

Question # 4

Compare and Contrast Hobbes and Locke's views on State of nature and Social Contract.

Hobbes and Locke were both political philosophers who presented the concept of State of nature and Social Contract. State of nature explains the life of a man before the state was formed. Their views on state of nature are given below

Hobbes concept of State of nature

According to Hobbes, man in state of nature was mere brute. His passion was greater than his sense of reason. State of nature was a state of war. It was a war in which every man was against each other. There

were no laws. In such a state of nature, there was no room for art, industry etc. The situation of might is right prevailed in state of nature

Hobbes social contract

In order to escape this harsh reality, men came into contract with each other. Each man gave up his right on the condition that all other shall give up their rights to a single individual or a body and accept him as the highest authority. This social contract led to the creation of states.

Criticism

Hobbes was criticized on the following grounds

- a) He portrayed a dismissed picture of state of nature
- b) There is no historical record of hobbes state of nature
- c) How can a man who is a mere brute so forms a contract with other men.

- d) Hobbes views on human nature were influenced by the prevailing conditions of his time.

Locke's concept of state of nature

According to Locke, man in a state of nature was not a brute as envisioned by Hobbes. Locke believes that man in state of nature was a peace loving creature. He lived his in harmony with his fellow men. He possessed reason and was not driven by passion. In the state of nature natural laws govern his behaviour. Man would follow these natural laws in dealing with his fellow men.

Locke's Social Contract

With the concept of private property and fruit of labour, conflicts began to develop between men. Natural laws were unable to provide a solution to these conflicts. As a result, men entered into a contract with each other. The first contract resulted in the formation of

Laws and civil society. The second contract led to the formation of Government.

Comparison of Hobbes and Locke's Social Contract theories

Hobbes theory of Social Contract

- 1) Envisioned man as a brute
- 2) Men in state of nature were at war with each other
- 3) Passion > Reason
- 4) There were no rights in state of nature
- 5) Men entered into a single contract

Locke's theory of Social Contract

- 1) Envisioned man as a peace-loving creature
- 2) Men lived peacefully in state of nature
- 3) Passion = Reason
- 4) Man was governed by natural rights in state of nature
- 5) Men entered in 2 contracts. First one led to the formation of civil society. The second led to the formation of government.