

**Paper Name : Western Political Thought**

**Paper Code : 18MPO33C**

**Class : MA SECOND YEAR**

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## **Unit 4**

### **1.1 Jeremy Bentham**

- He was the founder of new ideology of Utilitarianism
- He authored the book '**An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation**'
- Utilitarianism does not mean usefulness. It is an ideology of Pleasure and Pain
- Bentham was associated with an ideological group called **Philosophical Radicals**
- His utilitarianism is described as **quantitative Hedonism**
- Bentham advocate that mankind always wants to live in the **Kingdom of Pleasure and to avoid the Kingdom of Pain**
- Pleasures are measurable. They differ only in terms of quantity and not quality
- There are no moral differences among pleasures only numerical differences
- A pleasure can be called a greater one or lessor one in terms of quantity.
- A pleasure can never be called a better pleasure or worse pleasure in terms of morality

Bentham provided **Felicific Calculus** to measure pleasures.

1. Intensity: How strong is the pleasure?
2. Duration: How long will the pleasure last?
3. Certainty or uncertainty: How likely or unlikely is it that the pleasure will occur?

4. Propinquity or remoteness: How soon will the pleasure occur?
5. Fecundity: The probability that the action will be followed by sensations of the same kind.
6. Purity: The probability that it will not be followed by sensations of the opposite kind.
7. Extent: How many people will be affected?

-Bentham elucidated a phrase “**Greatest Happiness of the Greatest Numbers**” as the guiding principle and objective of the government. The state should not aim for the pleasure of the majority or minority or the oligarchy but the Greatest Numbers.

-Bentham rejected the natural rights concept attacking it as nonsense. He believed in Legal Rights Theory. For him Rights become rights only after legal recognition and codification

- Bentham contributed to the Theory of Punishment in an appreciable way
- Bentham was against the fusion of religion and politics and he supported secularism

### **Critical Evaluation**

Many thinkers in Political science criticized the various aspects and facets of Benthamite Utilitarianism. Thomas Carlyle, a stringent and strident critic of Utilitarianism dismissively described it as **Pig’s Philosophy**

### **Comment on the Following**

1. “Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. “

2. The greatest happiness of the greatest number is the foundation of morals and legislation.
3. "The quantity of pleasure being equal, push-pin is as good as poetry."

## 4.2 J.S.MILL

- J.S.Mill is the political successor to Jeremy Bentham in Utilitarianism
- He authored books "**On Liberty**", "**Considerations on Representative Government**"
- He introduced significant modifications in the Utilitarianism of Bentham
- **Pleasures differ not only in quantity but also in quality.** He rejects the quantitative hedonism of Bentham. A person who enjoys two different pleasures will say which one is morally superior. If he does not say it means that he has not experienced the greatness of the morally superior pleasure.
- **Mill rejects Benthamite Felicific Calculus** on the grounds that pleasures are not quantitative but qualitative
- Being a human being even if dissatisfied is better than being a pig even if satisfied
- As he advocates that pleasures differ in quality the objective of human life is not the satisfaction of any pleasure but only the higher pleasure. The objective of the state and man is the **moral development** and not any development.
- Mill is an important proponent of **Negative Liberty**. There are two spheres of action for any individual. **Self-regarding sphere** consists of actions that affect the concerned individual alone. The **Other- regarding sphere** is composed of actions that affect not only the concerned individual but also others in the society. Individual must have unfetterd liberty in self-regarding domain. The state should not interfere in his freedom. But the state can curtail the freedom of the man whenever his actions impact upon others. If the state and society interfere in his personal actions the individual will lose the opportunity of choice and the fear of tyranny will arise.

- Mill has been described as a **Reluctant Democrat**. He is a democrat because he believes that democracy alone gives freedom, the means to prosperity and happiness, democracy makes people better. But a reluctant democrat because of his belief that Democracy is **“Not a Gift to be Distributed Everywhere”**. It is not suitable for all people like in colonies of Asia, Africa . **Benevolent Despotism** is better than Democracy in these colonies. He was critical of universal adulthood franchise. He advocated Plural Voting System or Weighted Voting. The principle of “ every man to count for one and no one to count for more than one ” would mean a government of least educated class and manual labours . He regarded Rights to participate in suffrage, liberty should be conferred only to those who had the character for self-control and interest in using them. C.L. Wayper viewed that” there is no doubt that Mill is entitled to be regarded as a democrat though by the 20th century, a reluctant democrat”

- Mill was a champion of voting rights for women where he was very far ahead of his times.

### **Critical Evaluation**

Mill sought to modify and enrich Utilitarianism as he was wounded by the remarks of Thomas Carlyle but many critics say that his modifications had destroyed the ideology of Utilitarianism. The noted thinker Barker said that Mill’s concept of liberty is hollow as actions of an individual cannot be compartmentalized into self-regarding and other-regarding spheres. He described Mill as the **“Prophet of Empty Liberty”**

### **Comment on the Following**

1. It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is only because they only know their own side of the question.
2. If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.
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### **For Further Reading**

1. Western Political Thought by C.L.Wayper
2. Principles of Social and Political Theory by E.Barker
3. Western Political Thought by J.P.Sudha