



Political Obligation between Individual and State: Distinct Theoretical Interpretations

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Abstract

The concept of political obligation has a direct connection between the state and its individuals. In a nation-state system, being a member of the state, i.e., a citizen, means having certain obligations and responsibilities towards the state system. Similarly, the state also possesses certain responsibilities towards its citizens in order to safeguard and prosper their lives. Many political theories have interpreted in different ways the question of why and how a citizen shows obedience towards the state. The relationship between citizens and the state has been a central matter of discussion in many political theories. Many political theories and philosophies have brought different narrations regarding the role of citizens in a state. As a citizen, an individual has to follow and obey the rules and laws set by state institutions. A citizen possesses both legal and moral obligations while obeying the state and its laws. Primarily, this paper conducts a discussion on the understanding of the idea of political obligation. Moreover, it attempts to explain divine theory, contract theory, prescriptive theory, idealist theory, and Marxist theory and their different theoretical interpretations of political obligation.

Key Words

Political Obligation, Citizen, Individuals, State, Political Theory,

Introduction

The discourse relating to political obligation has been ongoing for centuries. And its course and nature have been shaped according to the change in the political systems. The relationship between individuals and the ruling authority is the central element of political obligation. In simple terms, political obligation means obeying a ruling authority by its people. However, the state also has certain political obligations towards its people, especially by providing good governance, security, integrity, and public spirit. The political obligation also came into existence as a result of political legitimacy. According to John Austin, this is actually how obligation

functions and the practice of political obligation is made up of two components: first, the majority of society's habitual adherence to the law; and second, a sovereign who enacts laws and has the right and ability to punish those who disobey him (John, 1995). The nature of people's obligations is distinguished from one political authority to another. In a monarchical, totalitarian, authoritarian, or dictatorial regime, the people have to obey the authority without any questioning, and their rights and liberty have been conditioned and also subjected to the will of the ruling authority. And whether people are willing or unwilling, they have to obey the ruling regime, and dissenting voices are absent. In contrast, in a democratic regime, the ruling authority is made up of the people. And that the ruling regime is instituted by the people with their consent in order to protect and prosper their lives. Here, people are voluntarily obeying the ruling authority because they created it. In a democratic regime, people also enjoy their rights and liberties because the ruling regime protects them. Moreover, people are more vigilant and committed to the institutional systems of democracy because they need to maintain such a system for their prosperity.

Being a citizen of the state, all individuals have certain responsibilities, and those responsibilities relate to the state. People show their responsibility mainly by participating in political discourse and government formation, obeying the laws, following orders, and respecting the institutional systems of the state. More specifically, the term political obligation has different connotations. From a theoretical perspective, the term political obligation has multiple meanings. This paper is mainly focused on divine theory, prescriptive theory, social contract or consent theory, idealist theory, and Marxist theory and their views regarding how an individual is related to the state and its institutional system, especially in expressing their responsibility towards a state. As per these theories, the position of an individual varies in a state. Theories such as divine theory and prescriptive theory view the position of an individual as being under the state, and they have to be obliged to the state without any dissidence. However, idealists say that the individual is rational in deciding their role in a state. Similarly, social contract or consent theories hold that the will of the individual is primordial in deciding their position in a state. In contrast, Marxists wanted to alter the state system that was instituted by bourgeoisies (the dominant class) because the position of an individual is only subservient to bourgeoisies. Likewise, these theories have also specified the relationship between the people and the state.

The Idea of Political Obligation

The term "*obligation*" comes from the Latin word "*obligate*," which denotes a force that compels people to carry out their duties. And it has multiple interpretations, and it can simply mean that something binds someone in order to perform certain things. Margaret Gilbert opined that in the literature, obligations simply characterised as "obligations to another person, correlative with the rights of that person against the person with the obligation, have become known as 'directed' or 'relational' obligations" (Gilbert, 2006, p. 51). John Horton categories the argument of the development of political obligation into two folds, and those are: "first, there is the conceptual claim that political obligation is a feature of membership in a polity, without which the very idea of 'membership'

is unintelligible. Secondly, it has been argued that persons' recognition of themselves as members of a polity shows itself in certain characteristic ways of thinking and feeling about their polity; that these thoughts and feelings are clearly intelligible; and that they are neither voluntarily assumed nor stand in need of justification in terms of some fundamental moral principle or theory” (Horton, 1992, p. 159). Rex Martin says that “political obligation is a broad notion and covers many things. Some have said, for example, that a citizen has an obligation or duty to vote. Others have claimed that citizens may have a duty to serve their country and possibly even to fight in its defence. Most people who talk of political obligation, however, have one thing in particular in mind: the citizen’s duty to obey the laws in their own country” (Martin, 2003, p. 216). Furthermore, committing oneself to a duty, a commitment, a contract, or a pledge is also called an obligation. Following certain orders, rules, laws, and customs can also be categorised as an obligation. Obviously, the term can convey a sense of duty. The term political obligation is further interpreted in terms of the relationship between the citizen and the state. John Horton says that “political obligation is understood as the special moral relationship which obtains between members and their political community” (Horton, 1992, p. 16). In a political obligation, the citizens have certain duties to perform, and those are in accordance with their commitment to the state system. Since citizens may have benefited from the state, they may be required to fulfil at least some of the obligations of citizenship out of a sense of justice or gratitude (Knowles, 2010). A well-known idealist political philosopher, T.H. Green, means that the term “political obligation includes both the obligation of the subject towards the sovereign, of the citizen towards the state, and the obligations of individuals to each other as enforced by a political superior” (Green, 1999, p. 5).

Bentley LeBaron has brought three components of political obligation, and those are the following:

1. Legal Obligation: People are bound by laws that are validly enacted by the appropriate authorities and upheld by the courts (LeBaron, 1973). If any individual violates it, legal action can be taken.
2. Moral Obligation: It may be based on our personal convictions or on our individual consent (or any other performative); it can be forced onto us against our choice. It is often passionate when it comes to moral commitment (LeBaron, 1973).
3. Interpersonal Commitment: it originates from our own individual behaviours, including our words and deeds, either directly or indirectly. Due to the fact that they are dependent on an individual's actions, they can also be termed "performatives” (LeBaron, 1973).

Generally, most of the constitutions in the world have only specified the rights of their citizens, and only some countries have specified the duties of their citizens. However, the rights and duties are considered on both sides of the same coin. Political responsibility entails a set of legal responsibilities that citizens must fulfil; non-compliance is typically punished or required by the applicable laws or regulations. In liberal democratic nations, citizens enjoy more rights and liberty than duties; instead, in totalitarian or authoritarian countries, the emphasis is placed on duties. The idea of political obligation also asks to obey the political authority. In democratic nations, obeying the political authority would be the choice of its citizens, and they could voluntarily and willingly obey

their authority. Similarly, there would be a choice of dissent in democracy. However, in authoritarian, totalitarian, or monarchical regimes, dissenting choice is very limited, and moreover, the citizen must obey their political authority. And under such regimes, the citizens would forcefully obey the political authority.

Citizen and State

There are distinct characteristics encompassed in a state. Many political philosophers interpreted its nature in different ways because of its approach towards the citizens. David Miller briefly summarises it as follows: (Miller, 1984). First, the state is a *sovereign* body in that it asserts total control over defining its subjects' rights; for example, it forbids subjects from retaining customary rights that it has neither established nor endorsed. Second, the state is a *compulsory* body, in the sense that every individual born into a certain society is compelled to acknowledge commitments to the state that rules that society; the only way to avoid these obligations is to abandon the community. Third, the state is a *monopolistic* body; it asserts a monopoly of force over the territory it occupies, prohibiting the existence of any rivals. Fourth, the state is a *distinct* body, in that the roles and functions that make up the state are different from societal duties and functions in general, and the people who make up the state, such as the police, legislators, bureaucrats, and military forces, generally belong to a different class. The way the state governs its people is by making them do things or have obligations. Therefore, it is appropriate for a legal state to use its authority to impose obligations or duties on its citizens. Legitimate states, sometimes defined as those having the authority to govern their own people, are those that lawfully exercise coercive powers, among other capabilities (Knowles, 2010). In general, individuals follow the law. They comply because they acknowledge that their government is in control. They act in this way as a result of their acceptance of the political system. Even if they prefer to defy the government, it is only because they find it difficult to accept the system as a whole and the government in particular.

The nature of the relationship between citizens and the state has been a core element of the academic discourse of many political theories. Richard Bellamy says that “citizenship has traditionally referred to a particular set of political practices involving specific public rights and duties with respect to a given political community” (Bellamy, 2008, p. 3). From ancient to modern political philosophies, there are distinct interpretations regarding the role of citizens in a state. The great ancient political philosopher Plato opined in his prominent work, *The Law*, that “a citizen is one who knows how to rule and be ruled with justice” (Plato, n.d.-a, p. 23). Further, he also said that a citizen is someone who resides in a political community, actively participates in it, and is subject to its laws as a political community member (De Lara, 2017). Another great ancient political philosopher Aristotle opined in his masterpiece work, *The Politics*, that “a good citizen ought to be capable of both: he should know how to govern like a freeman and how to obey like a freeman—these are the virtues of a citizen” (Aristotle, n.d., p. 57). Furthermore, he also introduced the idea that having citizenship should require the person who shall share in the administration of justice and the holding of office (Johnson, 1984). Likewise, in ancient times, being a citizen meant possessing certain qualifications rather than domicile status. However, Thomas Hobbes introduced the idea

that a citizen is always subordinate to the sovereign. Hobbes says in his famous work *De Cive* (On the Citizenship) that each citizen should make an agreement in a way that “I transfer my right to this man on condition that you transfer your right to him also” (Hobbes, 1998, p. 90). It connotes that a citizen is party to the agreement that created the origin of the state or ruling sovereign authority. Hence, the citizen should follow that ruling of the authority.

In the modern era, democracy has triumphed in over hundred countries in the world. And wherein the absolute power rests with the people rather than the ruling authority because people can decide whom to form an authority to rule. Hence, the people have more responsibility and obligation towards the state system than the other non-democratic political systems in order to maintain the state system intact. As Will Kymlicka viewed it from a liberal democratic perspective, “citizenship means treating people as individuals with equal rights under the law; therefore, it distinguishes from feudal and other pre-modern views that determined people’s political status by their religious, ethnic, or class membership” (Kymlicka, 1995, p. 175). In a democracy, citizens have a greater role to play, not only in electing their representatives to form a government but also in maintaining the government as a responsible one towards its citizens. The idea of citizenship in modern democracy also provides equality in civic life. Richard Bellamy summarises as the “status of democratic citizenship not only secures equal rights to the enjoyment of the collective goods provided by the political association but also involves equal duties to promote and sustain them” (Bellamy, 2008, p. 30).

There are multiple interpretations relating to questions of why citizens obey the state, why citizens perform duties, and why citizens have the right to dissent. In some states of nature, the citizens voluntarily obey the state, and in others, they obey the state due to force. Voluntarists explain political duty in terms of voluntary action or activity that obligates a person to their community on a moral basis (Horton, 1992). However, individuals should have choices about whether to obey the state or not. John Horton explains it from the Utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s perspective, “Bentham suggests, may lead us to conclude that we ought to obey but they may lead us as well to conclude that we ought to disobey on some other occasion (or perhaps support the political institutions of some other countries)” (Horton, 1992, p. 61). Another moral philosopher, John Rawls, brought a different implication to the idea of obligation, and according to him, obligations are distinct from natural duties because they are all based on the concept of fairness (Horton, 1992). John Rawls says that “first, we are to comply with and to do our share in just institutions when they exist and apply to us; and second, we are to assist in the establishment of just arrangements when they do not exist, at least when this can be done with little cost to ourselves” (Rawls, 1971, p. 351).

In light of such perspectives relating to citizen and state over the idea of obligation, significant political theorists such as divine theory, prescriptive theory, social contract or consent theory, idealist theory, and Marxist theory have forwarded distinct connotations regarding the political obligation between the people and state. The

divine theorist believes that the right of the king is directly derived from God, and people have no right to rebel against or oppose the king. The prescriptive theory emphasises 'customary rights', which means that people follow authority because they believe it emerged as the result of long-standing customs, conventions, and traditions. The idealist theory emerged from the political-philosophical views of Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, and others, and they believed that people are rational creatures; hence, people establish the state for their self-sufficiency and inner development. Social contract or consent theorists such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau point out that the political authority establishes itself as the result of an agreement between the people and the state, and the political authority gets the consent of its people to rule through that agreement or contract. According to Marxist theory, the state is an institution of the bourgeoisie to exploit the proletariat; hence, it proposes to re-establish the state system based on the dictatorship of the proletariat by means of class struggle, and finally, it will break away from the state and form a classless and stateless society. The following section of this paper conducts a discussion on political obligation based on these theoretical explanations.

Divine Theory on Political Obligation

Divine theory is one of the oldest theories and explains why people submit to the ruler of their state. During the Middle Ages, there was a widespread belief in the "divine rights of kings." Obeying the king is also similar to obeying God. It is believed that God is the source of the ruler's authority. Because of this, the populace lacked the right to resist an unjust leader. It is a theory mainly proposed in order to protect the monarchical absolutism. King James I of England and Louis XIV of France were the greatest advocates of the divine right of kings. Jacques-Benigne Bossuet (1627–1704), one of the principal exponents of the Divine Right theory, upheld ideas of kingship prevalent in mediaeval times, and the theory maintained that some kings held their position of authority because they had been selected by God and that no one else could hold them accountable (Mitchell, n.d.). Sir Robert Filmer was another English royalist who supported the divine right theory, and he stated that "the idea of divine rights holds that kings received their authority by a celestial command and, therefore, are not subject to any temporal or earthly power" (Erincik, 2018, p. 449). According to the Divine Right Theory, the individual is both morally and legally bound to obey the King; otherwise, there will be harsh punishment from the state. Individuals should not have any possible chance of challenging and standing against the ruler. Under such a state condition, the position of individuals is less significant because they are submitting their rights and liberty to the ruler.

Prescriptive Theory on Political Obligation

As per the prescriptive theory, political authority and its reverence are formed based on 'customary rights'. If a long-standing custom or tradition supports authority, then it is legitimate. Because obedience to authority has become a well-established custom, people generally obey their rulers. A well-known exponent of conservatism,

Edmund Burke, opined that it is irrational for man to completely reject custom and tradition. Since institutions like the state develop gradually and adapt slowly to new circumstances, it is a matter of responsibility to recognise and respect state authority while pursuing its gradual, peaceful change. Michael Oakeshott, a contemporary advocate of traditionalism, opined that "political education is not an indoctrination or even elucidation of political principles, but rather the elucidation of the traditional practices and activities characterising a nation's actual political life, and similarly, government is an activity rather than a system, and a narrowly conceived activity at that" (Himmelfarb, 1975, p. 412). Paying uncompromising attention to tradition, which is an inviolable matter, is the essence of political obligation.

Idealist Theory on Political Obligation

Idealists believed that an individual is a rational being with the characteristics of innate rationality. At the same time, an individual shows moral responsibility towards society and the state system. The idealist theory divides society into two parts: the state and the people. The state is viewed as an independent society, but human beings are seen as political and rational creatures. The idealistic theory emphasises that a person cannot have any rights that contradict the state once they are granted by the state. The idealists have also characterised the role of the state, and as per their views, the state is an organic unity, an ethical institution, the creator and protector of human rights and liberty, the remover of obstacles to an individual's good life, it is formed based on the will of the people, and above all, it is the best friend of individuals. An individual can pursue maximum development on her or his own by adhering to the laws and regulations of the state. Idealists such as Plato and Aristotle theorised the mutual relationship between individual and state in an 'organic form'. Aristotle wrote in his book of *Politics* that "the state aims at satisfying all the needs of men; men form states to secure a bare substance, but the ultimate object of the state is good life" (Aristotle, n.d., p. 31). Similarly, Plato also says in his book of *Republic* that "the original aim in constructing an ideal state was to find in its justice exemplified on a larger scale than in the individual" (Plato, n.d.-b, p. 119). And justice means the balance of individual virtues of reason, spirit, and appetite. Another group of idealists, such as Hegel and T.H. Green, theorised that an individual's liberty lies with the obedience of the state, and political obligation is lined with an individual's moral obligation. "As Hegel's state is a God state or the march of God on earth, to obey the state is to obey the God" (Bhattacharjee, 1959, p. 310). It is a view that when a person obeys the state, they are also exercising their freedom according to divine reason.

Consent or Contract Theory on Political Obligation

During the 16th and 17th centuries, the theory of contract on political obligation was developed in Europe. The social contract idea emphasised that people who existed in the state of nature made a contract that gave rise to political authority, which was once again dependent on the consent of the people. The ardent advocates of this theory were Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

Thomas Hobbes was an English philosopher, and his philosophy of social contract was theorised in his monumental work *Leviathan*. The development of science during his era influenced the development of his political philosophy. Hobbes also observed that physical laws may serve as the foundation for human behaviour and psychology. His theory is mainly centred on human nature and the state of nature. Hobbes did not have an optimistic approach to human nature because of his life experience during the English Civil War in 1641. He had seen human beings from a pessimistic point of view and emphasised that human beings have a selfish and egoistic nature. He ‘put for a general inclination of all mankind a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseth only in death’ (Hobbes, 1651, p. 66). ‘In the nature of man, he found three principal causes of quarrel: first, competition; secondly, diffidence; and thirdly, glory’ (Hobbes, 1651, p. 77). ‘The first makes men invade for gain; the second for safety; and the third for reputation’ (Hobbes, 1651, p. 77). ‘Men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man’ (Hobbes, 1651, p. 77). ‘In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short’ (Hobbes, 1651, p. 78). Hobbes emphasised that fear and self-interest are the two basic human motives that must be restrained and managed by an all-powerful, sovereign authority. And therefore, he defended the creation of an absolute legal sovereign. After the creation of the sovereign, everyone should obey the sovereign. According to Warrender, “political obligation for Hobbes is a moral obligation to abide by the covenant that subjects may be supposed to have made to obey (with some exceptions) the laws laid down by the sovereign” (Raphael, 1962, p. 375).

John Locke was a liberal English philosopher, and his theory covered many areas of liberal thought, including constitutionalism, consent, liberty, natural right, law-based authority, property, and tolerance. Locke introduces his own perspective on social contract theory in his *Second Treatise of Government*. According to his perspective, humans originate in the state of nature, which is complete equality and freedom (Fritz, 2019). He theorised about the concept of natural right. Mainly, there are three implications for his political theory. Firstly, since everyone has equal rights based on the law of nature, no one may be under another person's political control without their consent. Secondly, the government's primary duties were to protect and preserve these rights. Thirdly, rights specified and regulated the boundaries of the authority of governments. Individuals are naturally free and choose to participate in politics. The individuals maintained a private realm in which he carried out their actions and goals even after the formation of a political community. People agreed through a contract to organise themselves as a community or civil society and submit to the will of the majority. They surrendered some of their power—that is, the three particular rights (right to life, liberty, and property) that made up the inherent right to

uphold the laws of nature. There should be a legitimate government to rule over its citizens. And this government should be formed with the willing and voluntary consent of its individuals. John Kilcullen observed that Locke's 'political obligation is not a corollary of political power but an obligation assumed voluntarily by consent' (Kilcullen, 1983, p. 325). Locke also described the origins of political obligation as well as the conditions that keep citizens tied to it. 'The governments citizens consent to are those of majoritarian rule (unless they consent to some other form of governance). Thus, every person, by agreeing with others to make one body politic under one government, puts themselves under an obligation to everyone in that society to submit to the decisions of the majority and be bound by them' (Fritz, 2019, p. 17). Nevertheless, Locke's political obligation is a limited one. 'There are three rights which a person must exercise on his own judgement without deferring to the judgement of the community's representative, namely: not to do anything contrary to natural law; to defend oneself and others against serious injury which the community cannot or will not repair; and to rebel against corrupt government' (Kilcullen, 1983, p. 325).

Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a French political philosopher and the greatest critic of eighteenth-century French society. It seems like Rousseau was a strong supporter of individualism for some and a collectivist in the opinion of others. Rousseau believed that although the original persons lived in a pre-social and pre-political state of nature, their most essential interaction was with society. In a state of nature, individuals are guided by instinct of self-preservation and compassion rather than logic. In a social contract, he also tried to show how a righteous society could be created. He was optimistic that the right society would transform a noble savage into a human being. Here, his famous quote is relevant, and he mentioned in his work *The Social Contract*, "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains" (Rousseau, 1762, p. 2). A society guided by the "General Will" could achieve the same level of freedom enjoyed by the noble savage in a state of nature. Susan Dunn, observed that, 'this "will" reflect what enlightened people would want if they were able to make decisions solely as social beings and citizens and not as private individual' (Dunn, 2002, p. 10). The General Will shall prevail only in a democratic society where people have consciousness and are involved in the decision-making process of the government. The reason the General Will is universal is not due to its widespread acceptance but rather to the fact that its goal is always for the common good of all. Rousseau believed that a contract's principal objective was to balance authority and liberty. Rousseau says that his social contract provides a solution to the fundamental problems of "finding a form of association that will defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone and remain as free as before" (Rousseau, 1762, p. 10). He disagreed that surrendering one's freedom to a third party was a requirement of the social contract. Instead, to create legitimate polity to 'defend and protect with the whole common force the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself with all, may still obey himself alone, and remain as free as before' (Riley, 2005, p. 196).

Marxist Theory on Political Obligation

Marxists viewed that society is divided into two classes: the bourgeoisie (the capitalist class who owns most of the means of production in society) and the proletariat (the working class, who sells their own labour power for their subsistence). Under the social system, ‘society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other – Bourgeoisie and Proletariat’ (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 15). And that social system has bolstered the formation of the state. Marxist theory was highly critical of the hitherto existing bourgeoisie state system. In such a state system, Marxists postulate that the organised representation of the community was absent; rather, it was an organised representation of the dominant class, those who owned the chief means of production. In the ‘*Communist Manifesto*, Marx viewed that “the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” (Marx & Engels, 1848, p. 15). The interest of the state is to protect and prosper the welfare of the bourgeoisie class through the means of exploiting the proletariat. In a bourgeois state, the aspirations and wishes of humans will be suppressed and subjugated by the dominant position of the capitalist class. And as a consequence, human beings would alienate in a bourgeois economic order. In the *Early Writings*, Marx stated that alienation is the estrangement or separation of humans from humans and also from nature (Livingstone & Benton, 1975). As per Marx's view, there are two elements to the relationship between a human and his or her products in a capitalist society: while the human's products, or commodities, become his or her master, the worker himself becomes an objectless creature (Avineri, 1968). Similarly, private property is also the result of alienated labour (Catephores, 1972). Consequently, an individual would become a mere member of society without enjoying any significant power or position. In such a dominant class-controlled social system, individuals cannot have any obligation towards the state. The point of Marxism is that human emancipation can only be realised by transcending bourgeois society (Miliband, 1989).

As per Marxian observation, the political obligation of the individual evolves through three different stages. Firstly, there was a pre-revolutionary stage. In that stage, individuals are politically not obliged to the state because it is a bourgeois state, and individuals do not have any actual representation. Secondly, there was a revolutionary stage, wherein the actual transition occurred for political obligation. Under this stage, individuals would be in the process of abolishing the bourgeoisie state and creating a state under the dominance of the proletariat. And the individuals would also be in a condition of total political obligation towards the state. Similarly, the capitalist state should be abolished by establishing a state system under the control of the proletariat. And the ultimate existence of the state will be in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. ‘The state will be independent from and superior to all social classes, as being the dominant force in society rather than the instrument of a dominant class’. (Miliband, 1989 p. 289). The final stage is post-revolutionary; the state system will be withered away, and the total obligation of individuals will be changed towards social development. Individuals will be physically and mentally liberated from all the political and social systematic bondages.

The distinct theoretical perspectives have narrated that the political obligation of the individual towards the state system is transiting according to the governmental nature of the specified state. The divine theory postulates that individuals come under the obedience of the ruler, i.e., the king. So far, according to the divine theory, there is an asymmetrical relationship between the state and citizens because citizens come under the authority of the state. The prescriptive theory has further added that individuals have to follow the authority of the state because it has been attached to tradition or customary practices. The prescriptive theory introduced the idea that individuals are traditionally attached to the state system; hence, they are obliged to obey the authorities of the state. Idealist theory indicates that individuals cannot be detached from the state because they are one of its components. Individuals and states complement each other. Therefore, without a state, individuals cannot exist, and vice versa. The responsibility of the state is to protect and prosper the lives of its people, and similarly, people have a moral and legal responsibility to obey the authority of the state. The contract or consent theory puts forward the idea that individuals are obeying the state without any coercive command from the state. As per the contract or consent theory, the individuals are obeying the authority of the state because they created it with their consent or an agreement in order to safeguard their lives. Therefore, individuals are free to obey the state and have the responsibility to stabilise the state system. The Marxist theory highlighted the contrasting side of the state system because it criticises the functions of the state as the instrument of the bourgeoisie to exploit the proletariat. It argues for the withering away of the state by establishing a classless and stateless system wherein individuals do not need to obey any institutional authority. In such a way, all the principal theories relating to political obligation have theorised their views on the relationship between the individual and the state.

Conclusion

The connotation of political obligation has multiple interpretations as per the various political theoretical perspectives. It is a relationship between the state and its individuals. The above-mentioned distinct theories indicate that the positions of states and individuals in a political system are dissimilar. It may change accordingly if a change happens in the political system. In some political systems, the state controls individuals, and in others, individuals control the state. And accordingly, the political obligation will also be changed as per the change in the political system. As A.P. D'entrèves concluded that 'whenever we resort to the phrase 'political obligation', to indicate a duty of submitting to power or of obeying the law, we are committing ourselves to a particular use of the word obligation, using the word not to describe a given state of affairs (the mere fact that some men are under the command of others or that there exists in a state a system of sanctions organised), but to prescribe the performance or omission of certain actions as desirable, independently of the possibility of a recourse to force' (D'entrèves, 1968, p. 312).

Since the institution of the ruling system, human beings have been subjugated, willingly or unwillingly, to follow the authority that governs them. Population is one of the elements of the state, and without it, the idea of a

state will not prevail. In the modern democratic system, the perspective relating to the political system is that the people created the state with their consent in order to safeguard and ensure the wellbeing of their lives. Therefore, individuals have a certain responsibility to preserve the state by obeying the rules and laws set by the state. However, it does not permit any excess authority of the state to control its individuals and limit their enjoyment of personal life and liberty. And it is also the responsibility of the individuals to control the state against going towards authoritarian rule. In the light of distinct theoretical interpretations, it can be understood that the idea of political obligation has multiple meanings between the state and individuals, and it also provides certain inputs towards the formation of the present democratic idea of political obligation

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