**AUTHORITY**

The word ‘Authority’ has been derived from the Latin word ‘Auctoritas’. In ancient Rome, the term Auctoritas was used to denote the power of the Roman Senate to determine the validity of a law. When the law was accepted by the Senate, the people accepted it as a law backed by Roman Senate’s Auctoritas(Authority).

In modern times, however, Authority has come to mean authorised power of a person or an organization and a power which is legitimate. Authority means power characterised by legitimacy and rightfulness. It can be described as the legitimate power of the authority-holder. It is the recognised power of the authority-holder. Those upon whom the authority is exercises acknowledge and accept it as their duty to obey the orders of the authority-holder. Those who have authority have the legitimate right and power to exercise it. Government exercises the sovereignty of the state in the form of authority.

**Definitions of Authority**

According to MacIver,” Authority is often defined as being power, the power to command obedience.”

According to the Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences, “Authority is the capacity, innate or acquired, for exercising ascendency over a group. It is a manifestation of power and implies obedience on the part of those who are subject to it.”

According to Robert Dahl, “Legitimacy power or influence is generally called Authority.”

**Kinds of Authority**

1. **Traditional Authority –** Authority based on customs and conventions is called Traditional Authority. The authority of a village elder is a traditional authority. In the political system of Britain, the authority of the King and the Prime Minister mainly rests upon customs, conventions and usages and not upon constitutional laws. This can be called Traditional Authority.
2. **Constitutional Authority –** The legitimate power vested by the constitution of the state in an office or an institution is called Constitutional Authority. The authority of the President of India, Prime Minister of India, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, the Parliament, the Cabinet, the Governor of the State, the Chief Minister of a state is a constitutional authority.
3. **Legal Authority –** Power conferred upon a person or an office by the laws of the state is called Legal Authority. A Deputy Commissioner, a magistrate, an income tax officer and all government officials exercise legal authority.
4. **Legitimate Authority –** Authority is authority only when it is legitimate and enjoys the confidence and recognition of the people as a legitimate or rightful power. The term legitimate authority simply emphasizes the legitimate quality of authority.
5. **Religious Authority –** Authority sanctified by the tenets of a religion is called religious authority. The authority of Roman Pope as the spiritual ruler of the Catholics is a religious authority.
6. **Charismatic Authority –** Authority based upon the personal qualities, the personality of the person wielding power over the people is called charismatic authority. Personal charisma of the authority-holder always supplements the legal authority of the leaders.
7. **Political Authority –** The power resulting from the status and structure of a person in the hierarchy of a political party or a group is Political Authority.

**Relationship between Authority and Power**

For further clarity about the nature of authority, let us discuss its relationship with power. There are several similarities between Authority and Power. Both have several common features and sources.

Power of the state is a legal power. Its legitimacy can be weak or strong. When a dictator or an authoritarian ruler exercises the power of the state, his rule is legal. However, if it is based on force, coercion, suppression and domination, its legitimacy is always weak. The people obey his commands out of fear. They do not really recognise these as legitimate commands. The dictator does not enjoy the recognition, support and respect for his authority. His power cannot be really described as authority because he gets the power to rule through illegitimate means and exercises power which is devoid of legitimacy. When a democratically elected leader starts using the power of the state in an arbitrary or coercive way, his legitimacy also gets reduced.

Authority means legitimate power i.e., power based on law and characterised by legitimacy.

**Points of Differences between Power and Authority**

1. Power is the ability to produce a change in the behaviour of others through the use of force or coercion or threat of use of force. Authority is the recognised power/legal right of the authority-holder to direct and regulate the behaviour of his subjects.

2. Power may or may not be legitimate. It can be illegitimate also. Power based on naked force, dominance and suppression is illegitimate power. As against this, what is called Authority is essentially a legitimate power. Legitimate is the hall-mark of Authority.

3. Power is based upon force. Its basis is force or threat of use of force. Authority is based upon the constitution, laws or rights or traditions. It enjoys the status of being a rightful power.

4. Scope of authority is defined, recognised and limited. Authority –holder is responsible as well as accountable in respect of the exercise of his authority. Hence Authority is democratic in nature and scope. Power depends upon the ability and capability of the power-holder. Its use can be democratic or undemocratic.

5. Power can be legitimate or illegitimate, Authority is essentially legitimate. There can be no such thing as illegitimate authority.

6. Authority can have its basis on constitution, law, tradition, ideology, position in government or social or religious status. Power is basically the ability or capacity, legal or otherwise, to carry out desired functions in society.

7. A dictator has the power to rule, a democratic ruler uses the authority to rule.

8. Whereas authority bears the quality of being, recognised, just accepted and legitimate power of the authority-holders, Powers denotes the ability and capacity, legal or extra legal, to impose decisions on others by dependence upon the sanction of force or threat of use of force.