

Q: Discuss the theory of John Locke about his Social Contract and also discuss whether all these foundations are valid in contemporary era or not?

## Explicating Locke's Theory of Social Contract

Start with the introduction of the answer

John Locke was an English philosopher who had seen the Glorious Revolution of 1688 of England. Unlike Hobbes, Locke had seen progression period of England. He was an active member of Whig party of England who had supported the parliament in its struggle for power. So, Locke had a very positive image of human nature and state of nature in his mind. He had expressed his views about human nature and state of nature in his book "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding" written in 1691. Like Hobbes, he also opens his theory of social contract with

human nature and state of nature.

## Expounding Views of John Locke on Human Nature and State of Nature

### → Locke's Views on Human Nature

John Locke draws a very bright picture about human nature. According to him, man is sympathetic towards all his fellow beings. He is rational and understands moral order as well. He also knows how to maintain it.

### → Locke's Views on State of Nature

John Locke believes that man in state of nature was not political but he was social. There were laws of nature in that state of nature. He characterized the state of nature by perfect freedom. Everyone was free to do whatever he wants to do but within the boundaries of laws

of nature.

## Illucidating the Theory of Social Contract Proposed by

### John Locke

John Locke proposed the theory of social contract because he believed that there were three flaws in the state of nature: the laws of nature were not defined, there was no body to make those laws and there was no authoritative body to interpret these laws.

Since all human beings were able to think about their protection and about their natural rights. So, they decided to enter into society by making a contract where they will choose their representatives to make laws for their protection, liberty and to maintain social order.

In a nutshell, he gave a concept of representative form of government

through this social contract.

## Main Tenets of Social Contract Proposed by John Locke

### a. Popular Sovereignty

John Locke gave the concept of popular sovereignty in his social contract. He believed in limited form of government.

“It's people who are actual source of power.” (John Locke)

Unlike Hobbes, he believed that government rests with the governed.

### b. Separation of Powers

Locke gave the concept of separation of powers through his social contract. Because without any checks and balance, powers would be concentrated in few hands. So, he forced on prevention of concentration of powers in single state organ.

### c. Transparency and Meritocracy

John Locke believed that government must be accountable before the people who have brought them into power. The law making should be transparent and wider participation of public in decision making must be encouraged.

### d. Protection of Liberty

The key aspect of Locke's social contract was the protection of liberty of people. He gave the concept of freedom of speech, freedom of press and religious tolerance. This also leads towards protection of minority rights.

### e. Right to Revolution

Unlike Hobbes, John Locke gave the concept of right to revolt against the government. Thus, if the ruling government fails to protect the rights of people who have brought them into power;

people can overthrow that government.

## Compatibility of Locke's Theory with Contemporary Era

### a. Strict Accountability

John Locke has given the concept of accountability in his theory as he has mainly focused on the point that people have given power to government, so these people have complete right to keep check on their actions. John Locke in his **Second Treatise of Government** says that

"Government can not give powers in other hands because this power is given to them by the people and only they can transfer this power to someone else."

This principle is still valid in this <sup>modern</sup> era.

### b. Rule of Law

John Locke proposed that no one is above the law. Even the authoritative body that makes

Relate your headings to the qs statement

laws for the society are not above those laws. And laws are also applicable to them even though they are in position. Its best example is of **US** where every one is equal before law. Even it is **judiciary** that interpret the laws, even passed by President or Senate.

### c. **Pluralism and Diversity**

Since pluralism and diversity is the common feature of this age. This aspect was also clear in Locke's theory. Locke had given the concept of religious tolerance. He said that all men are "blank slates" - in latin **Tabula Rasa** - it is education that shapes their religious ideologies. This protects rights of minority group of society and fosters social harmony.

## d. Free and Fair Elections

Since Locke had given the concept of representative democracy which strengthens the foundation of free and fair elections. It encourages public to trust their electorate. Its magnificent example is of Turkey where despite the destruction caused by earthquake of 6<sup>th</sup> Feb 2023, people participated in elections.

## e. Wider Participation of Public in Decision Making

It is the feature of every democratic state of the world and its concept was given by Locke. In liberal democracies as well, the features of Locke's theory are seen. For instance, BREXIT referendum of Jun 23, 2016 is the best example of Locke's theory that encourage heavy turnout of 72.2% of eligible voters to participate in decision making of UK.



## Concluding Thoughts

The theory of John Locke laid the foundation of liberal democracy by throwing light on the concept of representative form of democracy. In this modern world, his theory is still valid because of features of liberty, right to revolt and accountability; that are thought to be essence of any democratic system in this contemporary world.