

J. S Mill (1806-1873)

J.S Mill was born in 1806 in England' it was a time of industrial revolution and emergence of capitalism. Mill's transformative criticism of Bentham utilitarianism was one of the greatest contribution of Mill's thought. He was deeply influenced by moral and romantic writers like Coleridge, words worth. He strives to modify **utilitarianism** by humanizing it.

Literacy Contribution

Some of his important literacy contributions are Essay 'On Liberty', 'Utilitarianism', 'Representative government', 'on subjection of women', etc. His essays 'On liberty' and the 'subjection of women' were classic elaborates of liberal thought on important issues like law, liberty .The principles of 'Political economy' recommends positive role of state.

Individualism/Liberalism

Liberalism and utilitarianism accept liberty and rights of individual. They supported constitutional democratic government. State is a machine for them. But Locke justifies liberalism on the basis of natural rights. Utilitarian believes in principle of pleasure and pain. Mill gave new Foundation, to liberalism on the basis of utilitarianism. Whatever is increasing our pleasure is having utility. Thus, Mill extended utilitarian argument to support state and government. State and government maximizes pleasure of individual, therefore it has utility. State and government is means for furthering pleasure of individual. Thus Mill is individualist. But limited and constitutional government is essential for maximization for pleasure, Therefore Mill is liberal. Individualism begins from Hobbes. But Mill became first liberal who recognizes moral, virtuous human being in modern age. Mill is influenced by Greek philosophy.

Being individualist Mill says that societies comprised of individual. Individual are moral and virtuous. It seems that Mill is influence by the Greek thought. He believes that a development of society or state depends upon the good nature of human being. He was Member of Parliament and said that politics is medium for involvement of social service. Therefore, he says worth of state (society) is determined by the worth of individuals. He did not except the Bentham concept of human nature. Who is concern with maximisation of his own pleasure. Mill was influence by Humboldt who said inner development is more important than external development.

Liberty

In his essay 'On Liberty' he made detailed analysis of Liberty. Mill says every **restraint qua-restraint** is an evil. It means Liberty is absence of **restraint**. Further he said that Liberty

consist in what once desire and he advanced strong argument in favour of liberty, which is as important like **Milton's Areopagitica**. During 19th century for moral, spiritual, mental and human development, liberty is essential. Mill liberty means '**absence of restraint**' and believes that any kind of **restriction** on liberty is an **evil**. He believes that there are **two types of liberty-**

- 1) Freedom of speech and expression where no censorship is allowed.
- 2) Freedom of action: - He divided freedom of actions into **two parts**;
 - i. Self-regarding actions.
 - ii. Other regarding actions.

ARGUMENT FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH/EXPRESSION

A. Individual is master of his own life:

Mill is a **liberal, individualist**, who believes that individuals are sovereign or **masters over his own body and mind**. Therefore, liberty is essential for development of the individual. Freedom of speech and expression is most important element of **liberty**. Everyone should be entitled to speak freely. **Liberty is an end itself**. It is not means for presentation of any pleasure. Anybody can speak against entire civilization. Conflict of opinion is necessary to obtain truth.

B. Nobody is infallible

Mill is against any restrictions on freedom of speech and expression and if someone is silencing the speech of others, it should be presumed that he or she has **monopoly over truth**. There is nothing like perfect or absolute truth. Truth is always multi-dimensional. Nobody can claim that his opinion is perfect. Mill believes in **diversity of opinion** and ideas. Diverse opinions through debates and dialogues are necessary to obtain truth. Ideas of each and every one should be respected eventually, truth will prevail.

C. Development of Society

Mill has applied Darwin's theory of **survival of fittest in his** principle of freedom of speech and expression. Truth emerges and survives after conflict between truth and falsehood. It weakens superstition, falsehood and conservative opinion and leads to progress and prosperity. Liberty is essential for moral development of individuals. It is equally important for the progress of society too.

D. Against Moral Policing

However on the other hand, **moral policing** is the greatest danger for Liberty. **Tyranny of majority** always suppresses dissent and disagreement. Majority always try to oppose the divergent views, on name of **customs and traditions**. Thus tyranny of majority proves more dangerous for liberty than **autocratic government**. Mill says that Saint Jesus was crucified. Socrates was given the poison due to **tyranny of majority**. Mill was influenced from **D. Tocqueville**, who said that liberty may absent in democratic nation too?

HARM PRINCIPLE

Apart from freedom of speech and expression Mill believes in freedom of action too. Freedom of making union and association is also part of liberty. But Freedom of action is not absolute like freedom speech and expression. Action of individual which interfere in the life of other is not permitted on the name of Liberty. Mill divided individual action in two parts.

- A. **Self-regarding action:** Individual is free to smoke and free, free to walk because it is only related to individuals life. It again proves that Mill is an individualist and nobody is allowed to interfere in the domain of life of others.
- B. **Other regarding actions:** The action of individual which is affecting the actions of other is not permitted. State will act against the person who is harming others because same amount of liberty is available for everyone. Apart from other regarding action various other limitation and also applied on individuals. Thus other regarding actions are subject to restrictions. Individual's freedom can be curtailed for safety and security of state and society. Policeman is not allowed to drink while he is in duty. Limitation on liberty can be imposed during emergency.

Criticism

Since individual is not like an atom. Thus every act of individual affects others. It means every action of individual is other-regarding. It is subject to interference. Automatically liberty destroy, Mill project individual like an **atom**, therefore it **abstract**. It reality individual is part community, member of family, school, said Barker. Barker says that Mill is profunder of **empty liberty and abstract individualism**. According to Sabine, Mill neither supported the Locke's concept of natural rights nor Bentham's ideas of legal rights. Without rights Liberty becomes meaningless, thus liberty is empty.

Barker criticized the division between **self-regarding actions** and **other regarding actions**. He said that Mill failed to understand that **individual is part of society or community**. Therefore rejected the distinction between self-regarding actions and **others regarding actions**. Mill also gave an analogy of **bridge**. Somebody crossing the broken bridge and policeman who know that bridge is broken can restrict the person to cross the bridge. Policeman is not restraining Liberty of individual but he is protecting the liberty of individual. Liberty implies acting according to wish of others. If somebody knows out interest better than us, then liberty implies obeying the instructions of other too. Critics said that acting according to instruction of others is destruction of liberty.

Bentham's concept of democracy

Bentham said that everyone should be counted as one. Nobody is counted more than one Bentham gave the fundamental slogan of democracy- **'One person one vote'**. Bentham

defended democracy based on notion of maximum happiness of maximum number. Bentham said that all the parliamentarians should be given salaries he supported secret ballot system of voting. Because ultimate aim of life to increase, more and more pleasure. For Bentham democracy means the happiness of majority. Democratic form of government can be applied across the world. Because human nature is same across the world and they believe in maximization of pleasures. Mill says that, Bentham's democracy is **false democracy**.

Mills democracy

J. S. Mill modified Bentham's democracy. He was deeply influenced by **De Tocqueville**, who wrote '**Democracy is in America**'. He observed that there was '**tyranny of majority**' in America instead of democracy. Democracy propounded by **Mill has following features:-**

- According to Mill, democracy implies ensuring freedom of speech and expression. He rejected Bentham's notion of 'one person one vote' and favoured **plural voting** educated and rich person are entitled to cast five votes.
- Mill was in favour of representative democracy which ensured due representation of all sections of society including **minorities** rather than overarching representation of majority only.
- In his work, '**On subjection of women**', he strongly supported cause of women voting rights. Bentham on the other hand, was silent on the issue of women's voting rights. Bentham said that women's did not demand for voting.
- Mill was in favour of **open and transparent Ballot** voting system, voting is **public trust** which "should be performed under open criticism of public."
- Mill was against providing of any salaries and entitlements to parliamentarians. Because Politics according to him was selfless service.
- For Mill, democracy is **way of life**. After Greek thinkers, he was the **first philosopher** in modern age who emphasized about importance of **morality and virtues** as thinker. From Hobbes to Bentham were materialistic thinkers. Mill was first thinker who believed that real progress **was moral development** and not just physical and materialistic development.

Mill argued democracy is the **best form of Government**. Moreover democracy is a way of life. Which promote **disagreement and dissent**? In it believes that differences in society should resolve peacefully. Toleration must be present in society. We should not become violent for setting the dispute. Democracy is a **method of education** too. Education ensures moral development of the individual. It inculcates truthfulness among people. Thus supported open **ballot**. Mill is the view that voting is a duty while voting citizens should play role of a **judge**. One vote will decide the future of civilization; close associate of Mill, **Lord Lothian** said that democracy is not a Cape, which can be gifted by anyone. It is a habit which believes in aristocrat who gives more to life than taking out of it.

Reluctant Democrat

Mill is considered '**Reluctant Democrat**' by Wayer due to following reasons:-

- Mill refused to accept principle of 'one person one vote'.
- It seems that he is more Aristocratic than a democrat.
- Mill said that democracy was **the best form of government** but it is not suitable for each and every society. He said that democracy was unsuitable for Asian and African countries. He recommended rule of '**benevolent despotism**' in these countries, he believed that people are not civilized enough to adopt democracy, in Asia and Africa.
- By '**benevolent despotism**' he meant mild or **soft despotism** which means rulers should not be barbaric towards his subjects.
- He justified Rudyard Kipling's notion of '**Whiteman's burden**'. It appears that democracy should be adopted according to social development. Democracy is suitable for Europe because society is more developed in Europe. However Asian societies are less developed. Thus unfit for democratic form of government. Mill was influenced by ideas of Auguste Comte. He said there are three stage of development of society.

Conclusion

Mill was a democratic according to 19th century's parameters of democracy he appears to be **reluctant democrat according** to 21st century principles of democracy. Nevertheless, his opinion about liberty and freedom of speech and expression are still relevant today.

Revision of liberalism

Locke is the father of Liberalism; Government is police state or night watchman state. Thus, state is regulation authority and state is laissez-faire too. Therefore economy is run by market. Economic activities are not regulated by state. Due to right of property, rich becomes richer and poor become more poor's. Capitalist economy created deep economic disparity in society. Liberty was only enjoyed by rich and middle class. Conditions of workers marginalized. Mill recognized this problem in his book **political economy**.

He said that everyone is not standing on equal footing in society. Mill propounded the notion of welfare state. Apart from managing law and order, state also provides health, education. State will also fix working hours and pension for workers.

Mill further said that state shall impose **progressive taxation** for the Welfare of the people Mill is not against capitalist.

Sabine says that Mill revised the liberalism. Liberalism was no longer an ideology for capitalist class only. It became the necessity for entire society. State became welfare state and liberty is available for the entire society. While talking over liberty Mill is individualist but he became founding father of socialism in England. Because he reformed the capitalism and propounded the welfare state. Thus countered Marxist ideology too.

Revision of Bentham's utilitarianism

- 1. Distinction between higher and lower pleasures:** - Mill accepted Bentham's idea that ultimate aim of human life is to acquire **maximum happiness**. He also believes that the chief end of human life is to attain internal, mental and higher pleasures. Happiness means perfection of human nature, cultivation of moral virtues, total control over ones appetites and desires. According to him, physical and external happiness are lower form of happiness.
- 2. Qualitative differences of happiness:-** Mill rejected Bentham's idea of **quantitative happiness** which believes in notion of '**maximum happiness of maximum numbers**'. In the words of Bentham's, "**pushpin is as good as poetry.**" If we are getting same amount of pleasure. On the other hand Mill believes that pleasure was not only differ in **quantity** but also differ in **quality**. There is difference in what satisfies pig and what satisfies man. For Mill, pushpin will not be as good as poetry.
"It is better to be Socrates dissatisfied than fool satisfied." Mill believes that higher, spiritual and a mental pleasure is more significant than lower, physical and material pleasures. He said that, 'a dissatisfied Socrates is better than satisfied fool.'
- 3. The objective of happiness is self-realisation:-** Mill was influenced by ideal thinkers like Humboldt and Coleridge. Mill said that **spiritual development** is more important than material prosperity. **Inner development** is more significant than outer development. By development he means the capacity of **self-realization** and **moral virtuous** development of individual. Seeking pleasure became secondary to Mill and **moral development** became **primary**. That's why he destroyed the very base of utilitarianism considered as **last utilitarian and first individualist**.