

Hobbes (1588-1679)

Thomas Hobbes was born in 1588 Malmesbury in England. It was time of political upheaval as confrontation between **monarchy** and **parliamentary government** which cause civil war in England. Thus, it was a period of **ceaseless chaos, fear and insecurity**. Hobbes' opinions about human nature, state of nature, sovereignty, social contract.etc was shaped according to prevailing condition in England. During civil war some people were in favour of **monarchical** system while others supported parliamentary form of government. His period was marked by emergence of **new scientific discoveries**, explorations and new scientific theories. **Newton's** theory of **gravity** influenced entire Europe.

His Literary condition - 'Leviathan' is the most important literary work of Hobbes, apart from it, his others literary contributions are 'De Cive', 'De corpore' and De Homine.

MECHANICAL- MATERIALISM

'Leviathan' is most important source of Hobbes political thought. His thinking was influenced by **scientific revolution** going on in Europe. Hobbes methodology for studying political science is neither **philosophical like Plato** and Aristotle nor it was **historical like that of Machiavelli**. He utilised study of **physics, geometry** and **psychology** for studying **political science**. He utilized **mechanical materialism** as a new method of study. He was influenced by Law of Motion of **Galileo** and geometry of **Euclid**.

Applying physics he said that everything in this universe is made up of matter. **Matter** is made up of particle and particles are in state of **motion**. By applying **psychological** he said that every person has unlimited **desires and attractions** towards some objects and repulsion towards then In his work, 'Leviathan', he said that '**Human Desires comes to an end only after his death.**' Hobbes said that **self-preservation** is the most important and fundamental desire of human being. In order to ensure **self-preservation**, person acquires more and more power and influence. He also utilized **geometry** and made Hypothesis about human nature, like in **geometry**. Nobody can deny the **logic** and **rationality** of Hobbes but nobody can accept the result of Hobbesian thought because of justification of **absolute monarchy**.

Structure of Thought

(A) Human Nature

Hobbes said that basic assumption about human nature is very similar to principle of geometry which says that sum of all the three angles of triangles is 180°. Similarly, Hobbes said that every human beings wants to fulfill unlimited desires. And desires come to end only after his death. Man has liking for something and aversion for others. Thus, they enter into social contract to remove anarchy of state of nature and ensure their self preservation.

(B) State of Nature: Features of state of nature can be summaries as follows:-

1. Absence of state and government
2. Absence of morality
3. Absence of private, property and culture
4. Absence of law
5. Absence of Justice property and culture
6. Absence of **Society**

There is ceaseless conflict between individuals in **state of nature**. This makes their life insecure. Thus, in Hobbes state of nature, the life of individuals is **poor, short, nasty and brutish**. There is absence of any authority to control individuals in state of nature. Thus, in order to abandon **anarchy of state of nature**, man exercises his **reason** and forms state by entering into social contract.

Vaughan criticized Hobbes who said that individuals. Life is endangered in state of nature. However, under state, they will become **like slave**. According to Rousseau, 'individualism ends with **end of freedom**.'

Natural Law

Hobbes theory of social contract is based on his concept of natural law. According to Hobbes, individual's **desires are endless**. But they have **reason** too. He termed this **law of reason** as natural law. It should be remembered that Hobbes concept of natural law is different from **universal religious law** of medieval times. Hobbes is a materialist thinker. He believes that law of reason prevents people from self-destruction. In his work 'Leviathan', he has elaborately dealt with his concept of law of reason or natural law. This law of reason makes life more secure peaceful and meaningful. Law of nature means **law of prudence**. Crux of natural law can be sunned up in the following terms: -

1. All people must strive for peace.
2. Individuals should be ready to surrender some of our rights for larger peace and security.
3. We must enter into social contract.

(C) Social Contract:- Natural law makes ground for making social contract. Social contract theory implies that Individuals must come together to form state.' In Hobbes word, "I **authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to assembly of man, on this condition, that they give up the right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner**". According to Hobbes, people will surrender all their natural rights and power to supreme King for sake of self-preservation. '**State and King are outcome of social contract** and not a party to contract.' The basis of Hobbes theory of social contract is **reason, power and utility**. The nature of Hobbes social contract is **hypothetical, theoretical** and **not historical**. According to Hobbes, emergence of state is based on rational self Interest.

Method of Contract

State, society and government comes into existence through a **single contract** with self-preservation as ultimate goal. State, society and government are **artificial institutions**. On dissolution of social contract, people will revert to **state of nature**. Thus, after social contract people will **surrender all their rights** and powers to king. And they will not have any right **except self preservation**.

Mechanistic State

Social contract implies that state is **not natural or divine institution**. It is an **artificial** organization. State is machine made by the people for their self-preservation. State is utilitarian because it removes anarchy.

Fear, Reason and Power

Entire Hobbesian thought can be understood with the help of three terms- Fear, Reason and Power. Hobbes was a premature baby and said that **I and fear are born together**. In state of nature there is a fear of **violent death**. After formation of state fear of absolute king is present. Social contract is a result of reason which changes interest into **rational self-interest**. Hobbes said that each and every individual want to get more and more **power and glory**. They are **selfish and egoist** too. In absence of strong king there will be anarchy. Power of **absolute king** is the only way to regulate the behaviour of selfish human being.

Legitimizing power of King

Social contract is a mechanism by which he **legitimized** the power of King. Because King is result of **consent of the people**. Consent display the element of **democracy**. Contract indicates towards consent. King is not part of the contract but. King is result of the contract. Although King is an outcome of contract but **King is all powerful and absolute**. Hobbes attract on democracy, because support the power of absolute Monarch. But He is democratic too, due to acceptance of social contract.

Absolutist State

State is **all powerful**. The power of state is **inalienable, undivided**. Command of state is law. State is not restricted by **morality, customs or traditions**. For Hobbes, state is absolute and powerful institution. It should be obeyed even by minorities and any **protest against state is unreasonable** and is against security of state.

Individuals are being denied of their rights against state. This makes him authoritarian/or supports of absolute state.

According to Hobbes, government resort to use of coercion against citizen, will not be considered as illegitimate. Because government and state are result of consent of people and protest against government will be considered as protest against people. Thus, only state

will have all the power and rights. According to Sabine, the state is like a **hypothetical corporation** where its rights are greater than its members. Thus, Hobbes has favoured absolute, powerful and despotic king.

Hobbes has completely **subordinated Church to state**. And no institutions, organizations will have any right to make any law which is against state. He believed that state should be governed by **fear of punishment** which is closer to Machiavelli's concept of state.

According to Hobbes, command of state is law. Powers of the three branches of government-legislative, executive and Judiciary should be monopolized by the state. He is against separation of powers. Hobbes made **king as immortal god** and his powers are indivisible. Hobbes ignores traditions, customs and morality. King is not bound by anything. Hobbes removes hurdles, put by French scholar **Jean Bodin**. Bodin said that King is subject to limitation of **natural law and divine law**. But Hobbessian King is not under any limitation. Hobbes said that King is **mortal God** or earth. Hobbes laid the foundation of **legal sovereignty** which is developed by **John Austin** in a more comprehensive concept.

Individualism

Hobbes concept of Government is based on his theory of consent. He has considered man as rational being. The seed of liberal ideology exist in thought of Hobbes.

Individual is rational: **-Individual** is an unit in thought of Hobbes. Individual makes society, state and government. **Self-Preservation** is an ultimate objective of individuals. They can deny order of state if self-preservation is in **dangered** society is merely aggregation of individuals. Thus society is Atomistic in nature.

- According to Sabine, individualism is a means and absolute state is an end. He went on to extent of saying that if state fails to secure self-preservation of its citizens, it does not deserved to be obeyed.
- According to Hobbes, state is an **artificial** and **utilitarian** institution and not any divine or natural Institution. Thus, Hobbes thinking forms basis of Bentham's is utilitarianism.

Base of Liberalism and Utilitarianism

Hobbes says that individual is **rational**. He is **rationalist** who did not accept traditions, customs and culture. Every individual knows his interest best and everyone is **selfish**. Thus, he established the philosophical foundation of liberalism. Liberals also believes in rationalism and refuse to accept traditions and customs. Hobbes never spoke against the right to property. He said that state is an **instrument** which is essential for **self-preservation**. Therefore, it is an **utilitarian institution**. State is not created by God but it is a result of consent of the individual. But he is not liberal due to support of **absolute state**.

Secular State

Church is **not divine institution**. It is made by the people. Hobbes is a materialistic thinker, who refused to accept divine origin theory of state and considered **Church as subordinate** institution to state. Thus, he approved **Machiavelli's** idea of separation of Church from state on reasonable grounds. Church is created by individuals. State has unlimited power and all other institutions are subordinate to state.

- Everyone is free to choose his faith. State will never dictate faith of individuals.
- Religious beliefs are not objective in nature. The institution of state is necessary to contain conflict over religious matters whenever it arises.
- Hobbes has considered Church merely as an institution like any other institution, but **state** is supreme of all.

Democracy

Instead of accepting parliamentary form of Government Hobbes has supported despotic king. Instead of favouring citizen's right, Hobbes has supported rights of king. Hobbes has considered King as embodiment of power. Who is freed from all the restrictions. He considered King as source of all law. As are mentioned features shows that Hobbes ideas are **anti democratic**. But following characterise proves that his ideas associated with democracy too. Hobbes **attacked on democracy, democratically** because he justified absolute monarch on the basis of social contract. And following democratic element inherent in Hobbesian thought:-

- (1) Hobbes **theory of consent** is a result of **contract** among people.
- (2) State is an **utilitarian institution** and its main function is to preserve lives of people.
- (3) According to Hobbes, creation of state, society and government is result of contract. Consent involves democracy.
- (4) If there is threat to people's life, it will not be obligatory upon people to obey state.
- (5) He was the first thinker, who said that physical and mental abilities of people are same.

Macpherson

In this work- '**The political theory of possessive individualism**':- Hobbes, Locke (1962) termed Hobbes Locke as '**possessive individualist**'. According to Macpherson, Hobbes is capitalist and supporter of market who commodified labour. There is flaw in his concept of state of nature. His concept of state of nature is reflection of capitalist society. Thus, Hobbes has created a **hypothetical state of nature** to provide legitimacy to capitalism. Says that Hobbes absolute power of monarch is also unreasonable. He supported despotic and powerful king to protect the interest of capitalist class. And maintaining peace and stability in society. In absence of powerful sovereign **property** of the capitalist class will be threatened and insecure.

Political Obligation

Social contract of Hobbes is not **historical** but is **hypothetical or philosophical**. Contract does not explain about **origin of state but utility of state**. It means why we should obey the order of the state. Political obligation tells about state is essential for **self-preservation**. Powerful state is far better than anarchy. Self-preservation is a danger in state of nature. Social contract is done for justifying the necessity of state.

Hobbes theory of social contract is not historical but philosophical interpretation of origin of state. His main objective is to analyze whether state should be obeyed. This gives emergence to theory of political obligation. **Leo Strauss** said that base of obligation in Hobbes is **physical**. Since state holds the absolute power. **Taylor** is of the view that political obligation of Hobbes is derived from **law of nature**. Law of nature stands for **law of prudence**. However, **Michael Oakeshott** said that obligation in Hobbes is comprehensive in nature. Which includes **physical, rational** and **moral** obligation. Contract is made for rational self-preservation. And people transferred all their power to king. Therefore, it is moral obligation for the people to obey the order of state. State is the most powerful institution which keeps all power in his hand.

Liberty

Hobbes said that **silence of law** is liberty. Law is **command** of King. King is all powerful and despotic. But liberty is not available in the state of nature. State of nature is state of anarchy. Liberty requires law, which is possible under state. Because self-preservation is in danger in state of nature. Liberty does not **mean violation of law or Hurting** the life of others. Thus **motion** of every individual is not unrestrained. **Hacker** says that liberty is available in idea of Hobbes. Hacker is of the view that Hobbesian state is **absolutist** and it is **not totalitarian**. Totalitarian state implies a fascist state which controls each and every part of individual's life. Individuals are free to engage in act of their choice.

Nobody is allowed to oppose the state. Opposition of state means inviting state of nature. Nobody can enjoy liberty in state of nature. Although, Vaughan **criticized** Hobbesian notion of Liberty. Liberty is not available in anarchy and it vanishes under powerful state. Thus individual is bound to fall either in **deep sea or in deep gorge**. Liberty finishes in both the conditions.



