (including political culture), processes of political engagement and competition (including elections and protest politics), the social basis for the formation, change, and maintenance of political institutions (including democracy and welfare states). It has been a relatively new field of study which is still developing. Various political sociologists define its scope in several different ways.

According to Greer and Orleans, "Political Sociology is concerned with the structure of the state, the nature and the conditions of the legitimacy; the nature of the monopoly of force, and peoples relations with their respective states. In other words, the scope of Political Sociology is held to concern with state, power, consensus and legitimacy, participation and representation and the relationship between economic and political development.

According to Lipset and Bendix the scope of Political Sociology is concerned with voting behaviour of communities and their nation; concentration of economic power and political decision-making, ideologies of political movements, and interest groups. In dealing with these fields, Political Sociology has a vast scope because it studies the politics of power in relation to all aspects of social relations.

Political Sociology studies power, authority and legitimacy of state in relation to social relations. It involves the activities of bureaucracy, interest groups, political participation of the people, conflict and conflict-resolution, political culture and political socialization, decision-making, political movements, social change, violence and revolution and some other areas/fields.

Maurice Duverger observes that Political Sociology centers around two facets of power and authority i.e., both oppressor and integrator. To him its scope consists of: political structures in which the dialectic of antagonisms and integration unfolds, the causes of conflict and integration in society; and the way the conflicts are resolved and integrated. Maurice Duverger states that: (i) political sociology is the study of power in every human grouping, not just in the nation-state. Each of these groups, therefore, serves as a structure, a framework, for the enactment of conflicts and integration. Political structures include physical structures (geographical and demographic), and social structures (technical skills, institutions and cultures), (ii) Political sociology analyses the causes of political antagonisms. The causes of political antagonisms may occur between individuals as well as between groups; (iii) Political sociology is also the study of conflict and integration. Conflict naturally tends to lead to integration, and antagonisms tend, by their very development, to self-elimination and the subsequent bringing about of social harmony. So the scope of political sociology includes political structures, the causes of political antagonisms and the flow from antagonism to integration.

Charles Tilly, related the construction of the national state to collective action, which also has direct consequences for the understanding of citizenship. Although he considers the construction of the state as a process that is potentially independent of other social forces. Tilly (1975, 1986,) analyses it in relation to the historically variable dynamics of collective action, trying to take into account the numerous reactions, mobilizations and negotiations on the part of common people to the assault of a centralizing and resource-greedy state. The available range of collective action varies greatly as the processes of state construction, capitalist expansion, urbanization and coercion (especially war) advance. Thus, the national state implied a great transformation in the ways people acted together in pursuit of their interests: since there was greater dependence on decisions taken at the national level, the most relevant levels of political power for the interests of the common citizen were significantly dislocated, requiring new means and new goals for collective action. On the one hand, he wants to determine the capacity of agency and creativity of individuals in their mobilizations; and, on the other hand, the structural constraints that limit the possibilities – or, in his words, the repertoire– of collective action.

Thus, Ulrich Beck (1992,1999), for example, claims that global processes produce a rupture in modernity, whose driving force (individualization) has profound consequences for collective identities such as the dissolution of patterns, codes and rules established by a national society. In other words, politics is not exclusively or principally found in institutions such as parliaments, parties, unions etc. It is now found at the centre of private life, since the microcosm of the conduct of personal life is interrelated with the macrocosm of global problems (such as the environmental issue). Thus, politics in the nation-state structure is no longer the starting point for a new territory of the political, the geopolitical or the global risk society.

Different perspectives (Delanty and Kumar,2006; Smith, 2010 [2001]; Young et al., 2007) have been stressing the perseverance of nation and nationalism as social phenomena of restored interest, the former as a subjective community and the latter as a social force informing in a theoretical and practical way both social movements and political agendas of states. In the studies on political culture, the

relationship between socialization processes and political behaviour also becomes central, based on the acknowledgement that the actors' answers to objective social situations are given by means of subjectively intervened orientations.

Another theme of the political sociology research agenda, which directly articulates the theoretical issue of social change with the state/society relationship, concerns social movements. It is possible to identify at least three major theoretical lines that explain social movements (Alonso, 2009), all of which had to be adapted in order to face contemporary challenges, such as collective mobilizations reaching global scale, involving violence and tending to concentrate on identity issues. The first theoretical line is expressed in the so-called resource mobilization theory (McCarthy and Zald, 1977), which values rationality over explanations of collective mobilizations in terms of collective emotions. The two other major theoretical lines – the so-called political process theory and the new social movements' theory – derive from the weakness of Marxist debates about possibilities of revolution. Despite the fact that the former is devoted to a theory of political mobilization while the latter is founded on a cultural change approach, both stand up against either determinism and economicist perspectives on collective action or the idea of a universal historical subject, preferring macro-historical perspectives, which analytically combine politics and culture in the social movements explanation. With reference to the political process perspective, Sidney Tarrow (1998), for instance, argues that when there are no changes in 'the political opportunity structure', that is, in the formal and informal dimensions of the political environment, then new channels of demand expression are opened and created for social groups outside the polity. This may occur through political and administrative institutions' increased permeability to civil society claims, caused by some crisis in the political coalition in power; by changes in the political interaction between state and society, particularly reduced oppression of protest; and by the presence of potential allies (Kriesi et al., 1995). Mobilization is grounded in a conflict between different parts, one of which occupies the state for the moment, while the other speaks on behalf of the society. Since such positions are variable, in as much as actors move from one to another, the analyses have to overcome the conventional barriers which define 'state' and 'society' as two coherent and separate entities. In its turn, although it is not considered a homogeneous perspective, bestowed with a stable unity, one can discern a common postulate among the main theorists of the so-called new social movements – Alain Touraine, Jürgen Habermas and Alberto Melucci. If, on the one hand, each of them maintains the macro-historical approach and the association between social change and conflict forms, on the other hand so too does each consist in the elaboration of an effective cultural interpretation of social movements. Notwithstanding the fact that each has his own modernity theory, they more or less share the same central argument that, throughout the 20th century, a macro-structural change would have modified the nature of capitalism, whose centre would no longer be industrial production and work. Labour conflicts would have been satisfied, either through democratic institutions, such as rights expansion movements, or capitalist institutions, like salary increases, and would have become eminently cultural, exercised through the control of information by a technocracy. There would be a politicization of private life. So the class movements would give way to new expressive, symbolic and identity movements, such as feminism, environmental and students' movements. The enhancement of global processes and the related crisis of the nation-state also pose inspiring challenges for the political sociology of social movements. It is necessary to

face the shift of scale in activism, from the national/local to the transnational/global level, as well as its professionalization, which can be observed in the fact that in various western countries social movements have become bureaucratized, converted into parties, acquired an enterprise culture or assumed the administration of public/state services (Rootes, 1996). Moreover, contemporary protests involve activists and themes that cross boundaries and are often directed towards multilateral institutions or to transnational public opinion. No less important is the weakness of the association between new social movements and post materialist agendas caused by the recent wave of ethnic, religious, communitarian and conservative mobilizations.

The re-emergence of the idea of ‘civil society’(Alexander, 1993) and the greater value attributed to debates on the ‘public sphere’ that goes along with it, may represent relevant theoretical alternatives to the more historical orientations of political sociology that are mainly focused on the problem of the nation-state. Not coincidentally, perhaps, there are efforts to give greater historical support and breadth to these alternatives (Cohen and Arato,1992), even though their Eurocentrism is still strongly criticized (Hann and Dunn, 1996). In any case, it is true that these alternatives may seem ‘minimalist ‘from the viewpoint of the problem of collective identity linked to the nation-state, in so far as they suggest that people should basically accept the procedural rules of open and equal debate between individuals bearing interests (Eder, 2003). However, perhaps what is most relevant is to observe that this revaluing of ideas of ‘civil society’ and the ‘public sphere’ has led to significant redefinitions of relations between state and society from the latter’s perspective. This may lead, in some cases, to the return of separate views of state and society and therefore, in extreme cases, to compromising the specificity of political sociology as a research tradition.

Check Your Progress

- 1) Explain the emergence of political sociology.

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- 2) Elaborate the meaning of political sociology.

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- 3) Discuss the scope of political sociology.

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2.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have tried to trace origin of political sociology and how it became a sub discipline that connects political science and sociology. We also tried to explore the conflicting notion related to the meaning of political sociology and also discussed the scope of political sociology.

2.6 KEY WORDS

- Nation- state** : A historically specific form of the state, developed initially in Europe and the US from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries and spread to the rest of the world with decolonization in the twentieth century, which attempts to integrate people according to shared cultural norms.
- Transnational** : Referring to relations or processes which cross national boundaries, by - passing the nation - state.

2.7 FURTHER READINGS

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2.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Emergence of Political sociology can be traced from the writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and Max Weber, among others, but it only emerged as a separate entity within sociology after World War II. There are four major trends which characterize the history and development of political sociology i.e. classical period, enlightenment period, role of elites and contemporary period.
- 2) Although sociologists don't have consensus on the precise meaning of political sociology and there are certain conflicting notions related to it. These notions broadly discussed political sociology as the science of state, interaction process between society and politics, science of power, government and authority and an integration of sociology and political science.
- 3) The scope of Political Sociology is held to concern with state, power, consensus and legitimacy, participation and representation and the

relationship between economic and political development. In dealing with these fields, Political Sociology has a vast scope because it studies the politics of power in relation to all aspects of social relations.

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