
Chapter 2

Freedom

❖ Freedom – Two Dimensions

- The first dimension of freedom is the absence of external constraints on the individuals.
- The second dimension is about expanding the ability of people to freely express themselves and develop their potential.
- In this sense, freedom allows the full development of an individual's creativity, sensibilities and capabilities in almost every sphere.
- A free society is a society that enables all its members to develop their potential with minimal social constraints.

❖ Constraints Over Freedom

- Restriction on freedom of individuals arises often from domination and external controls.
- It may be imposed by force or government through its laws.
- Other forms of constraints may come into existence due to social inequalities.
- In this sense, the citizens of a nation are **not** given rights and do **not** have any access to freedom.
- Thus, it is necessary to determine, which constraints are justified and which are **not**.
- However, a democratic government helps the members of its state to retain some control over their rulers.

❖ Importance of Constraints

- A little constraint over freedom is also important for proper regulation of a society.
- Constraints are important to build tolerance among different sections of a society.

❖ The Harm Principle

- John Stuart Mill in his essay *On Liberty* discussed the 'harm principle'.
- He distinguished between the 'self-regarding' actions and 'other regarding actions'.
- Mill was of the view that people should tolerate different ways of life of others, different points of views and different interests till the time they do **not** harm others.

❖ Positive and Negative Liberty

- Negative liberty seeks to define and defend an area in which the individual would be inviolable, in which he or she could become whatever he or she wants to.
- It is a **minimum** area that is sacred and in which whatever the individual does, is **not** to be interfered with.
- The negative liberty tradition argues for an inviolable area of non-interference in which the individual can express himself or herself.
- It is concerned with looking at the conditions and nature of the relationship between the individual and society and of improving these conditions such that there are fewer constraints to the development of the individual personality.
- Positive liberty recognises that one can be free only in society and hence tries to shape the society in such a way that it enables the development of the individual.

❖ Freedom of Expression

- Freedom of expression is considered to belong to the minimum area of 'non-interference'.
- John Stuart Mill presented four reasons in favour of the importance of freedom of expression.
 - First, **no** idea is completely false. What appears false to us has an element of truth.
 - Second, truth does **not** emerge by itself, it is only through a conflict of opposing views that truth emerges.
 - Third, this conflict of ideas is valuable **not** just in the past but is of continuing value for all times.

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- Fourth, what seems to be true may **not** actually be true. Very often ideas that were considered false at one point by the entire society turned out to be true later.