

Q.2

⇒ Critically analyze the social contract

theory of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau.

∴ Introduction:-

The social contract theory, a cornerstone of political philosophy, has been shaped by the influential works of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. These 17th and 18th-century thinkers proposed distinct interpretations of the voluntary surrender of individual rights to a governing authority, sparking enduring debates on governance, individual freedoms and social order. This analysis delves into the complexities of their theories, exposing strengths and weaknesses, historical context and philosophical underpinnings. By examining Hobbes' bleak view of human nature, Locke's emphasis on individual rights and property, and Rousseau's notion of the general will, this critique aims to illuminate the theoretical tensions and critiques surrounding the social contract theory, ultimately enriching our understanding of its implications for modern governance and societal structure.

∴ Social contract theory of Thomas Hobbes.

The conditions in the state of nature

might have continued indefinitely except for two factors inherent in men, i.e. reason and fear of violent death. Man is reasonable and he can understand that unless unless they are willing to accept the discipline imposed upon them by a superior authority, their possessions and their very lives may be forfeit. According to Hobbes, in order to escape and this ceaseless struggle, all men decided to enter into a contract.

Each man in this gathering uttered the following words.

" I authorize and give up my right of myself to this man or his assembly of men on the conditions that thou give up your right to him or them and authorize all his actions in right manner".

According to Hobbes, this was the beginning of great Leviathan. In a nutshell, all men surrendered their rights to a person, and the person to whom the rights were surrendered became the sovereign an absolute sovereign.

=: Implications of the contract:-

1. **Unilateral**: This is not the contract between the ruler and subjects but between the subjects themselves.
2. **Irrevocable**: Once the individuals get into contract, then they cannot annul it.
3. It creates an absolute ruler.
4. The society according to this contract is not a growth but an artifice.
5. The contract negates any kind of revolution because the people surrendered all their rights to a sovereign.

⇒ Social contract of John Locke's:-

Locke says that in order to get rid of the state of nature, men make a contract to enter into civil society. This is a political contract because it establishes a civil society. Locke's contract is two folded. In the first step, people establish a trust.

People, having formed a society must then institute a government. The government is the trustee of the people and it functions for them and responsible to them. It has obligations to those who create it and for whom it acts as an agent. It was responsible to secure the rights

of life, liberty and property. If it failed to secure these rights, it would be a breach of trust and would call for revolution.

He believes in the representative form of government and gives supreme power to the assembly of men trusted by the people to establish laws. Executive is subject to legislature but the latter is not all in all.

A: It cannot exercise power arbitrarily.

B: Its power must be directed towards the general principles of the society.

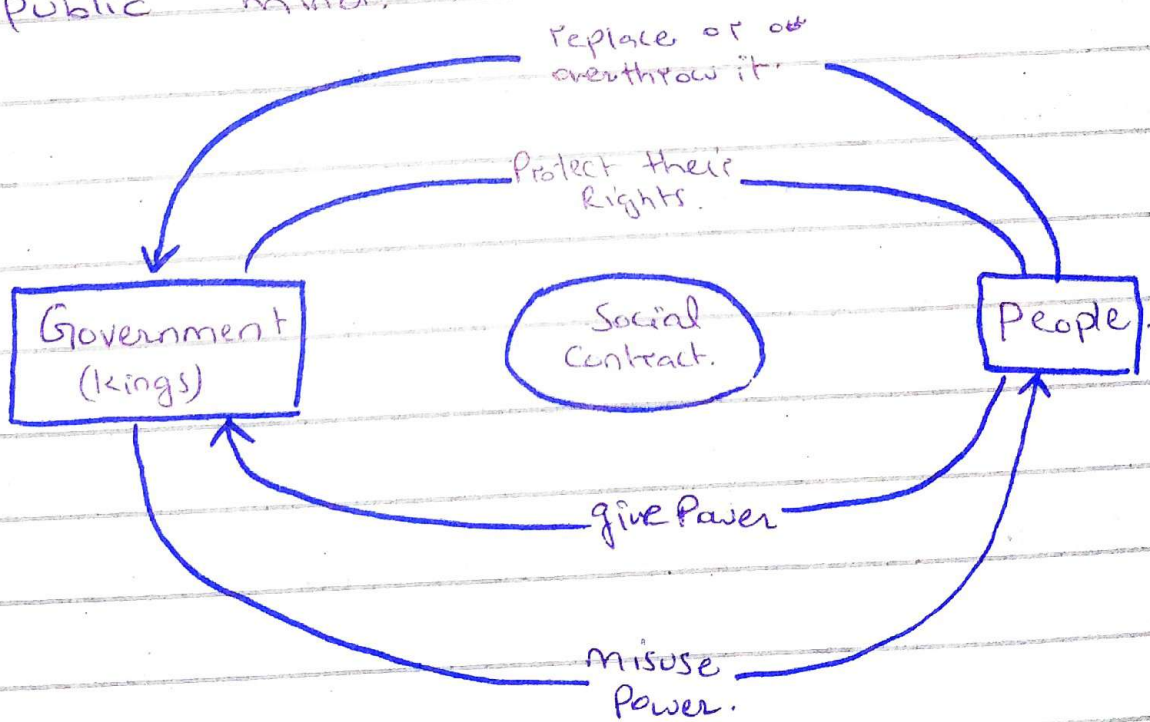
C: It cannot deprive a man of his property without his consent.

D: It cannot delegate lawmaking power to another body because only society has the power to do so.

→ Social contract of Rousseau :-

In Rousseau contract as the rights are social rather than natural. The Rousseau contract require that each member surrenders to the community all his rights. The surrender must be total and unconditional and in the legitimate political community the people as a body are sovereign. There now exist a public person

which on its passive role is known as sovereign. The people which are components of the body, also have a dual role when they exercise their sovereignty through the public policy, they are citizen's when they obey, they are subject. To avoid the selfishness of individual, which may destroy the community, it is necessary for the body politics to operate on "General will". This is a central part of Rousseau philosophy. The general will is an expression of the public mind.



(Social Contract theory of Rousseau)

⇒ Key components of Hobbes, Locke's and

Rousseau Social Contract:-

Thomas Hobbes

1. State of Nature:

Humans are naturally driven by self-interest, leading to conflict and chaos.

2. Social Contract:

Individuals surrender their natural rights to a sovereign authority, establishing a commonwealth.

3. Sovereign Authority:

Holds absolute power, maintaining order and protecting citizens.

4. Covenant:

A binding agreement among individuals to obey the sovereign.

Locke

1. State of

Nature:- Humans are free, equal and governed by reason.

2. Social contract:

Individuals consent to government to protect natural rights.

3. Natural Rights:-

Life, liberty and property.

4. Government:

Derived from the people, with limited powers.

Rousseau

1. State of Nature:

Humans are inherently good but corrupted by society.

2. Social Contract:

Individuals form a collective agreement to government.

3. General will:-

The collective will of the people, prioritizing the common good.

4. Sovereignty:-

Rests with the people, not a monarch or elite.

⇒ Conclusion:-

In conclusion, the social contract theories of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, despite sharing similarities, exhibit profound differences in their conceptions of human nature, government and individual rights. Hobbes' bleak view of humanity leads to an absolute sovereign, while Locke's emphasis on individual rights and property informs liberal democracy. Rousseau's focus on the general will and social equality shapes democratic governance. Criticisms of these theories include Hobbes' potential for tyranny, Locke's neglect of social inequalities and Rousseau's risk of majority tyranny. Nonetheless, their ideas have profoundly influenced western political thought, shaping modern democracy, liberalism and socialism.
