

Write note on classical liberalism.

Ans Introduction :

The word Liberalism is derived from Latin word 'liber' which means 'free man'. Classical liberalism or negative liberalism is based on the idea that individuals, liberty, and freedom are supreme, and it promotes minimal and neutral control of the state. The concept of classical liberalism is also applicable in modern political system.

2. Understanding the concept of Classical liberalism :

Classical liberalism is 'an ideology based on the commitment to individualism, freedom, tolerance and consent. J.S. Mill had supported this idea when he said,

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"Over his own body and mind, the individual is supreme."

Moreover, classical liberalism considers individual as an end in himself and prevents the maximum interference of the state in individual's matters.

3. **Origin of Classical liberalism:**

The concept of classical liberalism was originated in the 18th century in Europe and this disregarded the divine theory of state and stated that the government should exist on the consent of people. After a long period of struggle in England and France, there was the growth of Capitalism which is an economic philosophy of classical liberalism.

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4. Theory of classical Liberalism:

The theory of classical liberalism was originated by the social contract theory of Hobbes and Locke, and was developed by Bentham, J.S Mill and Paine. This theory states that;

- (i) An individual is rational, moral, and materialistic thus he knows his interests well.
- (ii) The state is considered as a necessary evil.

5. Theory of classical liberalism in contemporary politics:

The contemporary relevance of the theory of classical liberalism in politics is,

- (i) **Individualism:** Individuals are the end in themselves thus their liberty and freedom is utmost important.

The government should promote the well being of individuals.

ii. **Limited Government**: The government exists for to maintain law and order, and to protect life, liberty, and property of people. Thus its power is limited so that it should not rule arbitrarily.

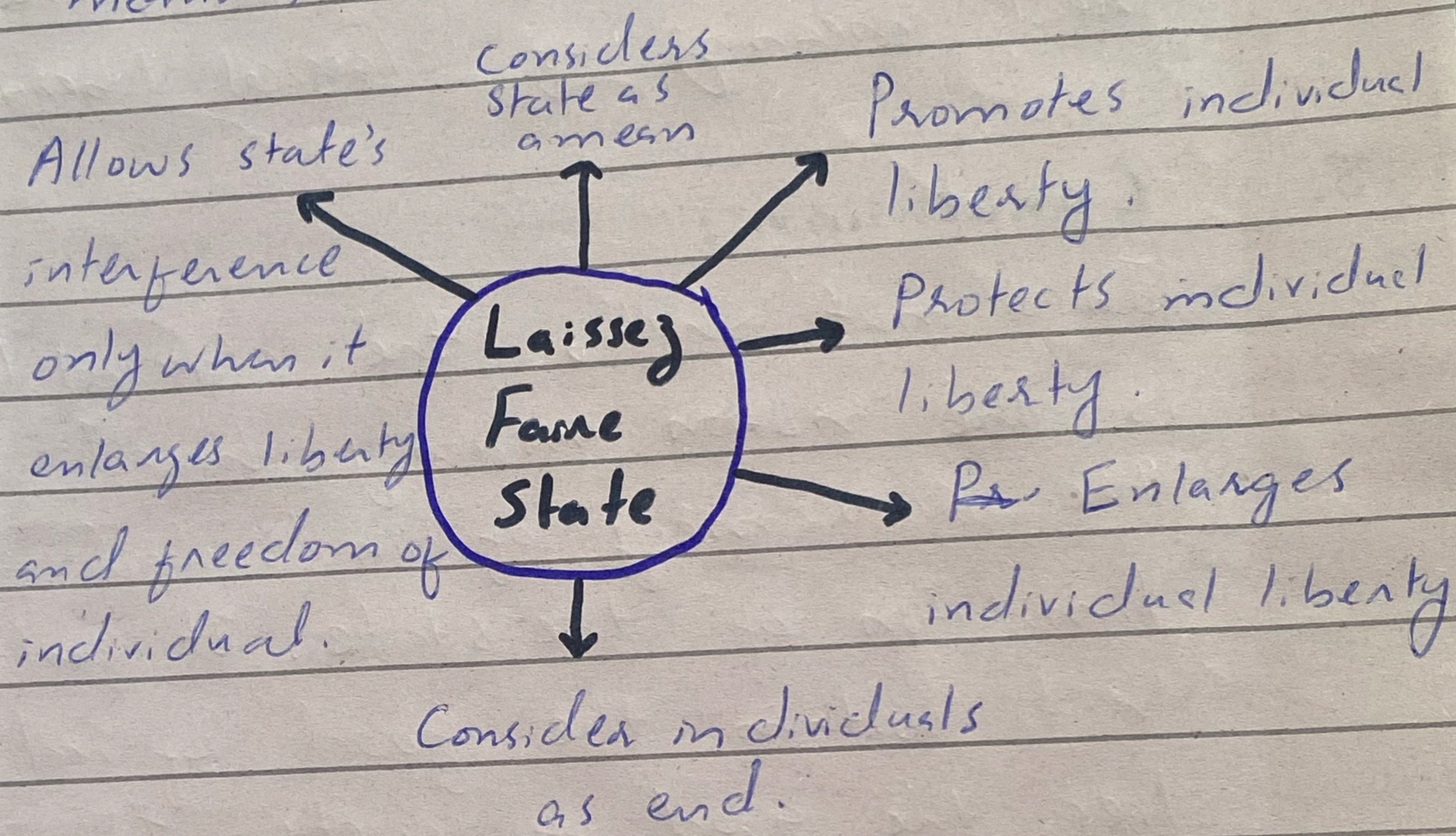
iii. **Democracy**: The government exists with the consent of the governed thus it is accountable to the people.

6. Classical liberalism give rise to the Laissez Faire State:

The meaning of the French phrase 'Laissez Faire' means 'Let it be'. The laissez Faire state was originated in the 18th century and it promotes limited state. It prevents the inter-

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ference of government in economic and social affairs of the individuals. It promotes the minimal government power and considers state as a means, and individual as an end.



7. Criticism :

The classical liberalism is criticized on the ground that state is not a negative institution, and thus it not only maintains the law and order but also exists for the overall well being of society. Besides,

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the minimal interference of the state in the economy leads to the **concentration of capital** in a few hands and monopolistic control of trade. Thus, it negates the real meaning of classical liberalism.

8. **Conclusion :**

In a nut shell, the classical liberalism is the notion mainly based on the supremacy of individual and limitation of the state. It entails that within the good of individual lies the good of society. It has some loopholes but is a very applicable in the contemporary politics.