

## NATURE, SCOPE AND APPROACHES TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Although the terms 'comparative politics' and 'comparative government' are usually used loosely and interchangeably, there still lies a point of difference between the two.

While comparative government deals with an extensive study of different political systems with special emphasis on their institutions and functions, comparative politics has a much broader scope. It covers all that which comes under the study of the latter, along with the study of non-state politics. Hence, comparative politics covers a much wider area in the study of politics.

### **Major Approaches**

But whatever the approach or the origin of its ideas, we can say that political science as a discipline is concerned with the problems of ends; the goals of good society; the means of governing in such a manner as to realize the good society, the activities of the ruled (the public), especially political actions personified in voting, public opinion and attitude formation; and the underlying connections between society and government. Its key concern is with power—how it is shared through participation and representation and how it is affected by growth and change.

The study of comparative politics is so interesting because of the different approaches, methods and techniques used in the realization of 'political reality'. A number of significant writers hold contrary viewpoints and adopt different strategies. The results, however, seem to be interrelated or synonymous. With the passage of time, some

approaches have become stringent and have had to give way to new and contemporary methods.

With a view of highlighting the meanings of different themes used in the sphere of contemporary political analysis, David Apter defines some of them in the following manner:

**Paradigm:** It is a framework of ideas that establishes a general context of analysis. Fundamentally, paradigms combine a mixture of philosophical assumptions and criteria of valid knowledge. The resulting combinations are sharply distinguished from each other.

**Theory:** It is a generalized statement summarizing the real or supposed actions of a set of variables, whether dependent, or independent, or intervening.

Parameters represent the conditions within which independent variables operate. A macro or micro theory may deal with large or small groups or units. Moreover, it may be abstract, or formal or notational, or concrete.

**Method:** It is a way of organizing a theory for application to data. Thus, methods are known by the names of conceptual schemes. They may be of many types like comparative, configurational, historical, simulative and experimental.

**Technique:** It links method to the relevant data. It represents various modes of observation and ways of recording empirical information. As such, techniques

vary in appropriateness, sampling, public-opinion testing, interviewing, regression analysis, factoring, scaling and testing.

**Model:** It is a simplified way of describing relationships. It can be constructed from a paradigm, a theory, a method or a technique. It may be typological, descriptive, formal, mechanical, organismic, biological, etc.

**Strategy:** It is a peculiar way of applying one or more combinations of the above type to a research problem. It is required that quality and integrity should be combined in a strategy. A good strategy fits a problem, theory, methods and techniques together in a systematic and coherent way.

**Research design:** It converts strategy into an operational plan for field work or an experiment. It is a prospectus or an outline from which research is carried forward. It is a final stage in professional research preparation.