

QUESTION 4

RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL CONTRACT IN MODERN POLITICAL SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION :

The social contract theory, the most ancient concept, emerged in order to define origin of state. The substance of this theory is that at first man used to live in state of nature (no governmental organisation). The escape from state of nature made man a social contract. In 16th and 17th century the "contractualist" philosophers that include Hobbes, Lock, and Rousseau brought forth their enduring philosophies. Hobbes' "Leviathan" presented a bleak view of human nature, suggesting without strong and authoritarian government human would descend into state of chaos. Locke's "second Treatise of Government" argues government derives its power from consent of governed. Moreover, Rousseau's "Social Contract" emphasized the importance of individual freedom and popular sovereignty. Nevertheless, the concept of social contract by Hobbes, Lock and Rousseau remains relevant in modern times in form of Absolute monarchies, constitutional democracies, and Democratic participation and social justice respectively.



THOMAS HOBBS' SOCIAL CONTRACT AND ITS ENDURING RELEVANCE

Thomas Hobbes outlined his theory of Social Contract in his magnum opus "Leviathan" (1651)

BASIC PREMISES OF THEORY

According to Hobbes, man by nature is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short" and envisioned: ~~state of nature~~ state of nature is a chaotic and violent place where individuals constantly compete for resources or survival

STATE OF NATURE

"state of nature exists wherever there is no legitimate political authority able to judge disputes and where people live according to law of reason"

(Thomas Hobbes)

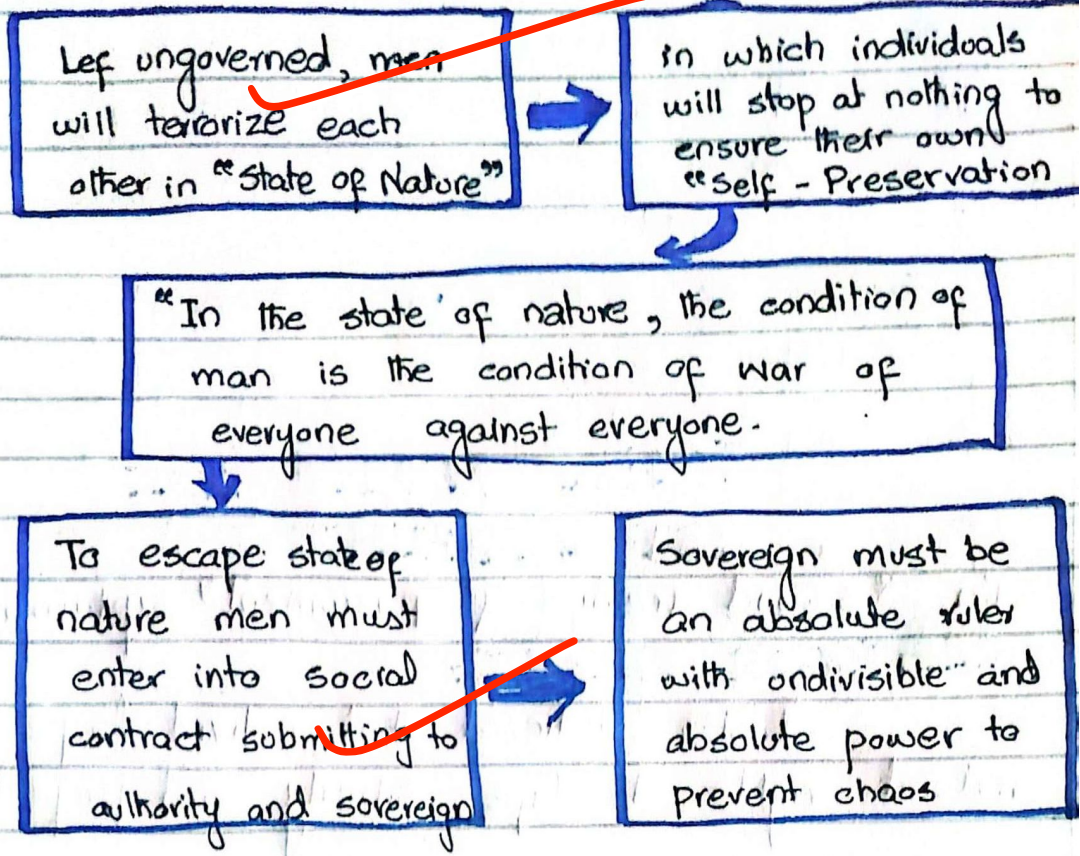
In state of nature there will be "war of every man against every man"

SOCIAL CONTRACT:

To escape this state of nature, individuals form a social contract, transferring their natural rights to powerful sovereign for protection and order

ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY

Hobbes argued for absolute sovereignty where sovereign has unlimited power to maintain order and civil war



MODERN IMPLICATION

1- ABSOLUTE MONARCHIES OF EUROPE AND MIDDLE EAST

The political systems inspired by Hobbesian philosophy were manifested in absolute monarchies of Europe and Middle East. These monarchies have unbridled power and lack of individual liberties, under the pretext of security and order. Historically Louis XIV, known as the "Sun King" is a classic example of absolute monarch who embodied Hobbesian principles.

Russian Tsars, particularly under Romanov dynasty, wielded absolute power, governing with belief that their rule was essential to maintain order in vast and diverse empire. Vladimir Putin's centralized power reflects Hobbesian principles. North Korea's absolute authoritarian regime also works on same principle. In the middle East Saudi Arabia, Jordan and UAE govern on Hobbesian philosophy.

JOHN LOCKE AND ITS RELEVANCE

In "Second Treatise of Government" explains **NATURAL RIGHTS**

Locke believed that individuals possess natural rights to life, liberty and property.

SOCIAL CONTRACT:

Locke argued that individuals form a social contract to protect their natural rights - The government's role is to protect these rights and serve the people.

LIMITED GOVERNMENT

Locke advocated for limited government and right of people to overthrow a tyrannical government.

MODERN IMPLICATIONS

1- CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACIES

Locke's principles underpin many of world's democratic constitutions, particularly the U.S constitution, which emphasizes individual rights and limited government.

2- PROPERTY RIGHTS

Lock's emphasis on property rights remains relevant in debates over economic systems, land use, and intellectual property in the digital age

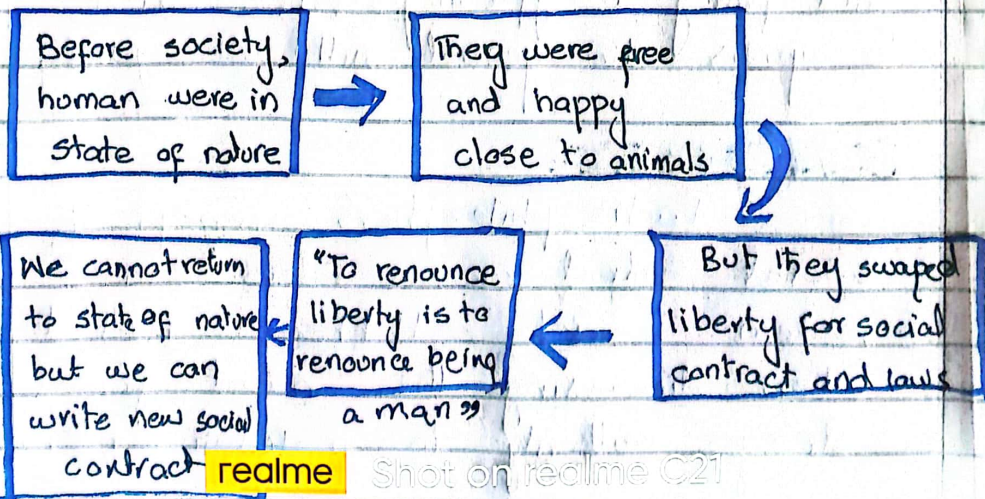
3- JEAN - JACQUES ROUSSEAU

In "Social Contract" he brought forth his theory **GENERAL WILL**:

Rousseau believed that individual should submit to the general will, which represents the collective interest of people.

DIRECT DEMOCRACY.

Rousseau advocated for direct democracy, where people participate directly in decision-making.



MODERN IMPLICATIONS

Rousseau's ideas about popular sovereignty, direct democracy, and social justice continue to influence political thought

a. DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION:

Rousseau's emphasis on general will is echoed in modern democratic practices where citizens are encouraged to participate in political process, reflecting belief that legitimate authority comes from power.

b. SOCIAL JUSTICE

His ideas inspire movements advocating for social justice and equality, arguing that laws should reflect collective will and serve common good.

c. DIRECT DEMOCRACIES

Rousseau's concepts are relevant in discussions on direct democracy, where citizens have a direct say in legislation and policy, bypassing representatives to express the general will more purely.

CONCLUSION

Each philosopher's concept of social contract remains relevant in modern society. Hobbes is invoked when discussing the need for strong authority to maintain order.

Lock is central to liberal democratic thought and the protection of individual rights. Rousseau is key in discussions on democracy, civic responsibility, and social justice. Their differing views provide rich frameworks for understanding and addressing contemporary political and social change.

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