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MPS-001

**MASTER OF ARTS
(POLITICAL SCIENCE) (MPS)**

Term-End Examination

December, 2024

MPS-001 : POLITICAL THEORY

Time : 3 Hours

Maximum Marks : 100

*Note : Attempt total **five** questions, selecting at least **two** questions from each Section. Answer each question in about **500** words. Each question carries **20** marks.*

Section—I

1. What is Political Theory ? Explain.
2. Trace the historical background of Democracy.
3. Explain the meaning and significance of Rights.
4. What is liberalism ? Discuss its characteristics.
5. Explain the rise and growth of nationalism.

Section—II

6. Discuss John Rawls' theory of justice.
7. Explain the concept of multiculturalism and its critique.
8. Elaborate upon the notion of citizenship.
9. Discuss feminism and its different forms.
10. Explain the significance of civil society in democracy.

Section—I

1. What is Political Theory ? Explain.

Answer : Political Theory is a branch of political science that studies the fundamental ideas, principles, and concepts related to politics and government. It deals with questions about the nature of the state, the purpose of government, the meaning of justice, liberty, equality, rights, authority, power, and democracy. Political theory not only explains how political systems function but also examines how they should function according to moral and ethical standards.

Political theory has both descriptive and normative dimensions. The descriptive aspect focuses on explaining political institutions, political behavior, and governance systems as they exist. The normative aspect evaluates political systems based on values such as justice, fairness, and equality. It asks important questions like: What is the best form of government? What rights should citizens have? What makes authority legitimate? Thus, political theory connects political facts with moral philosophy.

The origin of political theory can be traced back to ancient Greece. Plato, in his famous work *Republic*, discussed justice and the ideal state ruled by philosopher-kings. Aristotle studied different forms of government and classified them as monarchy, aristocracy, and polity. He believed the state exists to promote good life.

During the medieval period, Thomas Aquinas combined political thought with Christian theology and emphasized the moral role of the state. In the modern period, political theory developed significantly. John Locke introduced the theory of natural rights—life, liberty, and property—and supported limited government. Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed the idea of social contract and popular sovereignty. Karl Marx criticized capitalism and highlighted class struggle and economic inequality.

In the 20th century, political theory expanded to include new approaches such as behavioralism, feminism, environmentalism, and multiculturalism.

Contemporary political theory addresses issues like human rights, globalization, social justice, and democracy.

The importance of political theory lies in guiding political action and public policy. It helps leaders frame laws and institutions based on sound principles. It also educates citizens about their rights and responsibilities. Without political theory, politics would lack direction and moral foundation.

In conclusion, political theory is the systematic study of political ideas and values. It helps us understand political systems, evaluate them critically, and strive for a just and equitable society.

2. Trace the historical background of Democracy.

Answer : Democracy means “rule by the people.” The term comes from the Greek words demos (people) and kratos (rule). The historical background of democracy dates back to ancient civilizations, especially ancient Greece.

The earliest known democracy developed in Athens during the 5th century BCE. In Athens, citizens directly participated in decision-making through assemblies. Cleisthenes introduced reforms that strengthened citizen participation and reduced aristocratic power. However, this democracy excluded women, slaves, and foreigners.

Later, the Roman Republic practiced a form of representative government where citizens elected officials. Although it was not a pure democracy, it influenced later democratic systems.

During the Middle Ages, democracy declined due to feudalism and monarchies. Kings held supreme power. However, the signing of the Magna Carta in 1215 limited the power of the English king and established the principle that even a king is subject to law.

The Renaissance revived democratic ideas. John Locke argued that natural rights are protected by government. The American Revolution was governed by democratic principles.

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Democratic ideas gained strength during major revolutions. The American Revolution led to the formation of a democratic republic based on constitutional principles. The French Revolution spread the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. In the 19th and 20th centuries, democracy expanded worldwide. Voting rights were gradually extended to all adult citizens, including women. After World War II, many countries adopted democratic constitutions. The United Nations promoted democracy and human rights globally.

Today, democracy mainly exists in representative form, where people elect leaders through free and fair elections. Though challenges like corruption and inequality remain, democracy continues to be valued for promoting participation, accountability, and protection of rights. Democratic principles were put into practice during the American Revolution and the French Revolution. These revolutions promoted ideals of liberty, equality, and constitutional governance.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, democracy expanded gradually with the extension of voting rights, including women's suffrage and universal adult franchise. After World War II, many nations adopted democratic constitutions, and the United Nations began promoting democratic governance and human rights worldwide.

Today, democracy mainly exists in representative form, where citizens elect their leaders through free and fair elections. Although challenges such as corruption, inequality, and political instability remain, democracy continues to be valued as the most legitimate and participatory system of government.

3. Explain the meaning and significance of Rights.

Answer : Rights are claims or entitlements that individuals possess in society and that are recognized and protected by law. They are essential for human dignity, freedom, and equality. Rights allow individuals to live freely, express themselves, and participate in social and political life. Without rights, individuals would be subject to the arbitrary power of rulers or dominant groups. Therefore, rights form the foundation of a civilized and democratic society.

Rights can be divided into several types. Natural rights are inherent and belong to individuals by birth. John Locke identified life, liberty, and property as natural rights that governments should protect. Legal rights are granted and enforced by the state through laws and constitutions. Civil liberties include freedom of speech, religion, movement, and association. Political rights include the right to vote and participate in governing. The right to life, liberty, and property are

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In modern times, cultural and environmental rights are also recognized as important for human development.

Rights are closely linked with duties. Every right carries a corresponding responsibility. For example, the right to freedom of speech must be exercised without spreading hatred or violence. The right to property must not harm the interests of society. Thus, rights and duties are complementary and ensure social harmony. If individuals demand rights without fulfilling duties, social order may be disturbed.

Rights also require proper legal recognition and enforcement. A right without legal protection becomes meaningless. That is why modern democratic states include fundamental rights in their constitutions. The Constitution of India guarantees fundamental rights such as equality before law, freedom of expression, and protection against exploitation. Similarly, at the global level, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes basic human rights for all people irrespective of nationality, race, religion, or gender.

The significance of rights lies in protecting individuals from arbitrary government action and social discrimination. Rights promote equality by ensuring that all citizens are treated fairly. They empower marginalized and weaker sections of society, such as women, minorities, and economically disadvantaged groups. Rights also promote social justice and create opportunities for individuals to develop their talents and abilities.

In a democracy, rights are essential for meaningful participation. Freedom of speech allows citizens to express opinions. The right to vote ensures political participation. Freedom of association allows people to form organizations and movements. Thus, rights strengthen democratic governance and accountability.

In conclusion, rights are fundamental conditions for individual freedom, dignity, and social progress. They maintain personal freedoms and ensure justice, equality, and human development.

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4. What is liberalism ? Discuss its characteristics.

Answer : Liberalism is a political ideology that emphasizes individual freedom, equality, and limited government. It emerged in Europe during the Enlightenment period as a reaction against absolute monarchy, feudal privileges, and religious domination over politics. Liberalism advocates that individuals are rational beings capable of making their own decisions, and therefore they should be free from unnecessary state interference.

The foundations of liberalism were laid by John Locke, who argued that individuals possess natural rights such as life, liberty, and property. According to Locke, government is created through a social contract to protect these rights, and if it fails to do so, people have the right to resist it. Later, John Stuart Mill strongly defended individual liberty and freedom of expression. In his work *On Liberty*, Mill argued that freedom of thought and discussion is essential for social and intellectual progress.

The main characteristics of liberalism include:

1. **Individual Liberty:** Liberalism places the individual at the center of political life. It believes that every person should have maximum freedom to develop their personality.
2. **Equality before Law:** All individuals are equal in the eyes of the law. No one should receive special privileges based on birth, caste, religion, or wealth.
3. **Rule of Law:** Government actions must be based on law, and laws must apply equally to all citizens.
4. **Limited Government:** State power should be restricted by a constitution to prevent misuse of authority.
5. **Constitutionalism:** Liberalism supports a written constitution that guarantees fundamental rights.
6. **Representative Democracy:** People should elect their leaders through free and fair elections.
7. **Secularism:** Religion and politics should be separate to ensure religious freedom.
8. **Free Market Economy:** Classical liberalism supports private property and economic freedom with minimal state interference.

Over time, liberalism evolved. Classical liberalism emphasized minimal government and economic freedom. However, modern liberalism recognizes that complete non-interference may lead to inequality. Therefore, it supports welfare policies, social security, and state intervention to ensure social justice and equal opportunities.

Liberalism influenced major historical events such as the American Revolution and constitutional developments across Europe. It laid the foundation for modern democratic governance and human rights protection.

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In conclusion, liberalism aims to create a society where individuals can freely pursue their goals while living under a just, constitutional, and democratic system that protects their rights and dignity.

5. Explain the rise and growth of nationalism.

Answer : Nationalism is a political ideology that emphasizes loyalty, unity, and devotion to one's nation. It promotes the idea that people who share common language, culture, history, and traditions should live together under a single independent state. Nationalism encourages self-determination, meaning that a nation has the right to govern itself without foreign control.

Nationalism began to grow strongly in Europe during the late 18th century. The French Revolution played a crucial role in spreading nationalist ideas. It promoted liberty, equality, fraternity, and popular sovereignty, which inspired people to identify themselves as members of a nation rather than subjects of a king. Similarly, the American Revolution encouraged the idea that people could overthrow colonial rule and establish an independent nation-state.

In the 19th century, nationalism led to the unification of divided regions. Germany was unified under the leadership of Otto von Bismarck through wars and diplomatic strategies. Italy was also unified through nationalist movements led by leaders like Mazzini and Garibaldi. These movements demonstrated the power of national consciousness in shaping political boundaries.

In Asia and Africa, nationalism emerged as a response to colonial exploitation. Colonized nations developed strong nationalist movements to fight against foreign domination. In India, Mahatma Gandhi led a mass movement based on non-violence and civil disobedience to achieve independence from British rule. Nationalism became a powerful tool for liberation and self-rule.

Several factors contributed to the growth of nationalism. Common language, shared history, cultural traditions, and education helped create a sense of unity. The spread of print media and newspapers allowed ideas of national identity to circulate widely.

Industrialization and improved transportation also connected different regions, strengthening national consciousness.

However, nationalism has both positive and negative aspects. While it promoted unity and independence, extreme nationalism led to conflicts and wars, especially in the 20th century, including the World Wars. Aggressive nationalism can create hostility between nations.

Despite these challenges, nationalism played a major role in forming modern nation-states. Even today, nationalism continues to influence global politics, international relations, and identity movements. In conclusion, nationalism has been a powerful force in shaping political history, promoting unity, and asserting the right of people to self-governance.

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Section—II

6. Discuss John Rawls' theory of justice.

Answer : John Rawls was one of the most influential political philosophers of the 20th century. In his famous book *A Theory of Justice* (1971), Rawls presented the concept of “Justice as Fairness.” His theory was developed as an alternative to utilitarianism, which focuses on maximizing overall happiness even if some individuals suffer. Rawls argued that justice should ensure fairness and equality in society.

Rawls introduced the idea of the Original Position, a hypothetical situation where individuals decide the principles of justice without knowing their social status, class, gender, intelligence, or wealth. This situation is guided by the Veil of Ignorance, which prevents people from designing laws that benefit only their own group. According to Rawls, if individuals do not know their future position in society, they will choose fair and equal principles.

From this thought experiment, Rawls derived two main principles of justice:

First Principle (Principle of Equal Liberty):

Each person has an equal right to the most extensive basic liberties compatible with similar liberties for others. These liberties include freedom of speech, religion, association, and political participation.

Second Principle (Difference Principle):

Social and economic inequalities are acceptable only if:

- They benefit the least advantaged members of society.
- Positions and offices are open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity.

The Difference Principle is particularly important. Rawls accepted that complete equality may not be practical, but inequalities must improve the condition of the poorest sections of society. For example, higher salaries for doctors are justified only if they contribute to better healthcare for everyone.

Rawls emphasized fairness, equality, and moral reasoning in political institutions. His theory supports a welfare state that ensures social justice through redistribution, equal opportunities, and protection of basic rights.

However, Rawls' theory has been criticized. Libertarian thinkers like Robert Nozick argued that redistribution violates individual property rights. Communitarians criticized Rawls for focusing too much on individuals and ignoring community values.

Despite criticisms, Rawls' theory remains highly influential in modern political philosophy. It provides a moral framework for democratic societies and emphasizes protecting the weakest members of society. In conclusion, Rawls' theory of justice highlights fairness, equality, and moral reasoning as the foundation of a just society.

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7. Explain the concept of multiculturalism and its critique.

Answer : Multiculturalism is a political and social concept that recognizes and respects cultural diversity within a society. It supports the idea that people from different ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds should be allowed to preserve and express their unique identities while living together in one political community.

Multiculturalism developed mainly in Western democracies during the 20th century, especially in countries like Canada and Australia, where immigration created diverse societies. It challenges the idea of cultural assimilation, where minorities are expected to adopt the dominant culture.

Political theorists like Will Kymlicka argued that minority cultural groups deserve special rights to protect their traditions and identities. These may include language rights, educational rights, and representation in political institutions.

The key features of multiculturalism include:

- Recognition of cultural diversity
- Protection of minority rights
- Equal respect for different traditions
- Opposition to discrimination
- Promotion of social inclusion

Multiculturalism promotes tolerance, coexistence, and social harmony. It strengthens democracy by including marginalized communities and protecting their cultural identity.

However, multiculturalism faces several criticisms. Some critics argue that it may divide society and weaken national unity. They believe that too much emphasis on cultural differences may reduce shared national identity. Others argue that certain cultural practices may conflict with universal human rights, especially regarding gender equality.

Communitarian thinkers argue that multiculturalism may encourage isolation rather than integration.

Some critics also claim it can lead to “identity politics,” where groups demand privileges rather than common citizenship rights.

Despite criticisms, multiculturalism remains important in modern globalized societies. It encourages mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among diverse communities.

In conclusion, multiculturalism promotes diversity, equality, and recognition of minority cultures, but it must balance cultural freedom with national unity and universal rights.

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8. Elaborate upon the notion of citizenship.

Answer : Citizenship refers to the legal, political, and social relationship between an individual and the state. It signifies membership in a political community and grants individuals certain rights while imposing specific duties and responsibilities. Citizenship provides a sense of belonging, identity, and participation in public affairs. It is one of the foundational concepts of modern political theory because it connects individuals to the structure of governance and democratic life.

The idea of citizenship can be traced back to ancient Greece, especially the city-state of Athens. In Athens, citizenship meant active participation in political decision-making. Citizens directly engaged in debates and voting in the assembly. However, Athenian citizenship was highly exclusive; it was limited to free adult males, excluding women, slaves, and foreigners.

In the modern era, the concept of citizenship expanded significantly with the growth of democratic states.

Sociologist T. H. Marshall provided a classic analysis of citizenship by dividing it into three components: civil rights, political rights, and social rights. Civil rights include freedom of speech, freedom of religion, equality before law, and property rights. Political rights involve participation in political power, such as the right to vote and contest elections. Social rights refer to welfare benefits, education, healthcare, and social security that ensure a minimum standard of living. Marshall argued that full citizenship is achieved only when all three rights are guaranteed.

Citizenship is closely linked with democracy. It allows individuals to participate in governance and influence public policy. Through voting, public debate, and civic engagement, citizens hold governments accountable. Modern democracies promote inclusive citizenship regardless of race, gender, religion, or ethnicity. Universal adult franchise is an important achievement in this regard.

In contemporary times, citizenship has taken new forms due to globalization.

Concepts such as dual citizenship and global citizenship have emerged. Migration and international human rights norms have challenged the traditional nation-state model of citizenship. However, problems such as statelessness, refugee crises, and discrimination continue to limit the effective enjoyment of citizenship rights in many parts of the world.

Citizenship also implies duties and responsibilities. A good citizen must obey laws, pay taxes, respect the rights of others, and contribute to community welfare. Civic participation, tolerance, and respect for diversity are essential for maintaining democratic culture.

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9. Discuss Feminism and Its Different Forms.

Answer : Feminism is a social, political, and intellectual movement that seeks equality between men and women. It challenges gender-based discrimination and aims to transform social structures that perpetuate inequality. Feminism argues that women have historically been marginalized and denied equal opportunities in education, employment, politics, and family life. Therefore, it advocates equal rights, freedom, and dignity for women.

One of the earliest feminist thinkers was Mary Wollstonecraft, who in her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* argued that women are rational beings and deserve equal education. Feminism developed in different phases or “waves.” The first wave in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries focused mainly on women’s suffrage and legal rights. The second wave, during the 1960s and 1970s, expanded the struggle to workplace equality, reproductive rights, and family laws.

The third wave emphasized diversity, identity, and intersectionality, recognizing that women experience oppression differently based on race, class, and culture.

Liberal feminism seeks gender equality through legal and political reforms within the existing system. It emphasizes equal opportunities and anti-discrimination laws. Marxist feminism links women's oppression to capitalism and economic exploitation, arguing that economic independence is key to liberation. Radical feminism considers patriarchy—the dominance of men over women—as the root cause of oppression and calls for deep structural changes in society. Socialist feminism combines elements of Marxist and radical feminism, analyzing both class and gender inequality. Ecofeminism connects the exploitation of women with the exploitation of nature, arguing that patriarchal systems harm both.

Feminism has achieved significant progress globally. Women have gained voting rights, access to education, property rights, and representation in political institutions.

Laws against domestic violence and workplace harassment reflect feminist influence. However, challenges remain. Gender pay gaps, underrepresentation in leadership, and violence against women persist in many societies.

Feminism has also faced criticism. Some argue that it may overlook cultural differences or focus too heavily on Western experiences. Others claim internal divisions weaken the movement. Despite such critiques, feminism continues to evolve and adapt to new social realities.

In conclusion, feminism is a powerful movement for gender justice. Through its various forms, it addresses political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of inequality and works toward building a more equitable society.

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10. Explain the Significance of Civil Society in Democracy.

Answer : Civil society refers to the sphere of voluntary organizations, associations, and institutions that exist independently of the state and the market. It includes non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions, professional associations, media organizations, religious groups, cultural associations, student unions, and various social movements. Civil society occupies the space between the individual and the government and plays a crucial role in strengthening democracy by promoting participation, accountability, transparency, and public awareness.

The importance of civil society was strongly emphasized by the French political thinker Alexis de Tocqueville in his famous work *Democracy in America*. He observed that voluntary associations in America encouraged cooperation, civic responsibility, and political participation. According to him, when citizens come together in associations, they learn democratic values such as tolerance, compromise, and collective decision-making.

These associations prevent the excessive concentration of power in the hands of the government and thereby safeguard liberty. Civil society performs several important functions in a democracy. First, it acts as a watchdog by monitoring government policies and exposing corruption, abuse of power, and human rights violations. Investigative journalism, advocacy groups, and transparency organizations play a vital role in ensuring that elected representatives remain accountable to the public. By demanding information and questioning authority, civil society strengthens democratic governance.

Second, civil society promotes political participation. Through campaigns, protests, public discussions, and awareness programs, it encourages citizens to engage in political processes beyond voting. Active civic engagement deepens democracy by making it participatory rather than merely procedural. Civil society organizations often mobilize citizens around issues such as environmental protection, gender equality, and social justice.

Third, civil society protects and promotes human rights. Many organizations work to safeguard the rights of marginalized groups such as women, minorities, laborers, and economically weaker sections. They provide legal aid, raise awareness about constitutional rights, and influence public policy to ensure greater social justice. In this way, civil society contributes to the realization of democratic ideals.

Furthermore, civil society strengthens what scholars call “social capital”—the networks of trust, cooperation, and shared norms that hold society together. By encouraging dialogue and cooperation among diverse groups, civil society fosters a sense of community. It bridges the gap between the government and citizens by facilitating communication and negotiation. In many developing countries, civil society organizations also provide welfare services such as education, healthcare, disaster relief, and poverty alleviation, supplementing government efforts.

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However, civil society also faces challenges. Lack of financial resources, political interference, restrictive legal frameworks, and internal mismanagement can limit its effectiveness. Sometimes organizations may become influenced by partisan politics or external funding sources, which may affect their credibility and independence.

In conclusion, civil society is an essential pillar of democracy. It enhances accountability, encourages citizen participation, promotes human rights, and nurtures democratic culture. A strong, independent, and active civil society ensures that democracy remains vibrant, responsive, and inclusive in both theory and practice.