

Historical Approach

The historical approach is a very popular method to study social science.

Political

theory is also studied through this method. Every political idea or institution has its

birth, growth and decay. Historically, one can study the origin, growth and decay of

an institution. It is through the study of the past history of political institutions that the

political scientists try to understand the present political situations. Political scientists

cannot neglect the past. The past has its influence over the present and the future.

The study of political theory aims not to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Only the

study of history will enable men to avoid the mistakes of the past. Thus, the historical

method is a very popular method in the study of political theory.

The common method of studying political phenomena is historical.

Montesquieu, Burke, Seeley, Maine, Freeman and Laski are some of the eminent

exponents of this method. Professor Gilchrist has very aptly observed, 'The source

of the experiment of political science is history; they rest on observation and

experience'. The study of political science, according to Laski, 'must be an effort to

codify the results of experience in the history of states'. It is correct to say that

history serves as a guide to the present and future. History provides the best kind of

laboratory for political science. It is the store house of events pertaining to human

life. This is the reason why one should seek the aid of history, when one studies the

origin, development and the present nature of such important political institutions as the state and the government. The chief method of experimentation in political science, writes Professor Gilchrist, 'is the historical method'. To understand political institutions properly, one must study them in their origin, their growth and development. History not only explains institutions but it also helps us to make certain deductions for future guidance. It is the pivot around which both the inductive and deductive processes of political science work. Sir Frederic Pollock supports this method. 'The historical method', says Sir Frederic Pollock, 'seeks an explanation of what institutions are and are tending to be more in the knowledge of what they have been and how they have been and how they come to be, what they are, than in the analysis of them as they stand.'