

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE I

COURSE: BA LLB SEMESTER I

TEACHER: MS. DEEPIKA GAHATRAJ

MODULE: MODULE I, Political Science: Nature and Scope and it's relation to Law

Nature of Politics: Is Political science a Science or Art?

Whether politics can be considered a science has been a long standing controversy. Aristotle adopted a scientific approach to the study of the discipline. He separated the study of politics from ethics and law, examined and compared constitutions and classified governments into meaningful categories. On the other hand James Bryce, Charles Beard and Harold Laski are of the opinion that politics is not a science. It is said that the nomenclature Political Science owes its origin to William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft.

Science is systematised body of knowledge about any phenomenon which is governed by its own laws. Science is based on collection of data, generalisations, accuracy and verification or experimentations. Let's try to test political science on these grounds.

Political Science is not a Science

1) Lacks Precise and Uniform Definitions:

A Science has a set of its own terms and their precise and standard definitions. Political science lacks precise definitions, terminologies and methods. There is no general agreement among political scientist regarding these. Methods and principles of political science are not universally acceptable and applicable. E.g. terms like freedom, democracy, nationalism do not have uniform definitions. They can be and have been defined and interpreted in different ways.

2) Lacks Investigation and generalisations:

Political science also lacks scientific method of investigations, observations and generalisations. It is possible to obtain exact results in science which is not the case with political science. E.g. Democracy is regarded as the best form of government by many but in reality it is not a success in countries where there are ignorant and incompetent masses.

3) Lacks Experimentations:

Another difficulty in political science is that it not possible to have laboratory experiments in political science. Political researcher has to deal with human beings. The habits, sentiments, moods, and temperament of people differ from place to place and from time to time. They cannot be controlled as well under any circumstance. E.g. electoral behavior of voter is determined by various factors such as caste, class, religion etc. No government can claim that its people will react in a particular way to a policy or programme announced.

4) Lacks Objectivity:

While there is objectivity in the study of physical sciences, it is lacking in studying problems related to state and government. A completely impartial, indifferent, unbiased attitude may not be possible to analyse political problems and questions. A political scientist has to deal with human beings in relation to state, society and government and in such relations the element of subjectivity is most conspicuous. Views of political thinkers are bound to be prejudiced or coloured on account of racial, religious, linguistic or nationalistic factors.

5) Lacks Predictability:

It is nearly impossible for a political thinker to predict the future course of events. In fact events take course quite contrary to the expectations of the observer. This happens because politics studies human behaviour and social constructs which are vulnerable to change. Constantly changing socio-economic and political situations restrict a political observer from making predictions.

Thus it was rightly observed by **Burke** that there is no science of politics any more than there is science of aesthetics- for the lines of politics are not the lines of mathematics. They are matter incapable of exact definitions.

Political Science is a Science

1) If by the term science we mean a systematised body of knowledge political science can certainly be called as a science. Dr. Finer rightly says that, we can be prophets of probable if not seers of certain political science has been able develop a systematised body of knowledge on broad terms like state, government etc. after due observation, comparison and some sort of experimentation.

2) It is possible to conduct some experiments through which political scientist can benefit. It is well known that Aristotle based his Politics on his study of the working of 158 constitutions. Likewise, Lord Bryce compared the working of democracy in various countries and then came to conclusions with regard to relative merits and demerits of democracy. B N Rau constitutional advisor to the government of India also made a comparative study of various constitutions and presented a report to the constituent assembly.

3) It is true that there is no consensus among experts regarding the method, principles and conclusions of political science. But political science is a dynamic study of living subject-matter. It deals with man and his institutions. As man is dynamic, the same is true of the institutions created by him. The nature of man changes with the changing conditions.

The view of Lord Bryce is that political science is a science, although it is undeveloped and incomplete. Prof. R N Gilchrist believes that general laws can be deduced from given material and those are useful in the actual problems of the government.