

M . A. POLITICAL SCIENCE

SEMESTER : FOUR

UNIT : FOUR

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCHOOL

INTRODUCTION

- In the earlier part of the Nineteenth century social sciences were dominated by biology .
- The later part witnessed a turn from biology to psychology.
- It was seen that biology and politics could not be conveniently yoked together due to the fundamental difference between the natural world and the ethical process of human society.
- Natural selection has no moral standards so it could not be applied to humans as man's development can be measured only by the extent to which he realizes his moral qualities.
- Barker : "Nature knows no morals and no moral standard ; her 'fittest 'are measured by no canon of absolute worth ,but by the relative canon of adaptation to conditions..."
- If low moral conditions are prevailing then nature's fittest will be low in human scale of values.
- It is meaningless to impose moral rights of freedom or equality into the natural sphere.
- As a consequence the biological approach was first modified and then abandoned.

FACTORS LEADING TO CHANGE

- The later half of the Nineteenth century was an age when the comparative and historical methods of study were being promoted. While studying the history of societies ,the scholars realized the significance of traditions, customs, emotions, ways of life etc.. Consequently, studies were taken up to understand the various influences on the behavior of the people .
- Another reason for change was the frequent occurrence of revolutions and movements in the Nineteenth century. Studies were taken up to understand the difference between the behavior of ordinary people and crowds as well as the reasons behind these movements and revolutions.
- At the same time Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) had presented his views on the importance of subconscious. He had emphasized that no occurrence is coincidental . If it is not due to conscious thought , it must be due to the influence of our subconscious.
- After 1860 studies in popular/people's psychology had been initiated. Various psychologists like G. Stanley Hall, Wilhelm Wundt etc .had started studying special characteristics of particular social and national groups.
- The democratization of society had enhanced the importance of public opinion and studies related to factors influencing public opinion were encouraged.
- Thus, there was a surge in the studies on social psychology and scientific analysis of the behavior of humans .

BEGINNING OF NEW SCHOOL

- During the Twentieth century the social scientists turned to psychology giving importance to instinct ,impulse,reason and will .

- More stress was laid on customs ,traditions,psychology of crowds and associations and the nature of public opinion.
- This application of psychology to politics was not a new approach to study of politics.
- Plato and Aristotle had constructed their theory of state on the psychological conception.
- Machiavelli,Hobbes ,Locke , Rousseau ,Bentham and many others had a psychological approach.
- However the scientific application of psychology to politics began in England with Walter Bagehot - the father of the movement of applying psychology to politics.
- Bagehot isolated the assumptions that other social scientists had made about human nature and made them the object of his study and scientific analysis.

CHARACTERISTICS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCHOOL

- Emphasis on the study of human nature : Though earlier thinkers had analysed traits of human nature this school made it the center of its thought.
- Opposition to the Intellectual basis of activities : It was earlier believed that man differed from other animals since he had the capacity to think and reason. Aggressive emotions and impulses like anger, greed etc.had a negative influence on his thinking. This school ,on the contrary ,held that man was not guided by rationality.
- Emphasis on the subconscious : The influence of the views of Sigmund Freud led the proponents of this school to believe that Irrational and sub rational forces have tremendous influence on human behavior. They condition behavior more than the rational thinking of men. The men do not consciously plan every action but most of the human activities are inherited from the countless ages of evolutionary process. This theory was based on the rather limited stock of knowledge available at that time. It thus, became the "prospectus for future research work in social sciences".
- Study of both individual and group ; The school studied the behaviour of individuals and their conduct as part of a group. It attempted to study the complexity of an individual 's behavior as well as how his behavior changes when he is a part of the group..Eg. in a political party ,as a part of a crowd,in legislative assemblies etc. how the ordinary rational individual is influenced by different instincts and external influences These studies of individual and group psychology led to the connection between social psychology and political studies.
- Belief in the interconnectedness of the body, mind and intellect : They held that all activities of men are inspired by their emotions. These emotions influence their intellect and rationality that is the mind. The body in turn is influenced by the mental condition and mental disposition is created by body's conditions . Thus ,a realistic study of political systems requires a psychological understanding of its different activities and behaviors.