

State of the new phase in the development



**ASSIGN
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State as an instrument of power, as an agent of social welfare and a bulwark against authoritarianism too has undergone a total change. “ The expanded dimensions of Political Science, therefore, present a vast mosaic which can be understood partly historically and partly analytically.” As said earlier, the warp and woof of the history of political thought is constituted by the writings of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Bodin, Locke, Rousseau, Mill, Burke and Marx. For centuries the study of Political Science was riveted upon the seminal ideas of these illustrious masters who were not academics, but men of practical or public life.

They went deep into the basic questions of purposes for which human societies exist and their relations to the purposes of human life. Theirs was a quest for just and happy life for which men assembled together in a territorially integrated society. They had no vested interests in accelerating or impeding the progress of Political Science as a discipline. They were all liberal thinkers and the last in the line of this glorious intellectual tradition was perhaps John Stuart Mill (1806-1873). The end of the liberal tradition marked the phenomenal expansion of the university system and, consequently, the beginning of the new phase in the development of Political Science. Political scholars occupying prestigious university chairs, departing from the traditional approach, emphasised the need to develop a scientific approach to natural and social affairs. This they did by “ expounding the virtues of a scholarly way of analysing politics, whereupon, by comparison, any more traditional sort of speculation about public affairs appeared to be less incisive or plainly mistaken.

” As years rolled by, great quantity of scholarly work accumulated and the new expertise of academicians as a class became so highly regarded that “ for political scientists at least, it seemed reasonable to honour the old tradition for its historical stature” than for any relevance to the contemporary society. The most amazing consequence of it all is that a “ large number of American citizens have come to learn about public life from a particular aggregation of academic specialists rather than, as in the past, from a tradition based upon the works of great men in many walks of life.” Knowledge was, thus, compartmentalised in the tighter moulds of rigidity. The conditions of work in the universities, prejudices, ideologies, processes of thinking deliberately generated by powerful social and economic interests, in short, the “ contemporary socio-economic milieu, more than dispassionate comprehension of public affairs, have tended to determine the outlook of specialists and experts in all social sciences including Political Science.” As a result, political scientists, as a group, tend to endorse “ certain views of the polity as opposed to others.” Just before the Second World War there was a comprehensive view of American Society “ which seemed suitable for remaining loyal to science, and at the same time, for assimilating the results of its exercise.

” But John Dewey and Karl Popper, neither of them a political scientist, “ reflected a new and tough-minded version of liberalism which worked its way into the discipline of Political Studies.” Karl Popper provided the new philosophy of science, in terms much more specific than those of Dewey. The most authentic statement of his philosophy, linking it directly to democratic politics, appeared in *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945). All

statements of science, said Popper, are scientific to the extent that it is possible to associate them with unambiguous evidence. That is a belief is entitled to be called “ scientific if it is expressed in terms that can be clearly proved or disproved, as distinguished from moral. and religious statements couched in terms of values that cannot be supported or contradicted.” But it is very difficult to prove what we believe about humanity, society or nature.

Science, in short, is a matter of methods and not results. Indeed a scientist’s work may produce very few of the latter. But if he faithfully employs the proper methods, his findings will be “ maximally reliable”. Popper, in short, suggested how social research might be conducted and justified within a liberal society. In the wake of the Second World War and deep into the 1960s, all the noted political scientists, sociologists, commentators on public affairs were of the opinion that ideologies “ were, or ought to be, considered properly defunct.” The crux of their argument was that any belief in ideology precludes scientific social research and “ leads only to political disaster.”

Thus, the transition from dispassionate contemplation of public affairs to a study of politics according to rules laid down by the scientific community marked the first phase in the acquisition of new dimensions. The old subject matter, that is, the study of society as a moral organism and the objectives of the study as to how far the state helped to live a moral and, therefore, a happy life were abandoned.

A new concept of society or state emerged stripped of all moral precepts and considerations. But it was in the field of methodological assumptions that the study of politics underwent a revolutionary change. The knowledge of the nature of man, of nature and its relation with man, intuition, historical

perspective and the external varieties social life as discovered by great thinkers were deemed totally obsolete and “ unserviceable tools” with which a society could be studied, much less understood. Scientific tools of enquiry free from the constricting influence of moral values or values of any kind came to be accepted as the means of exploring the new dimensions of Political Science. The one school which made “ a big splash was behavioural school which tried to give to the study of Political Science a new orientation, a new image and a new meaning.”