

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE I
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Structure:

- Behaviouralism

C. BEHAVIOURALISM

Behaviouralism is one of the most significant modern approaches to the study of political science. Behaviouralism is an approach in political science which seeks to provide an objective, quantified approach to explaining and predicting political behaviour. Its emergence in politics coincides with the rise of the behavioural social sciences that were given shape after the natural sciences. Behaviouralism is mainly concerned to examine the behaviour, actions, and acts of individuals rather than the characteristics of institutions such as legislatures, executives, and judiciaries. Behaviouralism underscores the systematic inquiry of all exclusive expression of political behaviour. Some scholars insist that behaviouralism implies the application of meticulous scientific and statistical methods in order to standardise means of investigation. It is also an exercise in ensuring a value-free study of the discipline of politics. It is usually argued that by the adherents of behavioural approach that political science should be studied in manner similar to the study of natural sciences. In this context, the supporters of behavioural approach insist that the main role of a political scientist is to collect and analyse factual data in an objective manner.

The major point of criticism against the traditional approaches has been that they have been deficient in applying scientific methods to the study of politics that has rendered its very claim to be a science at all. Therefore, the behaviouralists recommended the application of exacting methodology and empirical studies to make the discipline of political science a true social science. The behavioural approach has without doubt given a totally ground-breaking purpose to the study of politics by taking it towards an inquiry based on research-supported verifiable data. The behaviouralists have challenged the realist and liberal approaches by labelling them traditional as they fail to substantiate their conclusion with verifiable facts. In order to understand political behaviour of individual the supporters of behavioural approach prescribe the methods like sampling, interviewing, scoring, scaling and statistical analysis.

The behavioural approach came to be exceedingly favoured in the study of political science after the World War II. Nonetheless, it originated with the publication in 1908 of the works of two political scientists, **Graham Wallas** (*Human Nature in Politics*) and **Arthur Bentley** (*The Process of Government*). Both these political scientists preferred to underscored the

informal political processes and diminished the significance of the study of political institutions in isolation. Wallas, moved by the new findings of modern psychology, strived to introduce similar realism in the study of political science. The major breakthrough provided by modern psychology was that an individual, after all, was not that much a rational being as the traditional political scientists and classical economists had tried to make him out. Consequently, he emphasised that, more often than not, an individual's political action were not given direction by rationality and self-interest. Wallas pointed out that human nature was a complex phenomenon and for an objective understanding of human nature suggested gathering and analysis of factual data of human behaviour. The other political scientist, Bentley was credited for inventing 'group approach' in the study of politics. He also prescribed that there should be a shift from description of political activity to the application of new tools of investigation. Bentley had sought greater inspiration from modern sociology that made him emphasise the role of the informal groups such as pressure groups, elections and political opinion in political processes.

Another significant political scientist who made valuable contribution to behavioural approach was **Charles E Merriam**, known as the founder of Chicago School. His objection to the traditional approaches to politics was the usual one i.e. they suffer from the absence of thorough scientific inquiry. He was also critical of the works of those historians who did not take into account the role of psychological, sociological and economic aspects of human existence. He vociferously advocated an inter-disciplinary approach to the study of political science, which would endow the discipline with a true scientific character. He favoured the use of quantitative techniques in the study of politics and encouraged political scientists to treat political behaviour as the cardinal issue in the studies. Since he was a resolute admirer of democracy, he strived to employ science to disseminate the message of democracy. He did not see any inconsistency to advance the cause of a specific form of government through an approach to politics. It was **William B Munro**, another supporter of modern approach who made it plain that it was improper for political science to encourage the spread of any specific form of government, democracy or otherwise. One more proponent of behavioural approach, **G E G Catlin** spoke of making politics a value-free social science in his notable work, *Science and Method of Politics*, published in 1927. For Catlin, the essence of politics is to be located in 'power' and in this respect he cautioned that in the analysis of power, no particular value-system should be taken into account. Catlin's idea that politics was essentially the study of power was later turned into a comprehensive study by Harold D Lasswell in the renowned work *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* that came out in 1936. It is considered as one of the most meticulous studies of power.