

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SCIENCE II
COURSE: BA LLB SEMESTER II

Relation Between State and Government

Government is regarded as an essential element of the state. In actual practice, the state is represented by the government. Governments exercise all authority and functions on behalf of the state. However, the terms 'state' and 'government' should not be used synonymously. 'State' represents a wider and more stable entity than 'government'. As R.M. MacIver (*The Web of Government*; 1965) has elucidated: When we speak of the state we mean the organization, of which government is the administrative organ. Every social organization must have a focus of administration, an agency by which its policies are given specific character and translated into action. But the organization is greater than the organ. In this sense, the state is greater and more inclusive than government. A state has a constitution, a code of laws, a way of setting up its government, a body of citizens. When we think of this whole structure we think of the state.

Thus, so long as a state maintains its identity and independence, governments may be formed and dissolved according to the established procedure without affecting the character of the state. But a state itself may lose its identity when it is suppressed and conquered by an alien power and its constitution or the established procedure of forming a legitimate government is suspended. The subjugated people may, however, retain or revive their feeling of national solidarity and re-establish their state in due course.

The state serves as a symbol of unity of the people. The image of the state inspires unity among the people and provides them with an identity as a nation. It arouses national pride and a spirit of sacrifice among the people. Government only represents a working arrangement to carry out functions of the state. Government commands our obedience; the state commands our loyalty. Government may be good or bad, efficient or inefficient, but the state will continue to be a symbol of our national greatness. We may criticize or condemn the government, and still acclaim the greatness of our state!

It is, however, essential that our duties and obligations toward the state should be determined by the character of the government it creates. If the government loses its credibility, it should either be replaced according to the established procedure, or the credibility of the state itself will be eroded. The government should be subjected to constant watch so that it conforms to the image of the state as the protector and promoter of our common interests. Any theory which does not provide for a concrete control mechanism over the government is bound to have disastrous consequences.

The idealist theory does not make a distinction between state and government. It creates an image of the perfect state. Hegel eulogized the state, especially the nation-state, as the 'march of God on earth'! This theory demands complete subordination of man to the authority and command of the state, without ensuring whether the actual government which makes such demands, conforms to the image of the ideal state or not!

The liberal-democratic theory is more rational in this respect. It treats the state as a product of the 'will of society', an instrument of 'conflict-resolution' and of securing the common interest; then it authorises society to constitute a government by free choice, and demands that the government should be responsible to the people, and should work with the continuous consent of the people. Any political theory which creates a truly constitutional government cannot be ignorant of the fallibility of government. It must recognise the distinction between the state and government.

Marxist theory treats government as agency of the state. It attributes any imperfection of government to the state itself. Accordingly, so long as society is divided into dominant and dependent classes, any government is bound to serve as an instrument of the dominant class. Thus, Marxist theory regards the state itself as an instrument of class exploitation, and advocates transformation, and ultimate withering away, of the state in order to restore 'authority' to a classless society.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN STATE AND GOVERNMENT

Some of the main differences between state and government are as follows:

1. Government is only an element of the state: A State has four essential elements—Population, Territory, Government and Sovereignty. Government is only one element of the State. It is just one part of the State which acts for the state.
2. Government is an Agency or Agent of the State: Government is an agency of the State. It acts for the state. It is that agency of the State which formulates the will of the state into laws, implements the laws of the state and ensures conformity to the laws of the state. Government exercises power and authority on behalf of the state.
3. State is Abstract, Government is Concrete: State is a concept, an idea or a name used to denote a community of persons living on a definite territory and organised for the exercise of sovereignty. State cannot be seen. Government is made by the people of the State. It is formed by the representatives of the people. It has a definite and defined organisation and form. It can be seen as a team of people exercising the power of the State.
4. Government is organised only by a portion of the population of State: The whole population is a part of the State. All the people are citizens of the State. However, government is made by the representatives of the people. Only some people, who get elected act as representatives of the people, form the government of the State. Their number is limited to few hundred only. In India around 5500 MPs and MLAs represent the total population of around 110 crores and exercise the political power at the centre and in all states of India.
5. Membership of a State is compulsory but not of Government: All people are citizens of the State. They together constitute the population of the State. Each one normally gets the membership (citizenship) of a state automatically right at the time of one's birth and continues to live life as such. However, membership of the government is not automatic. No one can be forced to become its part. Anyone can voluntarily seek an election, get elected as a representative of the people and become a part of the government. Only some persons form the government.
6. State is Permanent, Government is Temporary: Governments come and go regularly. After every general election the government changes. It can also undergo a total change through an election or even through a revolution. State is permanent. It continuously lives so long as it continues to enjoy sovereignty. Independent India continues to live as a sovereign independent state since 1947. However, she has witnessed the rise and fall of several governments at the national and state levels.