
UNIT 1 UNDERSTANDING CIVIL SOCIETY

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Between 1750 and 1850 the term civil society emerged as the key concept in Western political thought. Till then, civil society (*koinônia*, *politikē*, *civilis*, *societās*, *civile*, *bürgerliche*, *Gesellschaft*, *Civill Society*, *societate civile*) was used synonymously with that of the state (*polis*, *civitas*, *état*, *Staat*, *state*, *stato*). A member of the civil society was also expected to be a citizen of the state and under obligation to act in accordance with its laws and without harming other citizens. This perception remained dominant till the middle of the eighteenth century in Britain, France and Germany¹. The concern at this time is with the nature of civil society and the limits of state action. Civil society as a concept originated within liberalism with an attempt to undermine absolutism.

The concept was introduced into modern European political philosophy through the Latin translations of the Aristotelian Greek term, *politike koinonia*, which for Aristotle, is the ethical-political community of free and equal citizens in ruling and being ruled under a legally defined system of public procedures and shared values. According to Riedel (1975), the term has since come to refer to very different organisations of the sphere regulated by public law- city republics, estate politics, dualistic structures of prince and country, the society of orders within the absolutist state. However, the Aristotelian identification of the political and the civil was maintained until the eighteenth century. Civil society, as a concept, is part of the democratic revolution of the eighteenth century as a bulwark against the absolutism of the state. It reflects the new spirit of the Enlightenment espousing the cause of liberal individualism.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The concept and meaning of civil society
- The classical interpretation of civil society.

1.2 ARISTOTLE AND CLASSICAL NOTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The Greek view, as exemplified in Aristotle's (384-322 BC) writings, used the term *koinonia* that includes the notions of association, community and society, and there was no evidence of separate terms for each of these words. Aristotle's main concern, according to Runciman, is not 'between society and the State but between the private or familial and the political-cum-social'. However, in the context of developing a philosophy of what constitutes the political, Aristotle provides a series of distinctions that indicates the difference between political society and the society of citizens. Aristotle points out that a number of natural associations are formed for some good purpose and the highest of them all, is the state that has to be distinguished from the household which arises naturally out of a union of male and female for the satisfaction of daily needs. Within the household, there is a natural hierarchy of the husband over the wife and master over the slave. A cluster of households form a village and several villages together constitute the city-state that ensures economic and political independence.

The state comes into being for the sake of life but continues for the sake of good life. It is established as an ideological end of other associations. The state exists by nature since 'man by nature is a political animal', for human beings alone have perceptions of good and evil, just and unjust. 'A person who does not feel the need for a state is either an angel or a beast'. It is this commonality that makes possible for a household and a state. However, this unity between a household and the state does not imply that the two associations are equal, for the 'state has priority over the household and over any individual among us, as the 'whole must be prior to the part'. The household satisfies the basic needs and necessities while the state tries to secure good life. The quality of life within a state depends on those who constitute it and the ends they wish to pursue. Aristotle answers this question by defining a constitution not just as a form of government or a set of norms but as a way of life, as that determines the moral character of a state. He criticises Plato (428/7-347 BC) for conflating the household into a state and points out that household differs from a state in a fundamental sense. In the former, relationships are between the superior (husband and master) over the inferior (wife, children and slaves), whereas in the state, the relationship between the ruled and ruler is one of equality, a point that John Locke (1632-1704), the founder of liberalism, subsequently reiterates in his critique of political absolutism and patriarchal authority in the late seventeenth century. The state is a space for free men because women's domestic responsibilities do not give them time for political affairs. Thus, for Aristotle, a *polis* is an association of free and equal men bound together by friendship and a common search for justice secured in law.

1.3 POST-ARISTOTLE EVOLUTION

Aristotle also believes that it is only by balancing the oligarchic (principle of quality relating to exclusive category of birth, wealth, property, social position and education) with democratic (quantity or numbers, the claims of the mass of people) elements that the state could be stable and less susceptible to revolutions. By this logic he seeks to avoid the rule by the rich or the poor and sees the middle class as means in the societal balance. This middle class state, for Aristotle, is the polity and is the most stable state, reiterating Euripides' (480-06 BC) description of these states as the 'save states'. It fulfils two

important political ideals: equality and consensus. This ideal of a mixed constitution is reiterated by Polybius (203-120 BC), Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 BC), St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-74), Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), Adam Smith (1723-90) and the English classical economists and is embodied in the American Constitution of 1787.

In the post-Aristotelian phase, the Stoics developed a conception of world citizenship and the Roman Empire, unlike the Greeks, tried to unite all human beings under it. The development of Christianity snapped the unity that Aristotle emphasizes by separating the *polis* or *civitas* and the church of Ecclesia, creating in St. Augustine's (354-430) doctrine a dual citizenship of *civitas Dei* and *civitas terrna*. Christianity infuses social unity by appealing to a divinely inspired and commonly shared spiritual fellowship. Augustine, like Cicero, defines the *civitas* as a group of men joined in their agreement about the meaning of *ius* or right. However, for Cicero the Roman Republic is the expression of *ius*, for Augustine a community unified by the love of God or *civitas de* expresses *ius*. By this definition, only a Christian political community could be a true commonwealth, one that fully implements the indispensable requirement of justice.

The later Christian tradition, exemplified in Aquinas' writings, revives Aristotle's notion of political life in the *polis*, by viewing the state as not only natural and as the highest form of organisation, but also as existing within and subordinate to the general frame of divine direction of the world. The community and society is synonymous even in Aquinas just as it is in Aristotle. Alighieri Dante (1265-1321) makes a break with the old ideal of a unified Christian Commonwealth and substitutes a carefully balanced and complete dualism in which the State and the Church are independent of each other, but necessarily complementary. The ultimate political unit is no longer Christendom but a world State. In feudal society, there existed, in a narrow sense, a division of society into estates, communities and guilds but the traditional notions of community and society continue to refer to both the political society of the state as well as to the units within it.

1.4 EARLY MODERN NOTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY: FERGUSON AND SCOTTISH ENLIGHTENMENT

The concept of civil society as distinct from the state emerges only with the disintegration of feudal societies. The distinction between a political community and the spiritual one came under sharp focus in the wake of religious strife unleashed by the Reformation that gave rise to Protestantism breaking the unity of Christianity itself. Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) demonstrates that ecclesiastical power is not a form of rule, command or coercion but a form of teaching and persuasion. It could not claim power over the state, while on the contrary only through acts of state can religious doctrines acquire a political status. However, he still identifies political with the civil society. In contrast, Locke, reiterating Aristotle points out that the political community is not an extended family and political rule is not paternal. Both Hobbes and Locke interchange features of the existing civil society back into the state of nature in order to demonstrate the natural and rational grounds for establishing a social contract between the individual and a political authority.

The Emergence of the distinction between the political and the social

The end of the eighteenth and the beginning of nineteenth centuries, after the Industrial and the French Revolutions, brought about another distinction between state and society. Society no longer means the fundamental union between human beings that the state establishes. Civil society emerges as a network of interaction and exchange formed by

individuals exercising the right to pursue the satisfaction of their particular needs in their own way. Charles-Louis Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755) points out that commercialism cures human beings of their prejudices that conceal their true needs. Once human beings realise their true neediness they will discover their sense of 'humanity' which would supersede the previous religious, ethnic and national sectarianism. They will look with disgust at military exploits and risks of war once they understand the attraction of peaceful trade leading to overall prosperity. They will also begin to appreciate national diversity and individual singularity. Commerce brings about frugality, economy, moderation, work, prudence, tranquillity, order and rule and more importantly, the spirit of proper juridical remedies that will make a balance between outright robbery and neglect of one's interest for the sake of others.

David Hume (1711-76) considers interest rather than the contract as the factor that cements individual to the society. Adam Smith, like his contemporaries - Hume, Adam Ferguson (1723-1816) and John Millar (1735-1801), accepts the advantages secured by commerce and mutual support as the bases for forming society. Not only self-interest but also development of emotions (in particular, Smith mentions sympathy), rational character and conflicts, which arise between individuals, have to be taken into consideration. Civil society is shaped not merely by material desire for exchange but also by contract which requires trust and justice. These thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment provide a new description of civil society, as the expanding material sphere of trade and manufacture, and make a break with the traditional conception of the economy and the political notion of civil society, as adhered to by the social contract thinkers. For them, the economy is no longer limited, as it is for Aristotle, to the household, but an essential element of the civil society and of the civilised society that benefits from trade and exchange, extension of the division of labour and the market. This idea is derived from the writings of Marsilius of Padua (1275/80-1342) for whom material tranquillity makes possible for the smooth interchange of economic and social benefits constituting the essence of peace in a political community. He traces the development from family to state as a result of growing specialisation and differentiation of activities, all aiming at a common end, namely the acquisition of those things necessary 'for life and even the good life'.

Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), within the general framework of the Scottish Enlightenment, provides the most succinct analysis of civil society. According to Ferguson, civil society is not a sphere of life that is distinct from the state; the two are in fact identical. 'A civil society is a kind of political order which protects and 'polishes' its mechanical and commercial arts, as well as its cultural achievements and sense of public spirit, by means of regular government, the rule of law and strong military defences' (1792, vol.1, 252). He considers modern division of law as corrupting public spirit, a view that unites him with the old tradition of civic humanism. The loss of public spirit defuses the citizens' suspicion of power and thus prepares the way for despotic government. The destruction of public spirit by civil society augments the ambit and power of the state and habituates its subjects to the civil order and tranquillity. Civil society also institutes a professional army increasing the dangers of formation of government by military force. However, Ferguson does not say how the corrupted citizens of civil society can get rid of corruption or even entrenched despotism. To the dilemma that modern civil society requires a sovereign centralized constitutional state, which together with commerce and manufacturing 'breaks the bands of society (Ibid, 218) and threatens civil liberties and capacity for independent associations of citizens thus undercutting the rationale for life in civil society, Ferguson proposes strengthening citizens' associations-

whether in juries, militias or in civil society at large. Echoing Aristotle, Ferguson points out that human beings act best when they are in social groups. 'Under the influence of the animated spirit of society' human life is the happiest and freest (Ibid, 30). Interestingly he presumes public spirited constitutional monarchy as the best. This formulation emphasises the different realms of the state and civil society, but the realms are complementary and not antagonistic. However, the subsequent formulation reflects a total negation of this formulation.

1.5 CIVIL SOCIETY AND STATE IN OPPOSITION: PAINE

In the context of the modern evolution, Ferguson's formulation is the first phase whereas the second phase begins with Thomas Paine's (1737-1809) polemic against Edmund Burke (1729-97) in the *Rights of Man* (1791-2). Writing in the background of the American Revolution with its innovative principles, that of natural rights of man, popular sovereignty, right to resist unlawful government, and republican and federal political structure, Paine points out to the utmost need to restrict the power of the state in favour of civil society, as the state is a necessary evil while the civil society is unqualified good. The more perfect civil society is, the more it would regulate its own affairs leaving very little for government. With the exception of United States, according to Paine, states everywhere crush and barbarise their people. Despotism stifles individual initiative, support patriarchal forms of power within households and institute class divisions within society through excessive rates of taxation. Paine thinks that reduction of state power to a minimum would encourage the formation of an international confederation of nationally independent and peacefully interacting civil societies². This is the beginning of a new idea of 'a government being the best which governs the least'. The nationally sovereign state would be a mere elected manager and guarantor of 'universal peace, civilization and commerce' (1977, p.183). He is convinced that limited states guided by civil societies cemented by ties of reciprocal interests and mutual affection make it possible for global order and harmony. Civil society thrives on common interest which is more powerful than the positive law enacted and administered by governments. Individuals interact with others spontaneously enabling them to form interlocking self-sufficient social whole free from conflict and if states everywhere were built upon this natural social bases then the existing inequality, aggression and bondage among individuals and groups would disappear. A 'cordial union' (Ibid, 189) of civilised society would replace social divisions and political unrest.

Paine, pointing to the positive aspects of the American Revolution, repeatedly emphasizes the need for deliberately resisting excesses of state power, underlined by two related but quite different sets of arguments, resulting in conclusions different from that of Ferguson. In the first place, the principle of natural right and active consent of the governed guides a legitimate state. Individuals delegate power to the state held as trust, one that could be legitimately withdrawn at any time. No particular political group or institution has the right to bind and control how, and by whom, the world is to be governed, as all individuals are born equal and with equal natural rights. These rights are God-given and incline individuals to act freely and reasonably for their own comfort and happiness without injuring the natural rights of others. Natural rights measure the legitimacy of states and cannot be annihilated, transferred or divided and no generation can deny them to their heirs. This rights-based argument led Paine to insist that states are legitimate and civilised only when they are formed by the explicit consent of the individuals and when this active consent is formulated constitutionally and articulated continuously through parliamentary

and representatives' mechanisms. These governments have only duties and no rights towards their citizens. Government is the product of individual contracting with one another and is subject to its constitution which specify such matters as the duration of parliament, the frequency of elections, the mode of representation, the powers of the judiciary, the conditions under which war can be declared, and the levying and spending of public money. Government without a constitution is comparable to power without right: "A constitution ... is to a government, what the laws made afterwards by that government are to a court of judicature. The court of judicature does not make the laws, neither can it alter them; it only asks in conformity to the laws made: and the government is in like manner governed by the constitution".

1.6 CIVIL SOCIETY AS LIFE BREATH OF STATE: TOCQUEVILLE

According to Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-59) the problem of state despotism is the new problem that confronts modern nations and this could be checkmated only by the growth and development of civil associations that lie beyond the control of state institutions. The plurality of civil associations is necessary for consolidating the democratic revolution. Civil associations, according to Tocqueville, are permanent open schools of public spirit within which citizens learn their rights and obligations, and press their claims and become familiar with others. He considers civil associations as arenas in which individuals can direct their attention to more than their selfish, narrow private and conflicting goals and also realise that they are dependent on one another and hence must work for cooperation. He acknowledges that central state institutions ensure the survival and coordination among civil associations but he also insists, like Hegel, that freedom and equality among individuals and groups depend upon preserving types of associations that nurture local freedoms and provide for the active expression of particular interests. He is categorical that right of association within civil society is inalienable. For democracy to flourish a pluralistic and self-organising civil society, independent of the state, is absolutely necessary. He observes "no legislator can destroy it without attacking the foundations of society itself" (1981, p.279). Tocqueville has a three part model that differentiates, although unsystematically, between a civil society of economic and cultural associations and public, a political society of local, provincial and national assemblies and the administrative apparatus of the state.

1.7 STATE AS UNIVERSAL AND CIVIL SOCIETY AS PARTICULAR: HEGEL

There is a popular belief that it is the German thinkers in general and George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) in particular who had written extensively on the distinction between the civil society and state as the crucial organising principle of the modern world. Manfred Reidel observes that Hegel's notion of civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) is innovative in political philosophy and is comparable to Bodin's concept of sovereignty and Rousseau's notion of the General Will: "Hegel drew together '*bürgerlich*' and '*Gesellschaft*' into one of the basic concepts of political philosophy. When viewed externally, this concept corresponds to the tradition of Aristotle's *koinónia politiké*. Bodin's Melancthon's or Wolff's *societas civilis*, and Kant's '*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*'. In fact, it presupposes, for its appearance, a thoroughgoing break with this tradition. To this extent, one may well say that before Hegel, the concept of civil society in the modern sense did not exist" (Reidel, 1975, vol.2, p.262).

Keane (1998, p.63) disagrees with this interpretation and points out that between 1750 and 1850 many British, French and German thinkers were concerned with the notion of civil society and the limits of state action. Early modern German discussion on the scope and power of the state, when viewed comparatively, was the least receptive to the democratic political implications of the new distinction between civil society and the state. This is because late eighteenth and nineteenth century historical development in Germany had certain peculiarities: 'the absence of a successful revolution from below; the belated construction (from above) of a viable nation-state framework; the slower development of commodity production and exchange; the weakness of parliamentary rule; a deeply rooted *Obrigkeitsstaat* tradition; and the fragility of a political culture of citizenship- expressed in the idea (that was in sharp variance with the British *citizen* and French *citoyen*) of the *Staatsbürger*, the passive subject whose egoism is restrained and liberty, property and spiritual identity guaranteed and defined from above through the state and its laws'.

Hegel stresses that the state proper and the civil society are two different things. Civil society embodies a 'system of needs' and totality of private individuals. With gradual freeing of the Third Estate, the civil society came to be regarded as bourgeois society; a society of private, free and equal individuals with property but without the domination of one group by another. Civil society, for Hegel, represents conflict of interests that can be resolved only by the state representing all interests of society. Hegel sees the civil society as crippling and in constant need of state supervision and control. Unlike Paine, Hegel does not consider the civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) as a natural condition of freedom but as a 'historically produced sphere of ethical life' that lies in between the simple patriarchal household and the universal state. It includes the market economy, social classes, corporations and institutions concerned with the administration of welfare and civil law. The creation of civil society is the achievement of the modern world (1976, p.339) and is made possible because it develops the 'system of needs'.

Hegel, reiterating Ferguson, points out that the bourgeois economy generates commodities that make a level of specialisation and mechanisation of human labour necessary, thus transforming the nature of human needs, which no longer remain natural and become social. There is no possibility of harmony within the civil society. Harmony derived from unadulterated love is possible only within a family. Relationships within civil society are tenuous and, at times, bordering on serious conflict due to class division leading to restlessness. Hegel recognises a variety of classes or class fragments- civil servants, landowners, peasantry, intellectuals, lawyers, doctors and clergymen but the moving principle of the civil society, is primarily in the *Bürgerstand*. Much of Hegel's analysis is similar to that of Ferguson. The class of burghers, in which Hegel includes the workers, also is defined by its selfish individualism. The burgher class depends on the corporations- municipal, trade, educational, religious, professional and other state-authorised forms of collective associations; is less public spirited than a self-serving bourgeois. Hegel agrees with Ferguson and Paine that the modern civil society is a complex system of transacting individuals, whose livelihoods, legal status and happiness are interwoven but it is this universal selfishness, and on this point, rejects Ferguson's trust in citizenship and Paine's belief in natural sociability, that turns the civil society into a 'blind and unstable field of economic competition among private non citizens'. Hence the civil society is unable to resolve its inherent conflicts and overcome particularity and can remain civil only, if ordered politically, by the state. The state may intervene in the society to remedy its injustices and inequalities- for instance, the domination of one or more classes by another, the pauperisation of whole groups or the establishment of oligarchies. It could also

intervene in order to protect and attenuate the universal interests of the people, one that state itself defines.

Keane (1988) points out that Hegel's analysis represents the third phase in the evolution of the concept of civil society. The Young Hegelians and Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-83) criticise this relationship between the state and civil society. In writings such as *On the Jewish Question*, *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction* and *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx uses the term civil society to make a critique of Hegel and German Idealism. The term disappears in the later writings. For Marx, the civil society is the site of crass materialism, of modern property relations, the struggle of each against all, and egotism. Civil society, he stresses, arises from the destruction of medieval society. In the medieval society, the individual was part of different societies, such as guilds or estates, each of which had a political role and hence there was no need for a civil realm. With the breakdown of these partial societies, individual becomes all important thus giving an impetus to the rise of civil society. The old bonds were replaced by selfish needs of atomistic individuals, distinct and separate from one another and from the community. Law provides the links between individuals but it arises not from human will and dominates them by the threat of punishment. The fragmented and conflictual nature of civil society determines the nature of the modern state.

Antonio Gramsci (1871-1937) writes extensively on civil society and uses the term in a manner different from that of Marx. It is not simply a sphere of individual needs but of organisations that has the potential for rational self-regulation and freedom. While Marx stresses the separation between the state and civil society, for Gramsci, the two are inter-related. Civil society consists of private institutions like schools, churches, clubs, journals and parties which are instrumental in crystallising social and political consciousness and political society consists of public institutions like the government, courts, police and the army, the instruments of direct domination. It is in the civil society that the intellectuals play an important role by creating hegemony. If hegemony is successfully created by intellectuals then the ruling class rules by controlling the apparatus of civil society and if they fail then the rule is through coercion. Unlike Marx who places total emphasis on economic relations for Gramsci it is the superstructure that is important. The hegemony of the dominant class is exercised through the civil society, culturally and not through coercion. But this hegemony of the civil society does not exist equally in all societies. Writing about the former USSR, Gramsci observes "in Russia, the state was everything, civil society was primordial and galantines; in the West, there was a proper relationship between state and civil society, and when the state trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The state was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earth works".

The concept of civil society reappears in the neo-Marxist critics- Kolakowski, Mlynar, Vajda, Michnik, Habermas, Lefort, Touraine, Bobbio, Weffort, Cardoso, and O'Donnell of socialist authoritarianism locating the conceptual origins of communist totalitarianism in the young Marx's demand to overcome the distinction between the state and civil society. The separation of civil society from the state makes a decisive break from the Graeco-Roman conception that regards civil society as bound up with the state. The unity between the particular and the general in Hegel's account of civil society and state is also rejected by August Marie Francois Comte (1798-1957), seeking to establish a separate discipline of sociology as positive science of society. Sociology analyses social dynamics

and social static with the first deliberating on general law of social development and the second, on the 'anatomy' of society and the mutual interaction between its constituents. Comte's view of interconnectedness of elements of the social system anticipates functionalism.

1.8 SUMMARY

Most conceptions on state accept the distinction between the state and civil society except for totalitarianism that arose in the first quarter of the twentieth century, that negates not only the distinction between state and society, but also between the private and the public and between the state and nation. Totalitarianism conflates nation in the state and makes the state the sole and complete expression of the nation. It subordinates the state to a party and a paternalistic leader. Philosophically, some ideologies like Marxism and Anarchism feel strongly that the state will ultimately wither away. Radical versions of liberalism, as in Friedrich August von Hayek (1899-1992), contend that society represents spontaneity while the state stands for coercion and hence its ambit ought to be reduced to the minimum.

There is popular but mistaken notion that hard economic facts of modernity, that of commodity production and exchange under capitalism, a view traceable to the writings of Marx and Friedrich Engels³ (1820-95), were influential in the development of the concept of civil society. A brief overview of the writings of thinkers, other than Marx and Engels reveal of their awareness of the importance of market competition, commodity production and exchange and the growth of the bourgeoisie, hostility to aristocracy and its inherited wealth, corrupt manner and political privileges, to the modernisation of the concept of civil society. These thinkers are profoundly aware of the heterogeneity and complexity of civil society and "rarely reduced the complex patterns of stratification, organization, conflicts and movements of civil society to the logic and contradictions of a mode of production-the emerging capitalist economy.... they usually noted the patterns of harmony or (potential) conflict between civil society's privately controlled commerce and manufacturing and its other organizations, including patriarchal households, churches, municipal governments, publishers, scientific and literary associations and such policing authorities as charitable relief organizations, schools and hospitals" (Keane 1988, p.64). The early thinkers on civil society were aware of the inequalities within capitalism and the possible losses of freedom that commodity production and exchange would bring out. Above all, they were profoundly sensitive to the dangers of concentration of political power. It was the fear of despotism, attenuated by the experiences of the French Revolution that made them think of ways and means of limiting state power and in strengthening civil society. This view originated when liberal individualism was consolidating itself and becoming an integral component of the modern political discourse. The modern democratic age comes of age first in the post fascist period and then in the post communist era with the roll back of the state leviathan and the triumph of civil society.

1.9 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Explain the classical notion of civil society and what led to its breakdown.
2. Would it be right to say that the notion of civil society is distinctly modern?
3. What is civil society according to the early modern thinkers in general and Ferguson in particular?

4. Critically dissect Hegel's notion of civil society.
5. Compare and contrast Paine and Tocqueville on civil society.

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(Endnotes)

¹ Hume observes that 'liberty is the perfection of civil society, but still authority must be acknowledged essential to its very existence (1953, p.42). Rousseau also speaks in a similar vein: "Look into the motives which have induced men, once united by their common needs in a general society, to unite themselves still more intimately by means of civil societies (*sociétés civiles*): you will find no other motive than that of assuring the property, life and liberty of each member by the protection of all" (1763, p.15). Kant repeats the notion: 'the greatest problem facing the human species is that of establishing a civil society (*societas civilis*) in which freedom under external laws is combined to the greatest possible extent with irresistible force, in other words, of establishing a perfectly just civil constitution" (1975, p.39).

² Paine writes "some writers have so confounded society with government, as to leave little or no distinction between them; whereas they are not only different, but have different origins. Society is produced by our wants, and government by our wickedness; the former promotes our happiness positively by uniting our affections, the latter negatively by restraining our vices. The one encourages intercourse, the other craves distinctions. The first is a patron, the last a punisher' (1977).

³ Civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*) comprises the entire material interaction among individuals at a particular evolutionary stage of the productive forces. ... The term 'civil society' emerged in the eighteenth century when property relations had already evolved from the community of antiquity and medieval times. Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie (Marx and Engels, 1969, vol.3, p.36).

UNIT 2 ELEMENTS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Structure

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Aims and Objectives

2.2 Origins of the Concept of Civil Society

2.3 Gramsci's Seminal Contribution

2.3.1 Croce's Influence

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2.3.4 Relative Autonomy of Politics

2.3.5 Hegemony and Role of Intellectuals

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2.3.7 Post-Second World War Debate

2.4 Conclusion

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2.6 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Civil society refers to those aspects of human existence that are outside the purview of political authority or the state and government, namely, economic relationships, family and kinship structures, religious institutions, cultural organisations and so on. It is an analytical concept because civil society does not exist independently of political authority and vice versa. It is generally believed that neither can continue without the other and that no clear boundary can be drawn between the two. From the eighteenth century onwards the distinction between state and civil society has been drawn by the liberals to undermine the absolutist state. As such the concept of civil society, like the constitutional state, is essentially a liberal innovation though paradoxically the major debates about its proper meaning and importance has been within Marxism, particularly, Western Marxism.

Civil society, according to some, is seen as a mean of reducing the role of politics in society by expanding free markets and individual liberty, while others see it as 'the single most viable alternative to the authoritarian state and the tyrannical market' (WSF). There is also a perception that it constitutes the missing link in the success of social democracy and compassionate conservatism; something that cannot be explained is attributed to civil society. For Adam Seligman, civil society is 'the new analytic key that will unlock the mysteries of social order'. The United Nations and the World Bank perceive it as crucial to good governance and poverty reducing growth. The Administration Officials in the Washington DC see kick starting civil society in the Middle East as the real reason for the Iraq War. The Institute for Foreign Policy, Washington-based think tank observes that 'the US should emphasize civil society development in order to ensure regional stability in central Asia'.

Historically, civil society as a concept that features in the writings of thinkers from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards in an attempt to distinguish it, as an organised society over which the state rules. Some trace the origins of civil society to the writings of Aristotle and Seneca of the classical period. The civil society-state distinction is not valid as the state is itself part of society. Formal authority and political control exists with help of stable social institutions that exert considerable influence on, or control individual lives. Many consider voluntary associations as the life breath of civil society as these inculcate values of tolerance and cooperation that are essential prerequisites for democratic life. However, real associational life also harbours all kinds of different and competing values and beliefs. Moreover, the values of trust, tolerance, reciprocity and cooperation, reiterated by the advocates of social capital, are also fostered in families, schools, workplaces, colleges and universities –places that a person grows; learns and spends a greater part of one's life, more than in the voluntary associations that one may belong to. Within NGOs and other voluntary associations there is so much difference of opinion and divergences that securing a level political consensus to secure and enforce broad-based social reforms becomes difficult. Civil society, on the one hand, offers an opportunity for collective action to counter individualism and on the other hand, provides a balance to an overbearing influence of state authority and the allurements of the market.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The origins of civil society;
- The elements of civil society;
- Gramsci's decisive contribution to the concept of civil society.

2.2 ORIGINS OF THE CONCEPT

In the late eighteenth century the idea of the civil society was formulated by the Scottish Enlightenment with its forceful articulation by Ferguson. However, the primary focus of the theory at the time of its inception was mainly in the realm of economics and not in politics except for restricting state activity which became imperative with the philosophy of *laissez faire* and rejection of mercantilism. However, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the concept developed into a powerful concern mainly because of Hegel's efforts to incorporate civil society as a crucial and most dominant element in his ideal of constitutional monarchy. Hegel divided the life of an ordinary citizen in three distinctive parts: (1) the family which was the arena of love and affection beyond the strife and turbulence of contemporary life; (2) the civil society as the arena of the turbulence and strife and (3) the state with its most important component, of well trained efficient bureaucracy.

When the Left Hegelians, the most important of whom were Marx and Engels rejected Hegel's classification, they had to come to terms with dealing with the complexities of civil society. Within the larger framework of economic determinism, Marx insisted that the rule of the bourgeoisie or the ruling class in any order is perpetuated more by controlling the ideological apparatus of the state rather than by the use of brute force. This led Marx to discuss the concept of ideology in the political process in which he found out that the ruling class rules more by perpetuating a false consciousness among the people by which it projects its own values as universal and inevitable, whereas in reality it is particularistic

and transitory. As such, one of the important purposes of Marx's formulation of revolutionary consciousness was to transform this false consciousness into a true consciousness. This problem got further aggravated when Marx developed the theory of relative autonomy of the state in the context of failed revolutionary process in Europe in 1848. However, Marx never developed a detailed independent theory of civil society nor developed a framework in which it would be dissected and it was left to later Marxists in the twentieth century to articulate and theorise the notion of civil society.

2.3 GRAMSCI'S SEMINAL CONTRIBUTION

Civil society is the key concept in Antonio Gramsci's (1887-1937) political thought. No other Marxist in the twentieth century paid as much attention to civil society from a Marxist point of view as Gramsci did. Conceiving of a revolutionary strategy to fight fascism in the Italian context, he understood that the Marxist revolutionary strategy has to be analysed not on a singular note but on a differentiated basis looking to the stages of economic development, political culture, the external influences and the question of relative economic and political independence and identity. Furthermore, Gramsci's analysis of the process by which the proletariat could gain hegemony in the West led him to examine the relationship between the civil society and the state and to compare the situation in the former USSR with that of the West. This led Gramsci to use his famous sentence differentiating Western Europe from the Russian situation by dismissing the Leninist strategy as inappropriate as in Russia the 'state was everything and civil society, nothing'. In the more developed areas of Western Europe, there is a powerful and vibrant civil society and any serious Marxist analysis has to comprehend this as part of its revolutionary strategy. In formulating this, Croce played a decisive influence on Gramsci.

2.3.1 Croce's Influence

Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) had a decisive influence in the early twentieth century in the Italian intellectual tradition and can be compared to Hegel's influence within Germany. Croce was well versed with the writings of both Hegel and Marx, learnt a lot from them but was also critical of them. He viewed the entire process of history as a record encompassing human activity, art, economics, philosophy and emphasised like Hegel, on the supreme importance of the human spirit. Croce forsakes Marxism declaring it to be useful only as a 'simple canon of historical enquiry and research' and pronounces the 'death of theoretical Marxism in Italy'. Croce's secularism and opposition to positivism remains influential among the intellectuals. Politically Croce's role is ambivalent. He supported Mussolini in the early twenties. He was also an associate of Georges Sorel (1847-1922) giving the impression that his commitment to the philosophy of the Left was intact.

Gramsci describes critically his early intellectual leanings as 'Crocean' and his philosophical notebooks contain a rigorous critique of Crocean philosophy in connection to Marxism. In his prison writings, Gramsci emphasizes the need to counter "Croceanism both as a diffuse ideology and as a specific philosophical system, sometimes casting Croce in the role of a Eugen von Dühring (1833-1921), to be polemically destroyed, but more often seeing him as comparable to Hegel as a thinker whose work could be profited from in the struggle to renew Marxist thought and liberate it from positivistic accretions" (Hoare and Nowell Smith 1971, xxiii).

Gramsci was attracted a great deal in the early 1920s to a series of essays written by

Croce that endorsed Machiavellian approach to the study of politics and popularised by the Italian elitist thinkers, Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) and Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941). He was pleased with this approach as it shared the Marxism distrust for traditional political categories. Both Croce and Gramsci believed in a close relationship between consensus and force, and liberty and authority.

In one crucial area of Gramsci's thought, Croce exerts an extraordinary influence, namely the concept of civil and political societies. In using these terms Gramsci uses the language of Hegel and Marx but gives them novel meanings. For Hegel and Marx, civil society is discovered not in the structure but in the superstructure of society, not in commerce and industry but in ideology and cultural organisations. For both Croce and Gramsci it is in the sphere of 'Church' or civil society that the intellectuals operate and "for both men, whatever 'ethical' content a state may have is to be found in this sphere, not within the state proper" (Bates 1975, p.157). Gramsci acknowledges the instrumental value of Croce to Italian Marxism as highlighting "the importance of cultural and intellectual factors in historical development, to the function of great intellectuals in the organic life of civil society or of the state, to the moment of hegemony and consensus and the necessary form of the concrete historical bloc" (Ibid, p.356).

2.3.2 On Civil Society

Civil society for Gramsci does not belong to the structural sphere but to the superstructural sphere (Bobbio 1988, 82) and that is its distinctiveness. "What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society', that is the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private' and that of 'political society' or 'the State'. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of 'hegemony, which the dominant group exercises throughout society, and on the other hand, to that of 'direct domination' or rule exercised through the state and juridical government" (Gramsci cited in Hoare & Nowell Smith 1971, p.12).

Citing major historical examples, Gramsci points out that civil society in the Middle Ages was the Church understood as 'the hegemonic apparatus of the ruling group, which did not have its own apparatus, i.e. did not have its own cultural and intellectual organization, but regarded the universal, ecclesiastical organization as being that'. For Gramsci, the civil society comprises not only of 'all material relationships' but all ideological- cultural relations; not 'the whole of commercial and industrial' but the whole of spiritual and intellectual life'. He derives his concept of civil society not from Marx but is 'openly indebted to Hegel' (Bobbio, 1988, p.83). This is evident from Gramsci's work *Past and Present*, in which he points out the meaning of civil society to mean 'the political and cultural hegemony which a social group exercises over the whole of society, as the ethical content of the state' (Gramsci, 1966, p.72). Two aspects get highlighted in the process: (a) that Gramsci's conception is derived from that of Hegel and (b) that Hegel's concept of civil society, as understood by Gramsci, is superstructural. Gramsci's conception of civil society includes private and non state sphere, including the economy; his portrayal of civil society is different from that of Marx. It is not simply a sphere of individual needs but of organisations with the potential for self-regulation and freedom.

Gramsci uses the term state in different ways: in a narrow legal-constitutional sense, as a balance between political and civil society; or as encompassing both. He argues that the nature of political power in advanced capitalist countries, where civil society includes complex institutions and mass organisations, determines the present order. He defines the state as force plus consent, or hegemony armed with coercion, in which political society

organises force and civil society provides consent. While Marx insists on the separation of civil society and state, Gramsci stresses on the inter-relationship between the two, arguing that whereas, in the everyday sense, the word state implies government the concept of state includes the elements of civil society. The state narrowly conceived as government is protected by hegemony organised in civil society while the hegemony of the dominant class is fortified by the coercive state apparatus. The state also has the ethical function as it tries to educate public opinion and to influence the economic sphere. As a consequence the concept of law has to be extended, suggests Gramsci, as elements of habit and custom do exert a collective pressure to conform in civil society without coercion and sanction.

Gramsci points out that the distinction between civil society and state is blurred in actual society. He also cautions any attempt to equate or identify the two. He accepts a role for the state in developing civil society and warns against perpetuating state worship. For him, the withering away of the state in effect means the full development of the self-regulating attributes of civil society. The end of the state is the 're-absorption of political society in civil society'. He refers to a society without a state as 'regulated society' as the civil society enlarges, absorbing hegemonic forces and eliminating all the space occupied by political society. While for Marx, civil society is the sphere of individual egoism, Gramsci sees civil society as representing collective will as it consists of estates and corporations. The bureaucracy and the legal system regulate the civil society and connect it to the state. He could foresee that the hegemony of the proletariat would abolish the distinction between the civil society and the state. He realised that during the transition period the proletariat might have to rely on state power to transform civil society thus producing the phenomenon which he titled as 'statolatry' (Gramsci 1965, 268f). Like Marx, Gramsci's final aim was re-absorption of political society by civil society in a classless society.

At times Gramsci uses the term state to include both civil society and political society: "The general notion of the State includes elements which need to be referred back to the notion of civil society (in the sense that one might say that state = political society + civil society, in other words hegemony protected by the armour of coercion" (Gramsci cited in Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1971, p.263). Elsewhere, Gramsci observes that the State equals dictatorship and hegemony and that the 'civil society and State are one and the same'. In 1931, writing about the intellectuals he points out "this study also leads to certain determinations of a concept of State, which is usually understood as political society (or dictatorship; or coercive apparatus to bring the mass of people into conformity with the specific type of production and a specific economy at a given moment) and not as an equilibrium between political society and civil society or the hegemony of a social group over the entire national society exercised through the so-called private organizations (like the church, the trade unions, the schools, etc.); it is precisely in civil society that intellectuals operate specially" (Gramsci, 1966, p.481).

2.3.3 Theory of the State

Gramsci's theory of the state develops out of his notion of the proper relationship between the state and the civil society. Whereas Marx's most important emphasis is on the totality of all the economic relations, in Gramsci there is an enormous emphasis on the superstructure. The hegemony of the dominant class is exercised through the civil society, culturally, and not through coercion. But this hegemony of the civil society does not exist equally in all societies. For instance, making a categorical distinction between

Russia and the West European countries he asserts that “in Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous; in the West, there was a proper balance relationship between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earth works” (Gramsci cited in McLellan 1979, p.189).

From this, Gramsci lays down different revolutionary strategies. In primitive societies, the object of the frontal attack is the state while in more developed societies it is the civil society. Using military vocabulary, the frontal attack is characterised by Gramsci as ‘a war of movement or manoeuvre’ and the other a ‘war of position’. For a well developed capitalist state, the second course is the correct one. Gramsci believes that Lenin, before his death, had accepted this fact whereas Trotsky continued to be “the political theorist of frontal attack in a period in which it only leads to defeats” (Kiernan 1972, p.25). Gramsci’s position is similar to that of Kautsky’s polemics against Lenin, a position that enjoyed considerable support among the Marxist theoreticians of that time. Gramsci’s analysis significantly influences developments within Western Marxism in the post-Second World War period ultimately leading to the emergence of Euro-communism (McLellan, 1979, p.181).

2.3.4 Relative Autonomy of Politics

Gramsci dissects the vital relationship between economics and politics and the nature of the state in order to answer the pertinent question about the causes that led to the survival of fascism, in spite of the latter’s inability to solve basic contradictions of the Italian society. In the process, he discovers that the art of politics has a dynamics and autonomy of its own which could be clearly distinguished from the realms of economics, morality and religion. For him, as it is for Machiavelli, political activity is the human activity par excellence. One of his major unfulfilled ambitions was to deal specifically with this political aspect in a book significantly titled *The Modern Prince*.

Apart from Gramsci’s interest in the period of Italian unity, *Risorgimento*, he put a lot of efforts in comprehending the political theory of the Italian Renaissance in general and of Machiavelli in particular. Following Croce’s description of Marx as the ‘Machiavelli of the Proletariat’, Gramsci tries to analyse the contemporary situation. Many pages of the *Prison Notebooks* are devoted to notes on Machiavelli and for Gramsci, Machiavelli’s greatness consists in his distinction of politics from ethics. The Modern Prince, for him, has to be the Party.

The Modern Prince, the Prince-myth, cannot be a real person, a concrete individual: it can only be an organism, a complex element of society, in which a collective will... begins to take concrete form. Such an organism had already been provided by historical development and it is the political party, the first cell in which germs of a collective will come together and tend to become universal and total (Gramsci cited in Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1971, p.129).

Gramsci accepts the fact that the economic and the political factors are inter-linked and that the politicians could be relatively autonomous. But he also asserts that the political developments have their own independent characteristics. The degree and extent of this autonomy depends on a number of variables. In the case of Italian fascism Gramsci perceives that it enjoys a great deal of autonomy both internally and externally and as such any immediate collapse of it could not be expected. However, he was also confident

that because of its own internal contradictions, fascism would not be able to continue indefinitely. It is no small credit for Gramsci that his formulation of relative autonomy of politics is reaffirmed by Poulantzas four decades later.

2.3.5 Hegemony and the Role of Intellectuals

Gramsci points out that people are not ruled by force alone but by ideas, summed up by the word Hegemony, a key and unifying concept in the *Prison Notebooks* and of his entire theoretical edifice. Hegemonic crises arise when the rule is by force and not primarily of the ideological apparatus of civil society. Hegemony is created in the civil society by intellectuals and if successfully done, then the ruling class rules by controlling the apparatus of the civil society and if unsuccessful, then the rule is through coercion. Distinguishing between traditional and organic intellectuals, Gramsci observes that traditional intellectuals thought themselves as one and performed the functions in that role independently. The organic ones are however closely linked to the class to which they belong. An example of traditional intellectuals was the clergy and their relation with the feudal ruling class in The Middle Ages, which was organic but subsequently became autonomous. Another example of traditional intellectual was Croce. Gramsci argues that the idea of independence is an illusion as the intellectuals are linked to the class structure in which they live. An independent class of intellectuals do not exist, but rather every social group has its own intellectuals.

However, the intellectuals of the historically progressive class... exercise such a power of attraction that they end... by subordinating the intellectual of other social groups and thus create a system of solidarity among intellectuals, with links of a psychological (vanity) or caste nature. This fact is realized spontaneously in historical periods in which the given social group is truly progressive (Bates, 1975, p.353).

The shift from traditional to organic intellectualism takes place when the revolutionary class itself produces its intellectuals. The role of the intellectuals is a practical one.

The mode of being of the new intellectuals can no longer consist in eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor, organizer, 'permanent persuader' and not just a simple orator (Gramsci cited in Hoare and Nowell Smith, 1971, p.10).

Again emphasizing the need for a linkage between the intellectuals and the masses, Gramsci states,

The position of the philosophy of *praxis* is the antithesis of that of Catholicism. It does not tend to leave the 'simple' in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but rather to lead them to a higher conception of life. If it affirms the need for contact between intellectuals and 'simple' it is not in order to restrict scientific activity and preserve unity at the low level of the masses, but precisely in order to construct an intellectual-moral bloc which can make politically possible the intellectual progress of the mass and not only of small intellectual groups (Gramsci, Ibid, pp.332-33).

Gramsci rejects the Leninist conception of Party and its principle of democratic centralism. He contends that such a party would be more a policing organ than a deliberative body. He believes that a cultural consensus around a shared moral vision would render a coercive state redundant under communism. He argues that factory system is self-regulating and what is required is to ensure that production is related to needs of the producers, to raise workers' consciousness of their role within the productive process and

their relationship with the rest of the global economy. In course of time a collective will would emerge. In fascism, the hegemony of the dominant class remained only partially successful thus leading to perpetual hegemonic crises.

2.3.6 Analysis of Fascism

Gramsci characterises fascism as a passive revolution which is congenial to the situation of Italy as that enables it to modernise and restructure the economy within capitalism with massive state support, a situation that was just the opposite of the modernisation process initiated in the former Soviet Union after the proletarian revolution. Fascism, as such, was not mere Bonapartism as described by Trotsky but rather it was a new kind of an organisation with mass support from the petty bourgeoisie. Gramsci contends that this has happened for the first time in history. Fascism could contain but not solve the Italian crisis and the consequent static equilibrium could usher in true hegemony. Gramsci predicts a 'long life' for the fascist regime but denies that it constitutes an epoch. His analysis is vindicated by subsequent history when within eight years of his death fascism was wiped out not only from Italy, but also from entire Europe.

In the process of analysing Fascism, Gramsci develops three general concepts: Caesarism, War of attrition and passive revolution. Caesarism refers to a situation when some previously dormant or unknown forces capable of asserting domination intervene politically and restores a static equilibrium in a hegemonic crisis situation. There may be variants in this intervention, progressive (Caesar and Napoleon I) and reactionary (Napoleon III and Bismarck). Such a struggle, for Gramsci, represents a War of Attrition. Fascism is an example of this. He contrasts this with the War of Movement which means seizure of power through military confrontation. The example for this is the Bolshevik coup of November 1917. The rise of fascism demonstrates that such methods are outmoded and the War of Position whether won by incumbents or insurgents became decisive. Discussing the process of the War of Movement becoming the War of Position, Gramsci stresses their differences and on this basis, criticises Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution. The third concept is passive revolution where there is no frontal attack "because they possess either substantial hegemonies force without a capability for domination or like Caesarism, a capability for domination without substantial hegemonic force" (Adamson, 1980, p.629). Under the Roman Empire the passive revolution of the Christians was an example of the first type and the Italian *Risorgimento* was an example of the second.

2.3.7 Post-Second World War Debate

Ralph Miliband, in his *The State in Capitalist Society* (1969), argues that there is state intervention, of varying degrees, in the economic life in all the countries of advanced capitalism. The most significant political fact of advanced capitalism 'is the continued existence... of private and ever more concentrated economic power. As a result of that power, the owners and controllers in whose hands it lies, enjoy a massive preponderance in society, in the political system, and in the determination of the state's policies and actions' (Miliband, 1969, p.265). The basic fact in these societies is that unequal economic power produces unequal political power: '...it is the capitalist context of generalized inequality in which the state operates which basically determines its policies and actions. The prevalent view is that the state in these societies can be and indeed mostly is the agent of a 'democratic' social order, with no inherent bias towards any class or group; and that its occasional lapse from 'impartiality' must be ascribed to some accidental factor external to its 'real' nature. But this too is a fundamental misconception; the state in these class societies is primarily and inevitably the guardian and protector of

the economic interests which are dominant in them. Its 'real' purpose and mission is to ensure their continued predominance, not to prevent it (Ibid, pp.265-66). Miliband's views are known as instrumentalist because he argues that capitalism uses 'the state as its instrument for the domination of society' (Ibid, p.23).

The Structuralists, beginning with Louis Althusser (1918-85), challenge this contention. Althusser begins with Gramsci's assertion of the relative autonomy of the state which explores not only the economic dimension but also the various other components – political, legal and ideological segments- society. The repressive apparatus of the state works out the mechanism of domination of the working class by the ruling class with its apparatus like the bureaucracy, police, courts, prisons and the army. Besides these, there are the ideological and structural dimensions like the Church, schools, family, political parties, trade unions, communications and cultural organisations. Althusser argues that in advanced capitalism, the ruling class maintains itself in power by using both the repressive and ideological apparatuses. In mature capitalism, education is a mechanism of ideological domination and is similar to the role performed by the church in the pre-capitalist phase. It is the real mechanism of control behind the formal parliamentary setup with universal suffrage and competing party system.

Nicos Poulantzas elaborates on Althusser's basic formulations and relates them to the major function of capitalism, namely, the reproduction of the capitalist society in its totality. The state, along with maintaining the political interest of the ruling class, also performs the functions of ensuring cohesion and equilibrium in society in a manner that blurs class divisions. As a result, social relations appear competitive and individual-based. Any notion of class and class struggle disappears in that situation. The competitive party system conceals the contradictions, factions and disunity. It does not allow hegemony of any particular class, including the bourgeoisie. Since the state is not the instrument, as assumed by Miliband, of a dominant class, the state is relatively autonomous and a stabilising factor. The structuralist view, like the instrumentalist one, does not deal with the mechanism of change or the essential reasons for the continuance of the capitalist state.

The refreshing originality of Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) is in the fact that though he accepts the fact of inequalities in advanced capitalism and its irrationalities, yet he concludes that there is no probable escape from it because there is some rationality in these irrationalities which are cherished and valued by all, irrespective of class and status. One of these is the prevailing false consciousness in an overwhelming number which allows disguised violence of the state to continue making the state look legitimate to the majority of the people. His uniqueness is in the fact that he is a first-rate critic of this system as well as one of its best defenders.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Like Marx's concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat, both in content and emphasis, the concept of civil society has become one of the most contested concepts in the twentieth century Marxism. The reason for this extraordinary attention to the doctrine in Marxism is that unlike Liberalism, Marxism never formulates a well developed theory of the state nor details the institutions that would be essential in a socialist society. The liberals, always being conscious of human deficiencies and cautious about the dynamics of power, develop a well formulated institutional basis of a constitutional and limited state. However, all these remain elusive in Marxism and to find a way out of Marxist dogmatism, the phenomenon of civil society is dissected again and again but without a

satisfactory solution discovered for a proper balance between the state and the civil society.

2.5 SUMMARY

Civil society refers to those aspects of human existence that are outside the purview of political authority or the state and government, namely, economic relationships, family and kinship structures, religious institutions, cultural organisations and so on. It is an analytical concept because it does not exist independently of political authority and vice versa. It is generally believed that neither can continue without the other and that no clear boundary can be drawn between the two. From the 18th century onwards the distinction between state and civil society has been drawn by the liberals to undermine the absolutist state. As such the concept of civil society, like the constitutional state is essentially a liberal innovation though paradoxically the major debates about its proper meaning and importance has been within Marxism, particularly, Western Marxism. Civil society is the key concept in Antonio Gramsci's (1887-1937) political thought. No other Marxist in the twentieth century paid as much attention to civil society from a Marxist point of view as Gramsci did. He differentiated Western Europe from the Russian situation by dismissing the Leninist strategy as inappropriate as in Russia the 'state was everything and civil society, nothing'. In the more developed areas of Western Europe, there is a powerful and vibrant civil society and any serious Marxist analysis has to comprehend this as part of its revolutionary strategy.

2.6 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. Define civil society and identify the components of civil society.
2. Critically analyse Gramsci's concept of civil society.
3. What did Gramsci mean when he observed that 'in Russia the state was everything, civil society nothing'?
4. Explain the concept of Hegemony in Gramsci and its relationship with civil society.
5. What were the differences between Gramsci and Marx with regard to civil society?

SUGGESTED READINGS

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UNIT 3 CIVIL SOCIETY: LOCAL AND GLOBAL

Structure

3.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

3.2 Origins and Notion of Civil Society: Local and Global

3.3 Meaning of Global Civil Society

3.4 NGO's: Role and Relevance

3.5 Accountability of Civil Society Organizations

3.6 Summary

3.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Global or trans-national civil society refers to the increasing institutionalisation of citizen and non-governmental organisations in the governance of the complex interdependent world of nation states through which shared or public goods are pursued. Its emergence can be traced to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with the rise of global economy and when issues and activities like abolitionism, temperance, workers' rights and women's suffrage became trans-national in nature. The impetus to global civil society is closely linked to the widespread desire for a more democratic global political order, the emergence of groups and organisations that engage in global or trans-national public debate. The sovereign nation states continue but the world system is increasingly composed of layers of international institutions and organisations, individuals and groups. The idea of global civil society emerges from certain strands associated with the Enlightenment that assumes a global order informed by a set of shared values.

Aims and Objectives

This Unit would enable you to understand

- The origins and notion of civil society
- The meaning of global civil society
- The role and relevance of non-governmental organisations.

3.2 ORIGINS AND NOTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY: LOCAL AND GLOBAL

The idea of civil society can be traced to the word *koinonia* used by Aristotle to refer to notions of association, community and society. It means an ethical-political community of free and equal citizens in ruling and being ruled under a legally defined system of public procedures and shared values. However, it is in middle of the eighteenth century that the

distinction between the civil society and state emerged as part of the liberal agenda to undermine absolutism and theorise a conception of political authority as trust based on the consent of the governed. Civil society comes to be referred to aspects of human existence such as economic and professional relationships and associations, family and kinship structures, religious institutions, cultural organisations that exists outside the purview of political authority or the state and government. It is the realm of un-coerced and voluntary human association. The divergent voices within civil society are seen as an antidote to both the market and the bureaucratic and totalising tendencies of political authority. The expansion of democracy has the deepening and broadening of civil society with the nation state and between nation states respectively. Thus “civil society is the process through which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other or with centres of political and economic authority. Through voluntary associations, movements, parties, unions, the individual is able to act publicly. Thus, in the early modern period, the main concern was with civil rights- freedom from fear. Hence civil society was a society where laws replace physical coercion, arbitrary arrests, etc. In the nineteenth century, the issue was political rights, and the actors were the emerging bourgeoisie. In the twentieth century, it was the workers movements that was challenging the state and the issue was economic and social emancipation- hence the further narrowing of the term” (Kaldor, 2003, p.585).

The concept of universal civil society is generally attributed to Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) derived from the ideas of many of his predecessors- Desiderius Erasmus (1466/1469-1536), Thomas More (1478-1535), John Amos Comenius (1592-1670), Emeric Crucé (1590-1648)¹, Francois Fénelon (1651-1715), William Penn² (1644-1718), Abbé de St. Pierre's (1658-1743), Bernard Mandeville (1670-1733), Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu (1689-1755), Francios-Marie Arouet Voltaire(1694-1778), Jean Jacques Rousseau³ (1712-78) and his successor, Jeremy Bentham⁴ (1748-1832). Montesquieu points out that reason would help human beings discover universally valid rules of reciprocity, which, if enforced by positive law, would maintain peace, security and a certain degree of fairness within civil society. Reiterating Mandeville he counts on the transformation of human existence by the ‘spirit of commerce’ guided by the new science of finance or economics. Commercialisation would help human beings to get rid of their prejudices that veil their true needs. By recognising the common need and aspirations, human beings would discover their humanity and thus transcend previous religious, ethnic and national sectarianism. Once captivated by the allure of peaceful trade, human beings would look to military exploits and war with increasing disgust. Commerce would bring in frugality, economy, moderation, work prudence, tranquillity, order and rule. Montesquieu's defence of manufactures, commerce, finance, riches and even luxury enables him to not only take his stand with the moderns and against the Greeks but also influence Bentham and Kant to regard trade and commerce as the basis of perpetual peace.

Kant in the *Science of Right* (1790) discusses the rights of nations, international law and also the universal right of humankind. Inspired by Rousseau's emphasis on the dignity of the human being, Kant insists that ethically people ought to be treated as ends in themselves which implies that a ruler has no right to treat his people as objects for his ambitions and wars. The people have rights but do not owe any duty to the sovereign. According to Kant it is sovereign who has duties towards the people.

Kant's insistence on human dignity leads him to emphasise some key concepts like individual rights, equality before law, the need for a correct legal procedure and an

educational system that will enhance reason. Moral law and the autonomy of the individual will form the basis of freedom which is possible only under the rule of law. Hence laws are necessary and it is our duty to respect the law. But law can be administered only in a state which is a union of human beings and law has to be administered without prejudice to rank and privilege. Laws are the conditions by which the will of one particular individual is harmonised and united with the will of others within the framework of a general law whose basis is freedom. Only in a republican state all human beings are free, equal, independent and autonomous.

For Kant, morality and self-determination is the same thing and a person acts on the basis of 'categorical imperative' which implies acceptance of general principles which one recognises within oneself and is not self-contradictory and is universally applicable. This framework allows Kant to make a synthesis between individual's own moral will and the universal law. Action follows a philosophy of right which allows the freedom of existence of an individual while allowing all others to exist equally on the basis of a universal law.

According to Kant, since human beings are endowed with reason by nature, the purpose of nature is to ensure the development of rationality for that constitutes the human essence. History is a process towards rationality and links progress with reference to the moral character of human beings. With his firm conviction in human rationality, Kant condemns servility and cherishes independence of mind. He regards paternalism as the worst form of despotism. Members of a civil society are united for the purpose of legislation and thereby constitute a state. Citizens are endowed with three juridical attributes that inseparably belong to them by right. These attributes are constitutional freedom, civil equality and political independence. Kant does not dwell into the ways and means of achieving a republican constitution but merely indicates a set of absolutely valid principles for conflict resolution. He is categorical that republican constitutions in individual states are the necessary stepping stones to achieving perpetual peace among all nations. His faith in republican ideals of 1776 and 1789 did not waver despite the excesses in France during the reign of terror, ultimately helping in the rise of Napoleon. The overall optimism of the Enlightenment and the rise of republicanism and constitutional liberalism convinced Kant that perpetual peace can be envisioned within the plurality of nation states.

Kant in his *Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View* (1790) states that nature compels people to find a cosmopolitan solution making a league of nations the natural outcome of social evolution. Until that is realised human beings must suffer the cruelty of conflicts. The way out is a moral order which can be brought about only through education, as that would help in building character in accordance with moral principles. The justice and conscience within us, and not with help of governments, would enable us to realise our destiny, the sovereignty of God on Earth. Kant laments that rulers spend very little money on public because they spend it on paying for past and future wars and is convinced that the ever-growing war debt would eventually make war impractical economically. Reiterating Montesquieu, he highlights the value of interstate commerce as paving the way eventually for an international government, as commercial activity and material prosperity are a panacea against war. He also concedes that realisation of this ideal would be slow and long but is confident that intensive education of all citizens in every country would make possible the ideal. Eventually, the conflict between the individual's obligation *qua* citizen to obey the law of the state and his obligation *qua* man to obey the cosmopolitan law will cease as the member states of the

universal confederation cease to contravene the cosmopolitan law. As a result, the moral responsibilities of citizen and man will coincide and citizenship would assume a universal status. Kant's argument for perpetual peace rests on the assumption that human beings have the singular potential for reasoning and moral development. But Kant does not advocate world government as centralised authority is detrimental to individual freedom.

3.3 MEANING OF GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY

According to Keane, global civil society is born at the "confluence of seven overlapping streams of concern among publicly-minded intellectuals at the end of the 1980s: the revival of old language of civil society, especially in central-Eastern Europe, after the military crushing of Prague Spring; a heightening appreciation of the revolutionary effects of new galaxy of satellite/computer mediated communications (captured in Marshall McLuhan's famous neologism, 'the global village'), the new awareness, stimulated by peace and ecological movements, of ourselves of a fragile and potentially self destructive world system; the widespread perception that the imposition of Soviet type communist systems implied a new global political order; the world wide growth spurt of neo liberal economics and market capitalist economies; the disillusionment with the broken and unfulfilled promises of post colonial states; and the rising concern about the dangerous and misery produced vacuums opened by the collapse of empires and states and the outbreak of uncivil wars. Global civil society is about civic engagement and civic mindedness in a transnational, potentially global sphere; it is about private action for public benefit however defined" (cited in Anheir and Glasius, 2003, p.4).

At the global level, civil society organisations have emerged ranging from workers' societies such as the International Metalworkers' Federation and the International Conference of Trade Unions to environmental organizations such as Greenpeace to religious organizations such as Catholic Relief Services to Transparency International⁵. Two of the most famous global civil society organizations today are Doctors without Borders and the International Campaign to Ban Landmines⁶, both of which are recipients of Nobel Peace Prize. Just as in the national context, global civil society organisations do not fall under one definition and include social movements, religious and labour groups, associations and societies of all varieties. Of all the organisations that make up global civil society, the most important are the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Keane (2003) points out that the 'sheer heterogeneity of groups, activities, and networks that make up global civil society - nonprofits, businesses, social movements, tourists, academics, artists, cultural performers, ethnic and linguistic groups, and so forth - threatens to make the term a description of everything and nothing'. They function within rules and norms of conduct. Global civil society, he insists, is still evolving and represents an open ended civic sphere and its importance will depend on its ability to become democratic, better integrated into governance institutions, and invested with universal values.

The term global civil society has assumed new meanings and is understood in different ways, since 1989, in the wake of democratisation in East and Central Europe, and in Latin America. First and foremost, the term has been taken up by the emerging new social movements articulated and expressed along non party lines- movements that developed since 1968, with issues like peace, women and human rights, environment and the like. Second, many Western neo-liberal governments see it as part of their 'new policy agenda', as a mechanism for facilitating market reforms and parliamentary governments through NGOs and not through social movements. NGOs like the International Committee

of the Red Cross and Anti Slavery Society have long existed but what has happened after 1990s is a proliferation of their kind. NGOs increasingly have begun to look as an alternative to state functions and at the same time, like the market as they compete with one another.

The elements of global civil society include non governmental structures and activities comprising of individuals, households, profit seeking businesses, not-for-profit non governmental organizations, coalitions, social movements and linguistic communities, and cultural identities. It includes media personalities, past and present, from Gandhi, Bill Gates, Martin Luther King to Aung San Suu Kyi, charities, prominent intellectuals and think tanks, campaigning and lobby groups, independent media, citizens' protest groups, internet groups and websites, trade unions and sporting organisations. It comprises of bodies like Amnesty International, Sony, al Jazeera, The Catholic Relief Services, the Indigenous Peoples Bio-Diversity networks, FIFA, Transparency International, the International Red Cross, Ford Foundation, OpenDemocracy.net and the like. Common to all these is the multilayered interconnectedness spread over vast geographical distances with cross border social activities and business outside the government.

In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro ushered in a new era of civil society-government interaction. There was a NGO Forum organised by the civil society groups alongside the UN meetings which exerted substantial impact on the policies emerging from the conference giving rise to the idea of 'parallel summitry'. After the Rio conference, parallel summits became the standard operating procedure for civil society organisations, which were themselves growing both in numbers and strength. Concerns like human rights, population, social development and women were increasingly coming under the focus of such parallel summits. The culmination of this trend was the World Social Forum (WSF) held for the first time in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil, under the slogan 'a different world is possible'. The WSF was in response to the World Economic Forum held in Davos and was attended by 20,000 representatives of landless peasant groups, trade unions and human rights activists.

3.4 NGOs: ROLE AND RELEVANCE

Non-governmental organisations do constitute an important part of global civil society though it would be unwise to see the NGOs as the only component. The NGOs made their presence felt in the 1970s but mushroomed in the 1980s coinciding with globalisation. The NGOs, in the present time, are involved directly or from the margins, in transforming national, international and trans-national political space. They come in different guises: as building blocks for a global civic culture, incubators for new international institutions, barefoot revolutionaries carrying globalisation from below, or new missionaries trying to spread western ideals from above.

NGOs are Western in origin with welfare issues as its focus like homelessness or poverty, championing the cause of under-served populations, or advocating the cause of the under-represented groups. Some are social movements- ecology groups or opponents of nuclear weapons. Many NGOs function with professional staff and long term funding from philanthropists and increasingly from governments itself. Many NGOs have evolved into global organizations such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, CARE, Oxfam and Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders).

Within the global civil society, grassroots organisations are major alternative organisational form and are parallel to the more professional NGOs. They often start as church-based organisations focusing on local issues, relying on volunteers than professional staff emphasising on self-help and voluntarism through membership contribution rather than large external grants for funding. NGOs, active in more than one country is often referred to as international NGOs (INGOs). These have exploded on the global scene in the twentieth century and more so since the 1990s. In 1914, there were 1083 registered international NGOs and their growth was modest with a steady growth at 30 percent in the 1990s to a total of 37,000 NGOs active in 2000. Their growth can be explained with reference to three categories of factors: (a) geopolitical, (b) economic/ideological and (c) technological.

The end of the Cold War in the 1990s has been one of the most significant historical developments ushering in the growth of civil society in East and central Europe and Latin America. The civic organisations such as the Czechoslovak group Charter 77 showed the importance of a vibrant civil society for the legitimacy of democratic government as they emphasised on transparency and accountability. Many western philanthropic foundations such as George Soros' Open Society Institute, Ford and MacArthur Foundations and many western government agencies provided aid and money to support civil society initiatives in East and Central Europe, and in Latin America.

The NGOs are perceived as efficient channels for government aid since the 1990s while till the 1980s aid was given government to government. The reason for the change in the perception is the rise of neo-liberal regimes of Thatcher and Reagan in Britain and the US respectively that stressed on replacing governments with markets as engines of growth and development. NGOs began to assist official aid agencies such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the World Bank. The neo-liberal policies of structural adjustment and privatisation that insisted on rolling back the government created the space into which NGOs moved in. The World Bank estimated that over 15 percent of the total overseas development aid was being channelled through NGOs and the latter became more professional giving impetus to notions like 'faith-based initiatives' and social entrepreneurship.

Information Technology has played a crucial role in the emergence of NGOs enabling them to radically increase their capacities at relatively low cost. The internet changed the tasks of the NGOs, that of mobilising, organising, collecting and disseminating information. Besides the internet, mobile telephones also played a crucial role in transmitting information. Digital cameras helped in providing instant images of the causes that the NGOs stood for, protests or human rights violation or injustice.

Vaclav Havel, the former Czech President talks of 'global technological civilization'. "The post totalitarian system", he wrote, is only one aspect- a particularly drastic aspect and thus all the more revealing of its real origins – of the general inability of modern humanity to be master of its own situation. The automatism of the post-totalitarian system is merely an extreme version of the global automatism of technological civilisation. The human failure that it mirrors is only one variant of the general failure of humanity. It would appear that the traditional parliamentary democracies can offer no fundamental opposition to the automatism of technological civilisation and the industrial-consumer society, for these too, are being dragged helplessly along. People are manipulated in ways that are infinitely more subtle and refined than the brutal methods used in post-totalitarian societies. ... In a democracy, human beings may enjoy personal freedoms and securities that are unknown to us, but in the end they do them no good, for they too are ultimately victims of the

same automatism, and are incapable of defending their concerns about their own identity or preventing their superficialization or transcending concerns about their own personal survival to become proud and responsible members of the polis, making a genuine contribution to the creation of its destiny”.

NGOs are recognised by the United Nations. The Assembly, while considering the question of consultations with NGOs asked the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to adopt ‘suitable arrangements’ for the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the International Co-operative Alliance and other NGOs. The ECOSOC, in its first session, began to consider the arrangements for the NGOs, in 1946, and these are in operation till today. The first question was to define the type of organisation that would be accepted into consultative status. The recommendation of the committee was that an NGO should be concerned with matters that fall under the purview of the ECOSOC, its aims in conformity with the UN Charter, it should represent a major proportion of the people in its field and it should speak for its members through authorised representatives. NGOs based in one country, referred to as ‘national organisations’, might be accepted if they were not members of an international NGO or had ‘special experience’ to offer. Thus the American Federation of Labour (AFL) was one of the first three recognised NGOs, but it had to withdraw in March 1950 when the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, of which it was a leading member, was given consultative status. Subsequently it was accepted that single-country NGOs would only be accepted after consulting the relevant government. Though single-country NGOs have always been part of the system, these are few in number and the emphasis, since the mid 1990s has been on large international NGOs. It was also decided that NGOs would be divided into three categories: Those that have ‘a basic interest in most of the activities of the Council’ are Category A organizations; those with ‘a special competence in a few of the fields of activity are Category B and those that are primarily concerned ‘with the development of public opinion and with the dissemination of information’ as Category C. The last one was abolished in 1950 and replaced by a Register of Organizations that would be specialised and consulted on an ad-hoc basis. In 1968, at the end of a major review of NGO arrangements, the labels were changed to Category I, Category II and the Roster, but the classifications remained essentially the same. The committees were initially established on a temporary basis but made a permanent standing committee of the Council once the consultative system was in place. The NGO Committee is responsible for administering the system but all decisions are subject to the endorsement of the full Council.

3.5 ACCOUNTABILITY OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS

Accountability of civil society organisations has been a pertinent question due to broadly three reasons: (1) significant shifts in understandings of Governance; (2) the emergence of democratic deficit and (3) legitimacy challenges experienced by the civil society organisations. Regarding the first point, governments are no longer solely responsible for governance. It remains powerful and key player but increasingly there are more and more ways in which citizens are engaged in decision making about the management and distribution of resources, especially those that affect their day to day life. The modern nation state system is witnessing major process of internationalisation in three broad areas: (1) internationalisation of problems namely that political problems which a state face could be not of its own making but created from outside like environment, terrorism, crime (2)

internationalisation of culture and economies and (3) internationalisation of political decision making. All three overlap and reinforce one another. The second reason is the emergence of democratic deficit at the national and global levels where the contact between governance institutions and constituencies have been severed or weakened. The rise of monies interests in many political systems is partly responsible for the shift while the growing power of non-democratic and non-accountable global governance institutions, such as the IMF, WTO, and the World Bank is another factor resulting in a general distrust of political institutions in many democracies. The third reason is legitimacy challenges that insist on every institution having to earn its respect and not take people's trust as given. Unless the representatives of trans-national organisations are made accountable and the potentially negative ramifications of their actions scrutinised, their credibility would be at stake.

The reasons for this debate on accountability of civil society organisations is because of the mushrooming of so many no-profit organisations and citizens groups in recent years, particularly after the end of the Cold War. Second, scandals in many of the high profile non profit organisations has invited public scrutiny and placed them under public scanner. Thirdly, there is change in the role and involvement of NGOs which is becoming more policy directed. Accountability mechanisms instituted include voluntary compliance with ethical codes of conduct, selection of members to the Governing bodies in a manner that is transparent, the need to have annual reports, organisational and project evaluation, external assessment, audit of finances and regular channels of communications by means of newsletters, updates and briefs. Increasingly, civil society organisations are also judged by their effectiveness and performance. Funding from government, business firms, multilateral institutions or individual donor is made available if the NGOs are performing to realise their aims and objectives. An organisation that has weak links with the grass roots or has been unable to deliver or does not have the expertise on a matter that it claims to have is dismissed as ineffective and lacking in credibility.

3.6 SUMMARY

'Think globally but act locally' has become the watchword of a world that is becoming increasingly globalised. Many problems are global in nature but their solutions have to be evolved at the local level. The growing complexity of the modern world and the enormous stress on the governments to deliver effectively has given credence to civil society organisations both domestically and internationally. In the last three decades trans-national or global civil societies have proliferated spreading across the world. This suggests that global civil society organisations will play an increasingly important role in the modern state system. New and complex issues, increase in global inequalities and poverty and future wars will make the nation state more fragile making the need for global civil society organisations all the more necessary. However, the modern state system will not be replaced but only complemented by these global civil society organisations in terms of expertise, flexibility and impetus for change.

Global or trans-national civil society refers to the increasing institutionalisation of citizen and non-governmental organisations in the governance of the complex interdependent world of nation states through which shared or public goods are pursued. Its emergence can be traced to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century with the rise of global economy and when issues and activities like abolitionism, temperance, workers' rights and women's suffrage became trans-national in nature. The impetus to global civil society is

closely linked to the widespread desire for a more democratic global political order, the emergence of groups and organisations that engage in global or trans-national public debate. Civil society comes to be referred to aspects of human existence such as economic and professional relationships and associations, family and kinship structures, religious institutions, cultural organisations that exist outside the purview of political authority or the state and government. Non-governmental organisations do constitute an important part of global civil society though it would be unwise to see the NGOs as the only component. Global civil society organisations will play an increasingly important role in the modern state system. New and complex issues, increase in global inequalities and poverty and future wars will make the nation state more fragile making the need for global civil society organisations all the more necessary. However, the modern state system will not be replaced but only complemented by these global civil society organisations in terms of expertise, flexibility and impetus for change.

3.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What is global civil society? Explain its philosophical roots.
2. Distinguish civil society organisations at the local from the global level.
3. What is the role and relevance of NGOs?
4. Critically explain the issue of accountability of civil society organisations.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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(Endnotes)

¹ Crucé's principal work, *Le Nouveau Cynée* or *The New Cyneas* (1623) in which he represented himself in the peacemaking role of Cineas at the court of King Pyrrhus (319–272 BC) of the Molossians, calls for a permanent assembly of princes or their delegates to arbitrate international disputes. As envisioned by Crucé, such a body would rely on moral pressure, employing sanctions only rarely, to enforce settlements. It would include the nations of Asia and Africa as well as those of Europe. He suggests Venice to be the selected city for all the representatives to meet and that the Pope should preside over the meeting. Of course, during the Thirty Years' War (1618-48), this was not acceptable to the Protestant nations. He suggests that armies should be abolished and calls for a world court. Crucé's importance is his foresight that international organizations are crucial to solve international disputes.

² Penn believed War could be prevented within a framework of justice for both individuals and groups if conflicts could be resolved in a fair way. Justice could be ensured if governments enforced laws impartially. For maintaining peace in Europe, he proposes a Sovereign Parliament of European states

to decide disputes collectively and enforce decisions though states could still maintain their sovereignty in internal matters, thus anticipating the European Union.

³ Rousseau pointed out that larger federations uniting nations could help in maintaining peace and prevent wars.

⁴ Bentham believed that trade among nations would promote peace and if people are allowed free contact with one another then the rationale for secret diplomacy and treatise would evaporate.

⁵ Transparency International is global civil society committed to ensuring a world free of corruption. It was founded in 1993 with more than 90 locally established national chapters and chapters-in-information.

⁶ The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) is the result of six NGOs coming together to coordinate their work on banning anti-personnel landmines and subsequently sharing a common goal of a global ban on the use, production, stockpiling and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. It also advocates humanitarian mine clearance and mine victim assistance. The Campaign was formalized in 1993 with many manifestations at the national level. In 1997, the ICBL and its coordinator Jody Williams received the Nobel Peace Prize.



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UNIT 4 VOLUNTARISM IN GANDHI

Structure

4.1 Introduction

Aims and Objectives

4.2 Individual as Supreme

4.3 Autonomy of the Individual

4.4 Swaraj as Self Reliance and Self Government

4.5 Constructive Programme

4.6 Summary

4.7 Terminal Questions

Suggested Readings

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The distinctiveness of Gandhi lay in the fact that he desired social and political transformation through non violent means. He consistently reminded of the corruption that centralised power results in and underlines the need for devolution of power to the grass roots. Rejecting modern civilisation and its stress on industries and technology as highly unequal and violent, Gandhi offers an alternative that maximises self reliance and self sufficiency of ordinary persons. He stressed on devolution of power as the key to a better and fuller democracy. He also provided a vision of his ideal and at the same time accepted alterations to this ideal on grounds of feasibility, given the fact that Gandhi was a practical idealist. The activist theoretician that Gandhi was, he is categorical that it is futile to theorise about the future and expected his ongoing movements to yield the desired end, constantly reminding of the intimate relationship between ends and means.

Gandhi's vision had its critics. A major critic was Rabindranath Tagore who pointed out that a civilisation which is predominantly based on villages cannot advance the cause of individuals as the village-centric life revolves around the community. Offering an alternative to what Tagore offers, Gandhi argues from the standpoint of a philosophic anarchist, a defence of the freedom of the individual against the authority of the state and social tyranny which is why he focuses on decentralisation. He clarified that the "outermost circumference will not wield power to crush the inner circle, but will give strength to all within and will derive its own strength from it". Gandhi reminds of the mutual dependence of the individual and the next larger group on a voluntary basis stating that no individual is an island and that the individual is the social self. His consistent emphasis on the individual, and not the state, with the moral authority to question and judge injustice and repression and to bring the desired changes through non violent means is the framework within which he defends the supremacy of the individual.

Aims and Objectives

After reading this Unit, you would be able to understand

- Gandhi's advocacy of the individual as the supreme
- Swaraj as self reliance and self government
- His conception of the constructive programme.

4.2 INDIVIDUAL AS SUPREME

The individual, for Gandhi, is the basis of the society that would be self regulating and self governing. He is suspicious of the modern state apparatus and denies the need for an all powerful state leviathan. This is most evident in his statement written in 1924 to which he remains steadfast in his belief that the 'individual is the one supreme consideration'.

If the individual ceases to count, what is left of society? Individual freedom alone can make a man voluntarily surrender himself completely to the service of society. If it is wrested from him, he becomes an automaton and society is ruined. No society can possibly be built on a denial of individual freedom. It is contrary to the very nature of man. Just as a man will not grow horns or a tail, so will he not exist as a man if he has no mind of his own. In reality even those who do not believe in the liberty of the individual believe in their own.

This individual is no Robinson Crusoe but a social being as he is critical of unbridled individualism as being unsuitable for social progress. Gandhi's individualism is similar to the individualism of late nineteenth century British Idealist, T.H. Green. Within this framework he analyses freedom as not being left alone or to abdicate moral obligation towards others who are equally entitled to freedom for themselves. A free person can choose to enter into any association with others but cannot simply cut off from others. This is true of nations also. Gandhi's equation of freedom with self rule is to underline the intrinsic link between freedom and obligation to others and to oneself, without abandoning the voluntary basis of freedom. Self rule means voluntary internalization of one's obligations towards others and that a free person and a nation cannot be selfish and isolationist.

Unrestricted individualism is the law of the beast of the jungle. We have learnt to strike the mean between individual freedom and social restraint. Willing submission to social restraint for the sake of the well being of the whole society, enriches both the individual and the society of which he is a member.

For Gandhi, society is an aggregate of individuals and is incomplete if it ignores the self development of individuals. The individual, for him, is not only a social person but also a moral one. Individual initiative enhances human dignity and also provides for a mechanism for resolving conflicts in a non violent manner. He underlines the importance of common good without denying the pivotal role for the individual. He considers the individual as the bearer of moral authority vested with the moral law and duty (*dharma*) to judge the state and its laws, by the standards of truth (*satya*) and non violence (*ahimsa*). His faith in the individual as the basis of a modern society is strengthened by his notion of relative truth based on human needs.

The more mature Gandhi, observes Dalton, establishes the link between non violence and the preservation of liberty seeing the former as the bedrock of freedom. Yet in his commitment to non violence he does not sacrifice the social and political freedom of the individual: "...to make mistakes as a freeman... is better than being in bondage in order to avoid them (for) the mind of a man who remains good under compulsion cannot improve, in fact it worsens. And when compulsion is removed, all the defects well up to the surface with even greater force" (Harijan, 29th September, 1946).

4.3 AUTONOMY OF THE INDIVIDUAL

Gandhi's individualism is embedded in his notion of autonomy and is derived from his extensive view of power which he locates in the state, economy and society and in each individual. Within this framework he insists that everyone can and should take charge of his life. Accepting human dignity and worth as intrinsic goods, he is severe in his indictment of colonialism and untouchability and interestingly, sees the seeds of degeneration that undermines and suppresses human dignity within Indian traditions. He emphasises that India got subjugated because of its moribund and repressive practices and stresses on the need for reforming the Indian society and in particular, Hinduism, by highlighting some of its inequities and discriminatory practices towards women, the lower castes and the untouchables. According to Gandhi individuals make and remake their lives through their choices and action. The highest duty for Gandhi is to act morally, regardless of the consequences. The moral way to proceed is through non violence. Since each person knows best about his moral project and the means to realise it in action each one ought to be free from both domination and violence.

Gandhi's autonomous person is also a social person, never apart from the community to which he belongs and therefore he expects everyone to be concerned not only about their self governance but also the autonomy of others. This, in a nutshell is the meaning of '*swaraj*' or self rule, a vision of India ruled by Indians with concern for the poorest, the destitute and the most vulnerable. Self rule not only means end of British colonialism but also an end of other forms of domination such as untouchability and modernization. *Swaraj* for Gandhi is when Indians learn to rule themselves, individually and collectively. It means self control and self rule. Like Green, he seeks to "make life morally meaningful for all people and both viewed the community as held together not by compulsion but by the sense of a common interest or good" (Bondurant, 1967, p.12). The individual has a soul while the state is a soulless machine "which can never be weaned from violence to which it owes its existence". The individual has the moral authority as he consistently pursues *satya* and *ahimsa* and hence his description of the individual as possessing a soul while the state is soulless. He accepts the state if it uses minimum of violence but the fear is always that the state may use too much violence against those who differ from it. His concern with the consequences of excessive centralisation of power makes him concede only a minimal role to the state. Decentralisation of power ensures greater chance for the collective pursuit of *satya* and *ahimsa*. He admits that state ownership is preferable to private ownership involving the exploitation of the masses, but in general he considers the violence of private ownership as less injurious than the violence of the state. In an enlightened anarchy 'everyone is his own ruler'. In an ideal state there is no political power because there is no state. As this ideal is not realisable, he prefers a minimal state, like Thoreau, namely that government is best which governs the least. Gandhi limits the ambit of the state and focuses on the civil society and the role of the individual within it.

I look upon an increase in the power of the state with the greatest fear, because, although while apparently doing good by minimizing exploitation, it does the greatest harm to mankind by destroying individuality, which lies at the root of all progress

The individual is the votary of *satya* and *ahimsa* and has the moral authority to judge and if necessary, oppose the authority of the state, as all states violate *satya* and *ahimsa*. For Gandhi, *ahimsa* or non coercion is essential in order to accord respect to the human

person and that minimal coercion is a necessary evil to secure the larger good thus establishing superiority of *ahimsa* over *himsa*. Gandhi insists on the need for more and more people to affirm the value of *ahimsa* not as an elusive ideal or a pious hope but as a widely relevant principle of social action. Fear breeds force but if more people become fearless then force would become redundant. Gandhi points out it because of this commitment to *ahimsa* that has made us question retributive theory of punishment and forms of *himsa* like capital punishment, duelling, slavery, torture, collective retaliation or revenge, acts of aggression by states, preventive wars, cruelty to animals, flogging and corporal punishment, which were seen as respectable at one time. Gandhi's attitude towards *ahimsa* was that of an absolutist as he declares "a votary of *ahimsa* cannot subscribe to the utilitarian formula. He will strive for the greatest good of all and die in the attempt to realise the ideal. He will therefore be willing to die so that others may live.... The absolutist's sphere of destruction will always be the narrowest possible. The utilitarian's has no limit". Gandhi was convinced that masses could be trained in the acts of non violence and he consistently insists that *ahimsa* is the power of the stronger and not of the weak; that it requires greater physical and mental courage to be non violent. Strength comes from indomitable will and not physical power. *Ahimsa* needs the cultivation of self control. For the success of non violent mass action Gandhi relied on a small band of committed, intelligent and honest persons who have abiding faith in non violence as they would ensure the non violent atmosphere required for the working of civil disobedience in accord with *ahimsa*.

Gandhi defends the action of the individual citizen who challenges the might of the centralised bureaucratic state on the basis of *dharma*, *satya* and *ahimsa*. The state, for Gandhi, represents violence in a concentrated and organised form and is described as a 'soulless machine'; it can never be weaned away from violence and force as these are the bases of its existence. The individual has a soul. People normally take for granted the legalised coercion of the state as the state has too much violence which it could use against those who differ from it. Gandhi's fear of the centralised state makes him emphasise on a minimal role for the state. He admits that state ownership is preferable to individual ownership but concedes that the latter's violence is less injurious than that of the state. However, he supports minimal state ownership on unavoidable grounds.

4.4 SWARAJ AS SELF RELIANCE AND SELF GOVERNMENT

Swaraj is attained when the individual, through voluntary self sacrifice and suffering, achieves self-control, in other words self-discipline. In Indian context, *swaraj* is attained when there is social unity in three major areas of the Indian society: among the untouchables and the various castes, between the Hindus and Muslims and narrowing the gap between the city and villages, the former urban, westernised and educated and the latter rural and illiterate. To be of service for the betterment of the ordinary people, an idea that Gandhi derived from Vivekananda, Tolstoy, Sermon on the Mount and numerous texts and saints of the Indian tradition, is the quintessence of *swaraj*. *Swaraj* means "all around awakening-social, educational, moral, economic and political" (*Young India*, 26 August 1926, II, p.1231). Merely replacing British rulers with their Indian counterparts is Englishstan and not Hindustan, an "English rule without the Englishman, the tiger's nature, but not the tiger" (1997, ch. IV).

By *Swaraj* I mean the government of India by the consent of the people as ascertained

by the largest number of adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled, who have contributed by manual labour to the services of the state and who have taken the trouble of having registered their names as voters.... Real *Swaraj* will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused. In other words, *swaraj* is to be obtained by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority (Gandhi 1947, p.14).

In the *Hind Swaraj* (1909) through the Italian example, Gandhi points out that for Victor Emanuel, Cavour and Garibaldi 'Italy meant the king of Italy and his henchmen' whereas for Mazzini, it meant the whole of the Italian people, that is, its agriculturalists. Mazzini's ideal remained unrealized and that Italy still remained in a 'state of slavery'. Gandhi makes welfare of the masses, with fulfilment of their basic needs as basis of economic freedom, thus reflecting the inspiration that he derives from Ruskin. The India of my dreams, observes Gandhi is the *swaraj* of the poor person (Ibid, p.17). A truly non violent state would be composed of self governing and self sufficient small cohesive village communities in which the majority would rule with due consideration to the rights of the minorities. It would be a participatory democracy whereby citizens have the positive freedom to "participate in the process of politics in every possible way, restricting its activities to the bare minimum,... it did not mean that the state was all-powerful, rather an intimate relationship should exist between the state and all its citizens". *Satyagraha* is the glue that cements on one hand his ideal of enlightened anarchy and common good and on the other hand his ideals of individual autonomy and moral self-determinism. Like Thoreau, Gandhi stresses on the supremacy of the individual conscience against all claims of the state.

For Gandhi a good society could be attained if it could realise liberty, equality and fraternity through non violent means. This is the lesson, he observed to the Indian princes in 1942 that Europe has learnt from the French Revolution of 1789. Gandhi distinguishes between the fuller moral connotation of freedom and the narrower conception of individual or national freedom while analysing *swaraj* or self rule. Asked to explain the meaning of *purna swaraj* in 1931, he says:

The root meaning of *swaraj* is self rule. *Swaraj* may, therefore be rendered as disciplined rule from within and *purna* means "complete". "Independence" has no such limitation. Independence may mean licence to do as you like. *Swaraj* is positive. Independence is negative. *Purna Swaraj* does not exclude association with any nation, much less with England. But it can only mean association for mutual benefit and at will. Thus there are countries which are said to be independent but which have no *Purna Swaraj* e.g. Nepal. The word *Swaraj* is a sacred word, a vedic word, meaning self rule and self restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which "independence" often means.

"*Swaraj* of a people means the sum total of the *swaraj* (self rule) of individuals; government over self is the truest *swaraj*, it is synonymous with *moksha* or salvation. He considers individual *swaraj* as logically and conceptually prior to the notion of collective or national *swaraj*. He also clarifies that "self government means continuous effort to be independent of government control whether it is foreign government or whether it is national. *Swaraj* government will be a sorry affair if people look up to it for regulation of every detail of life". Gandhi's conception of *swaraj* includes four aspects: Truth, Non violence, political and economic independence. *Swaraj* would be incomplete without realisation of each, since each, for Gandhi, is interwoven with all. His conception of *swaraj* makes the same distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' forms of freedom which

Vivekananda and Aurobindo conceive of. Vivekananda's distinction involves a relegation of political freedom and national independence to a subsidiary position. But as the struggle for national independence gathers momentum merely relying on 'inner' freedom does not seem enough. Aurobindo's identification of national with spiritual freedom takes on an extreme form of religious nationalism which threatens individual liberty which he subsequently abandons. Gandhi never espouses this view of freedom as he consistently emphasises on the supreme importance of a supra-political form of freedom which very few Indian leaders concur with. Swaraj for Gandhi means acquiring inner freedom which means that Indians gain sovereignty over themselves and over their nation (Dalton, 1982). *Swaraj* would become a reality only if people have the capacity to regulate and control authority. Real *swaraj*, for Gandhi, "will come not by the acquisition of authority by a few but by the acquisition of the capacity by all to resist authority when it is abused.... *Swaraj* for me means freedom for the meanest of my countrymen. I am not interested in freeing India merely from the English yoke. I am bent upon freeing India from any yoke whatsoever. I have no desire to exchange 'king log' for 'king stork'. Elaborating further he points out "there is no freedom for India so long as one man, no matter how highly placed he may be, holds the hollow of his hands the life, property and honour of millions of human beings. It is an artificial, unnatural and uncivilized institution. The end of it is an essential preliminary to *swaraj*". Gandhi does not consider good government as better than self government as there is a connection between individual and national self rule. The evolution of the nation and its component parts, the individuals are inter-twined; one cannot advance without the other. Individual self rule is included in *swaraj*. Self awareness, self discipline and self respect are key components of *swaraj*. Fundamental to *swaraj* is the essence of freedom which is more important than the social, political and economic liberty. *Swaraj* "is infinitely greater than and includes independence".

Let there be no mistake about my conception of Swaraj. It is complete independence of alien control and complete economic independence. So, at one end you have political independence; at the other, economic. It has two other ends. One of them is moral and social, the corresponding end is Dharma, i.e. religion is the highest sense of the term. It includes Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc., but is superior to them all. You may recognize it by the name of Truth, not the honesty of experience, but the living Truth that pervades everything and will survive all destruction and all transformation. Moral and social uplift may be recognized by the term as we are used to, i.e. Non violence. Let us call this square of Swaraj, which will be out of shape if any of its angles is untrue. We cannot achieve this political and economic freedom without Truth and Non violence in concrete terms, without a living faith in God and hence moral and social elevation (Harijan, 2nd January, 1937).

Gandhi considers accumulation of wealth as immoral which is why he proposes trusteeship. To achieve equitable distribution he proposes four specific measures: (a) Bread Labour or manual labour which for Gandhi would remove exploitation. "If all worked for their bread, distinctions of rank would be obliterated; the rich would still be there, but they would deem themselves only trustees of their property, and would use it mainly in the public interest". Bread labour would reduce not only economic inequality but also social inequality and in the Indian context it would undermine caste based inequalities. Bread labour ensures that none would be rich and poor; high or low and touchable and untouchable. (b) Voluntary renunciation, a value that Gandhi reiterates from the *Isopanishad* of not coveting the possessions of others and not accumulating beyond one's basic needs. Personal wants ought to be kept to the barest minimum keeping in mind the poverty of

one's fellow human beings and try for a new mode of life. (c) *Satyagraha* to resolve industrial and agricultural disputes as legitimate and the proposal of trusteeship to resolve the conflict between labour and capital with the core idea of non appropriation by owners. He writes "If, however, in spite of the utmost efforts the rich do not become guardians of the poor in the true sense of the term and the latter are more and more crushed and die of hunger, what is to be done? In trying to find the solution to this riddle I have lighted on non-violent non-cooperation and civil disobedience as the right and infallible means. The rich cannot accumulate wealth without the cooperation of the poor in society....If this knowledge were to penetrate to and spread amongst the poor, they would become strong and would learn how to free themselves by means of non violence from the crushing inequalities which have brought them to the verge of starvation". (d) Governmental Action is necessary to ensure that every work receives a minimum or living wage. Gandhi insists that his ideal would have to be realised through non violent measures, through moral process of transformation involving individuals and keeping the role of the state to its minimum. This is what separates the Gandhian ideal from the Marxists and socialists who too emphasise on equality as a moral ideal but while the Marxists advocate violent transformation the socialists insist on a democratic transformation. Gandhi categorically rejects the Marxist ideal of the dictatorship of proletariat as a means of securing social and economic justice for the poor.

Gram Swaraj is Gandhi's ideal. As a virulent critic of all models of western industrialisation as they produce material goods but are alien to our moral values he considers the village as the unit of development. The village panchayat system, the village republic could create both a participatory model of democracy and would also allow an escape route to avoid the perils of western industrialisation. *Gram Swaraj* will be the essential framework of this alternative model with the promotion of self sufficiency in providing the material conditions essential for fulfilling the needs of the individual and enhance the elements of self respect and pride in one self. Gandhi is conscious that the present day conditions of the villages are far from the ideal that he desires and it is because of this consciousness that he argues for a reformed rural setting where truth and non violence would co-exist in a situation of harmony and promotion and practice of rural virtues of cooperation and performance of duties. His close associate, J.C.Kumarappa coins the term 'villagism' which Gandhi gladly accepts as an essential framework of realising rural *swaraj*. Gandhi desires a complete economic revival of India with *satya* and *ahimsa* as its foundation and the credit for preparing a blueprint along these lines goes to Kumarappa.

4.5 CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAMME

Gandhi's prescription for social progress and transformation is contained in what he describes as the constructive programme. It is conceived as an alternative positive programme for social reorganisation to the one, the orthodox Anarchists offer. In its implementation, Gandhi met with partial success. It gives content to the concept of *satyagraha* and is framed with the purpose of their applicability within the Indian social and economic milieu. The programme is considered as the key to the attainment of *poorna swaraj* and consists of the following items: (1) communal harmony, (2) removal of untouchability, (3) prohibition, (4) *Khadi*, (5) cottage industries, (6) village sanitation, (7) new or basic education – *nai talim*, (8) adult education, (9) upliftment of women, (10) education in health and hygiene and (11) propagation of national language, *Hindustani*. Of these, the most important is *Khadi*.

For Gandhi, hand spinning and hand weaving is the salvation to the economic, political and psychological problems of India. He tries to meet the communist critique of the *Khaddar* programme by emphasising its capacity to organise the community. Decentralisation of industry is crucial for preserving the purity and cohesiveness of domestic life, artistic and creative talents of the individual members and more importantly, 'people's sense of freedom, ownership and dignity'. He wants to develop what he considers a *khadi* mentality by which he means decentralisation of production and distribution of the necessities of life thus ensuring economic and political freedom and reducing the dependence on the state and the government. He is also convinced that spinning would purify the body and soul of the spinners and would lead to spiritual progress.

Another highlight of the Constructive programme is the emphasis on the scheme of basic education by which he means the learning of the three R's (reading, writing and arithmetic) and acquisition of skill, preferably the traditional family skill. The aim is to make the individual self-supporting by the sale of products of work done by vocational training thus ensuring an assured occupation which would give the students, the material rewards which could, in turn, be diverted towards their further education and self-development. Gandhi also sees it as a practical expression of his belief in the idea of bread-labour, a concept which he borrows from Ruskin.

Gandhi is convinced that education has to be a lifelong process and should not stop with childhood. This is recommended with the view to enrich the minds of the individual, and here Gandhi, like Plato, believes in the human capacity to absorb knowledge lifelong. Moreover, education would have to be imparted in one's mother tongue as that enables the person to retain and understand what is taught. It would also instill love for one's mother tongue and pave the way for the development of a common national language, which for Gandhi would be *Hindustani*. He desires free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of fourteen.

Gandhi also drew attention to the filth and lack of hygienic conditions in Indian villages by his emphasis on sanitation, clean drainages, well-paved roads and education in basic hygiene. He also drew special attention to the exploited and the underprivileged sections of the Indian society. He pleaded for the abolition of child marriage, *purdah* and other customs that kept women in a state of subjugation. Under his stewardship of the freedom movement, women participated in large numbers. Initially, in the 1920s he wanted women to be confined to their homes and practice *swadeshi* by working on the spinning wheel but subsequently during the civil disobedience campaigns of the 1930s, he allowed them to picket liquor shops besides participating in the salt *satyagraha*. Women played an important role in many of the humanitarian works that Gandhi undertook like helping the poor, nursing the sick and promoting *khadi*. He advocated class, caste and gender equality seeing equality and justice as the bedrock of a humane and dignified society.

Through his constructive programme, to which he devoted most of his time and energy, Gandhi tried to link freedom with harmony. *Khaddar* and the spinning wheel would bridge the gulf between the small numbers of educated urban elite with the majority of villagers. Similarly *Hindustani* would be the lingua franca of the nation as it would create one language for the entire nation. For Gandhi, both untouchability and communalism were corrosive poisons. He considered Hindu-Muslim unity as an extension of untouchability, which needed to be fought, as long as it lasted. Within this framework of social harmony Gandhi persisted with attempts to resolve particular social problems. He wanted to reconcile freedom with harmony and deal with the contradictions of caste and religion.

Emphasising on compromise and cooperation he endeavoured to reconcile divergent interests.

4.6 SUMMARY

As a philosophical anarchist, the essential nature of the state as striving for more concentration of power and egoism is writ large in Gandhi's entire philosophy. He concedes the point that pursuit of power is an endemic human desire but he was equally careful on emphasising the countervailing and more effective role of moral values which may create a new category of power which will be in consonance with individual fulfilment and a humane collective face. Gandhi's emphasis on the individual and his rejection of the all powerful state stems from his belief that individual initiative, voluntarism and decentralisation are to be the organising principles of his ideal society. Gandhi rejects the idea and institution of the state on the basis of two anarchistic arguments: the state represents an authority that poses a threat to the liberty of the individual and the state represents violence in an organized form. From these two premises he derives his support for a decentralised, non-industrial, non violent, self sufficient and self reliant free society; village *swaraj* would advance the cause of individual freedom. Gandhi also stresses that political independence by itself is incomplete unless accompanied by a moral or spiritual transformation of the individual in society. Not only does Gandhi insist on moral progress but also in the elimination of slave mentality. Equally important is social reform with the help of constructive programme to realising the three pillars of *swaraj* and thus establishes close link between freedom and social harmony.

He stresses on devolution of power as the key to a better and fuller democracy. He also provides a vision of his ideal and at the same time accepts alterations to this ideal on grounds of feasibility, given the fact that Gandhi was a practical idealist. Gandhi's emphasis on the individual and his rejection of the all powerful state stems from his belief that individual initiative, voluntarism and decentralisation are to be the organising principles of his ideal society.

4.7 TERMINAL QUESTIONS

1. What are the reasons for Gandhi's rejection of the all powerful state?
2. Swaraj for Gandhi is self reliance and self government. Explain.
3. What is the importance of Constructive Programme in realising Swaraj?
4. Explain Gandhi's view on the individual initiative and autonomy.

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