

Chapter-3

Machiavelli

Machiavelli was born in Florence city of Italy in the year of 1469. His period was marked as an end of middle age and **beginning of modern age**. During his period, Italy was weak state divided into small principalities, vulnerable to foreign attack. Thus his political thinking was influenced by contemporary situation prevailed in Italy, particularly his objective was centered around how to **unify Italy** and make it more powerful.

Literally Contribution

The most important work of Machiavelli on statecraft was 'The prince' in which Machiavelli has given his advice to king about his art of **statecraft**. In his second work, '**The Discourse**' he emphasised on importance of 'Republican Government' His third book, 'The art of war' deals with practical techniques in war.

Forms of government

In Discourses he tried to analyze which form of government is better. He believed that given condition of state he should determine which form of government is most appropriate or suitable. He said that **absolute monarchy** is best form of government in Italy because people of Italy are **egoistic, corrupt and selfish**. However, Machiavelli was convinced that **republican or democratic** form of Government is best form of Government. The republican form of government is most suitable form for unity and integrity of state. Because majority of people participate in government formation **Republican** form of Government can be practiced where citizens are moral and virtuous. According to Hacker, Machiavelli is neither in favour nor against Republican Government. He is neither democratic like Rousseau nor liberal like John Locke.

- According to Machiavelli, there is greater tolerance in **republican** form of government and it provides some powers and rights even to minorities. It is governed as per law.
- It is citizen-centric form of government which ensures unity and integrity of state.
- If a ordinary person incapable or incompetent to rule, the citizen will have choice to choose their own ruler. This can be only in republic democratic form of Government. It makes citizens to obey its ruler willingly.
- According to him, collective wisdom of group of people is more effective than wisdom of one individual. Calling it as best form of Government, Machiavelli believes it is only suitable where citizens are moral and virtuous like Switzerland.

According to Sabine, there are lots of contradiction in Machiavelli's thinking because on one hand he calls human nature as universal egoist. On the other hand, he also said that Swiss citizens are moral and virtuous, which is paradoxical.

Methodology

He discovered a new path in political thought. He rejected the metaphysical method of Greek age. He also neglected religious dominated thinking of medieval period. Machiavelli has discarded conventional methods and adopted more **practical** and **realistic methodology**. His methodology is **empirical** as he applies knowledge of **Human Psychology and history** rather than applying merely knowledge of **philosophy** to understand **politics**.

Important characteristic of modern time

Machiavelli era was end of mediaeval period and beginning of modern era. The modern period has following characteristics: -

- According to **Berki**, modern political thinking was dominated by **secular humanism**. The human beings in modern times were considered as rational and autonomous and also as an end itself. Thus Machiavelli thinking departs from ancient Greek thinking of **morality**.
- Modern time is materialistic in nature whereas medieval time laid greater emphasis on philosophy and religion.
- The major objective in modern period is to attain materialistic objects.
- The modern thinking is individualistic in nature in which greater emphasis has been laid on individual than on society and state. Modern era is also the age the age of development of nation-state.

Child of his time

Dunning believed that '**Machiavelli was child of his Age**. He was profoundly influenced by society of his time. According to Sabine, had Machiavelli born in different time, his thought would not have been **same**. During the time of Machiavelli, Europe and Italy was undergoing many social, political and internal transformations. There was emergence of despotic monarchy in England, France. Italy was divided in s parts, and Church was the biggest **internal obstacle against** unity of Italy. France and Spain were **external threat**. Powerful monarchy was responsible behind the power of France and Spain. Many important inventions and exploration where taking place in Europe. There was development of new means of Communications. All these factors lead to development of middle classes.

Every individual is selfish and avaricious and wants to maximize property or wealth and security. This leads to conflict and struggle amongst themselves. According to **Sabine**, Machiavelli is father of school of **universal egoism** which implies that every human being is

driven by self-interest and greedy in nature. Machiavelli, says that people of Italy are creative intelligent, but they are **also corrupt**. Due to these circumstances, Machiavelli supported powerful **Prince** who could unify and secure Italy.

Machiavelli was resident of Florence Italy. During his era Italy was divided into 5 principalities. Church was biggest hurdle in the way of unification of Italy. There was emergence of despotic monarchial system in Britain, Spain and France. Machiavelli believed that major reason behind strengthening of these countries was powerful rulers. France and Spain consistently attacked Italy and wanted to keep Italy divided. Thus, only powerful **Prince** could resolve the **internal and external challenges** which Italy faced at that time. He was propounder of **realistic approach** who advised Prince to be cautious of external attack or attack from neighboring state. He also stressed upon the need to enhance **military capability**.

Italy was **Centre of Renaissance** which focused on human dignity. He rejected **platonic and medieval thinking** and sought to separate **polity from morality**. Machiavelli said that, the king should not be bound by **moral principles**. He gave new definition of morality as he believed that strengthening and securing state should be biggest **moral duty of Prince**. Thus he laid foundation of **secular thinking**. He also laid down foundation of Nationalism.

Propounder of power politics

- The notion of power politics was not an issue during Greek Age or medieval period. Greek Age deals with an **ideal state**. Medieval period was dominated by **Church and religion**.
- He discovered **new path in political science** and stressed over the need to **build powerful state and powerful Prince**.
- Machiavelli has discarded morality, idealism and traditions. He was strong supporter of powerful **Prince**.
- According to Machiavelli, emergence and decline of any state could be understood only in context of **power politics** and weak states are likely to decline.
- Machiavelli has considered **power as means to secure** and strengthen state and has sought to separate **morality from politics**. Machiavelli has advised the Prince about need to acquire knowledge about ‘**Art of War**’ management of power and enhancing military capability.
- Machiavelli has emphasised that state can be ruled through power/force/coercion. Human beings are selfish and egoist.

This shows that Machiavelli was not only political scientist but also a ‘strategist.’ According to Hacker, his contribution is more for **policy science** than towards **political science**.

Human nature

Human beings were considered **moral and virtuous** in **Greek Age**. Human beings were depicted as **fallen man** in the **medieval age**. Machiavelli's human nature is secular. Thus individual is looking property in Modern Age they do not want salvation or liberation. Machiavelli has presented **realistic nature** of human beings. He has laid down foundation of liberal thinking which was forwarded by thinkers like **Hobbes, and Bentham**. According to Machiavelli, human beings are selfish and greedy in nature and their ultimate objective is to safeguard and maximize their property. In order to secure his **property**, he wants to acquire **power**. Therefore, the **Prince** should learn art of managing and controlling selfish human beings. Machiavelli says that both **love and fear** should be used to manage human beings. Love is not sufficient means to manage human beings because he behaves kindly only to fulfill his selfish interest. **Fear is more** reliable and permanent method to control human beings but it should be used cautiously to avoid any harm to **Prince**. Machiavelli also advised king not to acquire/forfeit property or women of citizens. According to him, the king may seek assistance from alliance partners, but he should not be over-dependent on them.

Statecraft

- Machiavelli does not deal with **philosophical or theoretical questions**. Nature and origin of state is not subject matter of Machiavelli. Question like justice, citizenship does not bother him. His purpose is **practical- that is unification of Italy and qualities of a ruler** and method essential for ruling is important.
- Machiavelli has made **realistic analysis** of politics. **Hacker** called him a **policy maker** or strategy maker rather than a political thinker.
- In his work, 'The prince', Machiavelli has elaborately dealt with issue of how a Prince should behave. Machiavelli has considered violence/coercion and deceit as appropriate means to ensure powerful existence of Italy.
- Machiavelli wanted to prevent disintegration of Italy and ensure its **unification** which was only possible by strengthening power of state.
- Only a powerful Prince can ensure powerful Italy. He advises that a Prince should incorporate/possess qualities of both **lion and fox** for maintaining social order and his hold on state.
- In his work 'Prince', he advised the king to be cunning like **fox and courageous like lion**. He said that lion is powerful enough to threaten jackals. But lion cannot unearth the plot. Fox is able to cut the net. Normally technique of fox is helpful for punctuation of people. Whereas for controlling movements, revolts and violent protest against state, **qualities of lion** should be used.

- A **Prince should show himself** virtuous, religious, duty-bound but he must not hesitate to use methods of deceit, force and cleverness whenever need occurs.
- However Machiavelli believed that the Prince must adopt use of force of to control chaos or unrest. It is for this reason **Wolin** said. ‘**The Prince**’ is **economy of violence** as.

Relationship between politics and Religion

During **Greek and mediaeval political** era, religion was inseparable part of state. In the mediaeval era, the church monopolized all the powers and always challenged the state. Machiavelli has sought to **separate religion from** state and laid down the foundation of secular political thinking. He was against **church** interfering in affairs of state, he was not against religion. A Church is biggest internal hurdle in the way of unification of Italy. He believes that politics was not profession of goodness and the Prince should learn how not to be good.

For Machiavelli religion should be utilized as a **tool for furthering** the interest of state. He understood **social importance of religion**.

Machiavelli said that **moral principles** are not applicable for prince. If king will uphold moral principles then it will be against safety and security of state. Although king/prince should be compassionate, humane and religious but he should not hesitate to be **amoral** whenever situation so arise.

According to Machiavelli, religion can be potent tool to make citizens obedient, discipline and fearful whenever need arises. He has used **religion as a tool** to make state more powerful. Thus he has applied utilitarian approach towards religion.

He accepted the theory of **separation of state from religion**. He said that, god is fear of unknown power. People are **coward** as they always fear from God. To some extent **fear of God** is more important than **fear of Prince**. Machiavelli has **redefined politics** as form of power politics. He believed that power is a guarantee for the security of state and in order to acquire more and more power, the king must know ‘Art of using religion.’ The king must show that it is providing freedom to its people but actually it should not. He said that it is a responsibility of Prince to create his **citizens Army (Militia Army)**. He was in favour of strong regular ‘**citizen army (Militia Army)**’ and was against rented Army.

Thus, he stressed upon the need of for powerful Prince for having Italy secure both internally and externally. **Critics** said that applying religion for political objective is **communalism not secularism**.

State and morality

Machiavelli, has redefined morality. He believes that 'all actions taken by Prince to make state more powerful and securing it from any external attack is **moral action.**' He has freed the king from obligation of **moral principles**. He wants **citizen** to **obey moral principles**. He said that if Prince will follow moral principles then state can never become powerful because human beings are selfish and greedy. Berlin says that Machiavelli is a- moral. State is neutral to moral Principles. He is not anti-moral. He developed two standards of morality. One for Prince and next for ordinary citizens. Citizens are bounded by moral principles, but action of Prince is not subject to moral judgment.

Critical analysis

Machiavelli's political thinking is still relevant. According to Berki, thinking should be understood in totality. From his work, 'The Discourses on livy'. He said that republican form of government is the best.

In his work 'The Discourses on livy' he said that republican form of government is the best form of government. Forster said that 'Prince' is a kind of book of advice which can be utilized either way to become opportunist, powerful and cunning Prince. And also protecting himself from cunning opportunist King. He was child of his age. His views on statecraft, secular politics, realistic analysis of politics and separation of state from morality makes him relevant in modern world.

Virtue and Fortuna: - Machiavelli said that virtue for Prince is got power, and preserve the power. Prince should reply over Fortuna or destiny. No cosmic moral law exist in this world. Thus moral act is not guarantee for survival of Prince. Ordinary people believe in Fortuna. They are coward too Prina can control adverse condition in his favour through power. In Prince, he said that a small boat capsized in the sea, good deed of sailor can save the boat.