

Why Machiavelli is considered the father of modern political thoughts. Explain.

Niccolò Machiavelli is one of the most realistic political thinkers and is regarded as the father of modern political thoughts. According to Leo Strauss (1987), Machiavelli's concept of politics still exists and will continue to exist independently of his influence. His kind of politics uses all means, fear and fowl, iron or poison, for achieving its end. The end, which Machiavelli mentioned in 'The Prince', is the state itself. Therefore, anything done for strengthening the state is justified. The Prince, or the ruler, has to be cruel as well as vigilant in expanding and strengthening his state and in deciding the foreign policy for his country. Machiavelli also stated that the Prince must be free from the influence of religion, which implies that the church must not guide him while making decisions. His concepts of secularism and theory of moral difference appeared realistic and influenced modern thinkers.

Biography of Niccolò Machiavelli (1469-1527):-

Machiavelli was born in Florence, Italy. He was born in the era when Italy was divided into 5 city states, namely, Milan, Rome, Florence, Venice and Sicily. After the coup in Florence, he was elevated to the post of Secretary to war. As a diplomat, he visited all states of Italy and tried to explore the reasons for its division. As a patriot, he wanted to see Italy as united. He worked on this important position for fourteen years after which the coup was reversed and he was dismissed, imprisoned and later exiled.

While imprisoned, he wrote many important works. The most influential book written by him was "The Prince", which is also known as a handbook for modern diplomats. In his book, he presented the theory of power politics, where he proposed certain principles on the basis of which a ruler should govern his state.

The Context of Machiavelli's Theory:-

Machiavelli was born in the period when renaissance was growing and expanding in whole Europe and he was the important catalyst of the enlightenment period. As a diplomat, he observed the working of all states of Italy. He explored the reasons for their disunity and concluded that Pope is the root cause of division in Italy. The Pope has kept the kings divided to rule himself. According to him, if the king is weak, he will depend on the Pope for governing his state. The kings of all the states of Italy should become powerful by unity. In this way, the prince can rule on the basis of his power for politics and not on the divine based power endorsed by the Pope. This will be the effective form of government.

Machiavelli's Theory of Power Politics:-

• View of Human Nature

Machiavelli started his theory with his view of human nature. He said that man is wise and rational by nature and the basis of his decisions is logic and cost-and-benefit analysis. As he is rational, so

(Prince)

his interests are his top priority, which means that man is naturally selfish. The only thing that motivates man is fear. He can do anything to protect his life and interests.

• Nature of States

States are like humans, i.e. selfish and motivated by fear. States can be of many forms but he preferred strong, powerful and absolute form of monarchy as the most effective form of government. He condemns the hereditary monarchy and advocates that the prince must be elected.

• How should the Prince Govern?

1- Principle of Secularism:-

The Prince must ensure separation of Church from politics. He must govern independent of the advise of Popes, ~~by~~ on the basis of his own wisdom and the needs of the state. Machiavelli argued that the power of Church should be restricted on divine matters only and the political matters should be governed by the Prince himself i.e. the principle of secularism must be ensured. He was the first to give this principle and hence, he is known as the father of secularism. The principle of secularism ensures the sub-ordination of Church to politics. Therefore, Machiavelli suggested governance to be rested on the shoulder of the prince instead of the divine laws - proposed and manipulated by Popes. John Adams was greatly inspired by Machiavelli's principle. In his book, "A Defence of the constitutions of

Government of United States of America", he stated that Machiavelli has restored empirical reason to politics. Machiavelli, in his theory, further argued that ~~the~~ although the prince must not involve religion in his governance, but he should allow and encourage his subjects to have a religion so that he can use their religious sentiments to achieve the objectives of the state.

2- Theory of Moral Indifference:-

Machiavelli believed on the theory of moral indifference on the matters of the state. He said that state is not the means to an end, it is the end itself and end justifies everything. This implies that the purpose of prince must be to promote the interests of the state so every means can be adopted to protect it. Moral principles are important but they should not direct the prince's decision making he should govern on the basis of the needs of the state. An Italian Communist of the 20th century, Antonio Gramsci was greatly inspired from Machiavelli's writings on ethics, morals are how they relate to the state and revolution in his writings on "Passive Revolution", and how a society can be manipulated by controlling popular notions of morality.

3- Traits of the Prince:-

According to Machiavelli, the Prince must be cruel and deceitful for the interest of the state. Cruelty is better than mercy as virtues bring ruin and vice brings

security. Therefore, the ~~sh~~ Prince should not be virtuous. He must adopt harsh policies so that he is feared by his subjects. In order to terrify people, the Prince must also have a strong national army with patriotic sentiments and equipped with all kinds of weapons. He is totally against the mercenary army because in the hour of need they ~~will~~ will not sacrifice their lives for the cause of the state. In addition to cruelty, the prince must have the trait of deceitfulness. Hypocrisy is essential for prince. 'Let mercy on his tongue and evil in his heart', ~~is~~ which means that fraud and force are the main shields of the prince. Therefore, the prince should have courage of lion and cunningness of fox.

4- Foreign Policy - in case of war:-

~~Foreign policy adopted by the prince~~

The prince must be vigilant while making foreign policy. In case of war in the neighbourhood, he must never be neutral. He must ~~is~~ support the weaker state to crush the stronger one. Otherwise, the stronger state will be more strengthened and attack you afterwards. ~~In case of fear of war,~~

5- Expansion of Territory:-

He stressed on the necessity of the expansion of the state's territory. He has the opinion that the state must expand itself or expire. In the times of peace, the Prince must concentrate all his efforts on making schemes of territorial expansion and annexation. When the prince occupies new territories, he should get away with the old traditions of

the occupied areas. He should formulate new ideas and morality to avoid revolt by the new citizens. In case the prince does not ensure expansion, some other state will conquer its territory.

6- Principle of Pre-emptive strike:-

Machiavelli suggested that if the prince feels that war has become inevitable, he must not wait and must take the initiative and crush the enemy. This is known as the principle of pre-emptive strike, which stresses that the prince should be ready for war at any time.

Conclusion:-

The concepts of Machiavelli are adopted by the modern states, therefore, he is known as the father of modern political science. Leo Strauss regarded Machiavelli as the deliberate originator of modernity itself. He proposed the separation of morality and religion from politics and provided a rational approach for governing rational people and states. Being influenced by the renaissance movements, he freed ruler from the influence of the manipulated Church and promoted reliance on the wisdom of the prince himself. He also adopted modern concepts of pre-emptive strike and the expansion of territory. Hence, it can be said that he is among the most influential figures whose philosophy, presented in 15th century, is still applicable.