



**NEERAJ®**

# **POLITICAL THEORY : CONCEPTS AND DEBATES**

**B.P.S.C.- 103**

**B.A. Pol. Science (Hons.) - 2nd Semester**

**Chapter Wise Reference Book  
Including Many Solved Sample Papers**

*Based on*

**C.B.C.S. (Choice Based Credit System) Syllabus of**

# **I.G.N.O.U.**

**& Various Central, State & Other Open Universities**

*By: Kshyama Sagar Meher*



**NEERAJ  
PUBLICATIONS**

*(Publishers of Educational Books)*

Mob.: 8510009872, 8510009878 E-mail: [info@neerajbooks.com](mailto:info@neerajbooks.com)

Website: [www.neerajbooks.com](http://www.neerajbooks.com)

**MRP ₹ 280/-**

## Content

# **POLITICAL THEORY : CONCEPTS AND DEBATES**

Question Paper–June-2023 (Solved) .....	1-2
Question Paper–December-2022 (Solved) .....	1
Question Paper–Exam Held in March-2022 (Solved) .....	1-2
Question Paper–Exam Held in February-2021 (Solved) .....	1
Sample Question Paper–1 (Solved) .....	1

---

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
1.	Liberty – As Absence of External Intervention .....	1
2.	Liberty As Self-Determination .....	12
3.	Alienation, Oppression and Freedom .....	24
	(Important Issue: Freedom of Belief, Expression and Dissent)	
4.	Equality Before Law and Equality of Opportunity .....	34
5.	Equality: Sameness and Difference .....	42
6.	Differential Treatment and Equality of Outcomes .....	51
	(Important Issue: Affirmative Action)	
7.	Justice as Fairness (Distributive Justice) .....	59
8.	Idea of Just Desert .....	70

<i>S.No.</i>	<i>Chapterwise Reference Book</i>	<i>Page</i>
9.	Justice in a Global Context (Important Issue: ..... Climate Change and Environmental Hazards)	78
10.	The Idea of Rights: Entitlements and Boundaries .....	88
11.	Bases of Rights: Legal, Moral and Natural .....	98
12.	Rights and Obligations (Important Issue: ..... Human Trafficking)	108
13.	Law and Civil Disobedience ..... (When is Resistance Justified?)	118
14.	Rights and Universality ..... (Are Human Rights Universal?)	128
15.	Multiculturalism and Tolerance (How Do ..... We Accommodate Diversity in a Plural Society?)	140



**Sample Preview  
of the  
Solved  
Sample Question  
Papers**

*Published by:*



**NEERAJ  
PUBLICATIONS**

[www.neerajbooks.com](http://www.neerajbooks.com)

# QUESTION PAPER

June – 2023

(Solved)

## POLITICAL THEORY : CONCEPTS AND DEBATES

**B.P.S.C.-103**

**Time: 3 Hours ]**

**[ Maximum Marks: 100**

**Note: Attempt all the questions. All questions carry equal marks.**

### SECTION-I

**Q. 1. Examine Amartya Sen's concept of liberty.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-2, Page No. 14, 'Amartya Sen's Concept of Liberty'.

**Also Add:** According to Sen, development is the process of expanding human freedom. It is "the enhancement of freedoms that allow people to lead lives that they have reason to live". Hence "development requires the removal of major sources of unfreedom: poverty as well as tyranny, poor economic opportunities as well as systemic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities as well as intolerance or overactivity of repressive states". Sen argues that there are five types of interrelated freedoms, namely, political freedom, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency and security. The state has a role in supporting freedoms by providing public education, health care, social safety nets, good macroeconomic policies, productivity and protecting the environment. Freedom or liberty implies not just to do something, but the capabilities to make it happen. What people can achieve (their capabilities) is influenced by "economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling condition of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives".

Sen worked closely with the UNDP on its Human Development Report 2004, "Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World". This report argues that an essential element of human development is cultural freedom, namely the freedom to choose one's identity and to exercise that choice without facing discrimination or disadvantage. Cultural freedoms should be embraced as basic human rights and as necessities for the development of the increasingly diverse societies of the 21st century. All people should have the right to maintain their ethnic, linguistic, and religious identities.

The adoption of policies that recognize and protect these identities is the only sustainable approach to development in diverse societies. Economic globalization cannot succeed unless cultural freedoms are also respected and protected, and the xenophobic resistance to cultural diversity should be addressed and overcome.

**Q. 2. Write a note on the concept of Equality of Opportunity.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-4, Page No. 39, Q. No. 3.

**Also add:** Equality of opportunity provides an equal opportunity to compete in a system that remains hierarchical. Equality of opportunity points to an egalitarian society. This idea rests itself on the distinction between nature and convention, the argument being that distinctions that emerge based on different natural qualities like talents, skills, hard work and so on are morally defensible. However, differences that emerge out of conventions or socially created differences like poverty, homelessness are not.

Equality of opportunity is institutionalized through the acceptance of keeping careers open to talents, providing fair equal opportunity, and the many variations on the principle of positive discrimination. All of these work to make the system of inequality seem reasonable and acceptable. The underlying assumption is that so long as the competition has been fair, advantage itself is beyond criticism.

**Q. 3. Describe in brief three main constituents of desert.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-8, Page No. 70, 'Constituents of Desert'.

**Q. 4. Examine Feminist understanding of the debate on sameness and difference.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-5, Page No. 44, 'Sameness and Difference'.

**Q. 5. Describe the importance of differential treatment as a means for social justice.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-6, Page No. 51, 'What is Differential Treatment?' and 'Why Differential Treatment?'

**SECTION-II**

**Q. 6. Write a note on the theory of Natural Rights.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-11, Page No. 101, Q. No. 2.

**Q. 7. Explain the Marxist perspective on law.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-13, Page No. 118, 'The Marxist School',

**Also Add:** Marx's ideas about law were expressed mainly in the Communist Manifesto and On the Jewish Question which he published in collaboration with his friend Friedrich Engels in 1848. In Marxist thought, material relations of production (economy) constitute the base, which determines the superstructure such as politics, religion, education, culture and law. Capitalism is inconsistent with our species-being, because it alienates us from labor, our production and from each other. The class conflict to which this leads will eventually lead to the demise of capitalism. To avoid this, capitalist relations of production need to be regulated, and this is the main task of the superstructure. One way of viewing the relationship between the economic base and law (as an element of superstructure)

is instrumentalism. In simple words, according to this view, the law means the oppression and domination of the proletariat by the ruling class (the bourgeoisie). The latter has a stronghold on the State and its law and uses it to promote its interests. It is on the basis of this that, according to Marx, law is present in all phases of class domination prior to the proletariat revolution but not to carry equal emphasis in all stages of development. Thus law is perceived as having a relatively minor role in the phase of feudal domination but started to make its role more prominent during the bourgeoisie phase, because of its least close relationship with institutions of private property.

**Q. 8. Describe the idea of justice in international relations.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-9, Page No. 78, 'Justice in Global Content'.

**Q. 9. Examine the theory of Multiculturalism.**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-15, Page No. 140, 'Multiculturalism: Meaning and Concept'.

**Q. 10. Write short notes on the following:**

**(a) Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-14, Page No. 131, 'Debate Over Universality of Human Rights'.

**(b) Relationship between rights and obligation**

**Ans. Ref.:** See Chapter-12, Page No. 109, 'Relationship Between Rights and Obligations'.



# Sample Preview of The Chapter

*Published by:*

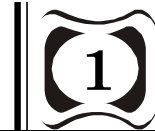


**NEERAJ  
PUBLICATIONS**

[www.neerajbooks.com](http://www.neerajbooks.com)

# **POLITICAL THEORY – CONCEPTS AND DEBATES**

## **Liberty – As Absence of External Intervention**



### **INTRODUCTION**

Liberty means absence of restraints. The notion developed based on the rational individual capable of self-determination. The idea of liberty as absence of constraints came from the theories of *social contract* which was put forward by philosophers like Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau who also proposed the framework within which individual freedom was to unfold. Liberty is considered as a democratic ideal, but has always been conceived as occurring within a set of specific constraints in social relationships. There are always limits to what is seen as acceptable forms of liberty in modern democratic societies. The idea of liberty as absence of restraints or a sphere of autonomy of the individual created. In this chapter, we shall define liberty and discuss its elements and the justifications for constraints on liberty.

### **CHAPTER AT A GLANCE**

#### **THE MEANING OF LIBERTY**

Liberty refers to freedom from, or absence of restraints. A person may be considered free to do something when his or her actions and choices are not obstructed by those of another. Constraints are obstructions imposed by political and other authorities. Thus, imprisonment, bondage or slavery and subjection to laws are curbs on freedom. Modern democratic social and political organisations have been founded on legal and institutional structures, which aim at ensuring equal consideration of each individual's liberty. Therefore, there should not be unlimited right to liberty. Each society will have a set of restrictions on liberty, which are justified by the fact that people accept these restrictions as the best possible conditions in which liberty could be maximised.

Liberty as absence of restraints or absence of external constraints is generally described as negative. The negative nature of liberty has two different senses:

(a) Law is the main impediment to liberty. For example, Hobbes described freedom as the 'silence of the laws'. According to this view, freedom is limited only by what others deliberately prevent individuals from doing. It implies a definite limit upon both law and government. However, philosophers like John Locke pointed out that a commitment to liberty does not mean that the law should be abolished. Rather, it means that law should be restricted to the protection of one's liberty from encroachment by others. Hence, Locke opined that law does not restrict liberty, it rather enlarges and defends it.

(b) Liberty means 'freedom of choice'. For example, Milton Friedman suggested that 'economic freedom' has freedom of choice in the marketplace – the freedom of consumer to choose what to buy, the freedom of the worker to choose his job or profession and the freedom of the producer to choose what to produce and whom to employ. 'To choose' means that the individual can make unobstructed and voluntary selection from different options.

Negative liberty refers to the idea of absence of external constraints and positive notions of liberty means 'the existence of conditions which enable or facilitate'. The difference between the two views is the 'freedom to do' something and actually being able to do it. To be free or at liberty to do something means not to be restricted from doing it. While to be able to do is to have the capacity, financial or otherwise, to do something. For instance, one may be free or unrestrained to take up any job, yet, one may not have the qualifications or the economic resources which may make one's candidature worthwhile.

Political theorists differentiate between liberty as an absence of restraints and the conditions which make liberty worthwhile. A starving person who is legally free to eat in an expensive restaurant enjoy no liberty based on the legal freedom. The freedom to eat for him will need some positive action by the state. For this



2 / NEERAJ : POLITICAL THEORY – CONCEPTS AND DEBATES

reason, social legislation is justified to increase opportunities for individuals. Such a move by the state not only decreases inequality but increases liberty. The negative view of liberty is a characteristic of a strand of English political thought represented by Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, Herbert Spencer and the classical and neo-classical economists who supported the claims of individuals to break free from unnecessary restraints of arbitrary government.

The main political axiom of negative liberty was that everyone knows his own interest best and that the state should not decide a person's ends and purposes. Essential to the doctrine was the sanctity of the contract. Implicit in this assumption of sanctity was the understanding that the act of entering into a contract, even if the terms of the contract were restrictive of individual freedom, was an expression of liberty, of the exercise of individual choice. Thus, to this strand of thinkers, a person's liberty was a function of that area in which he was left alone and not related to the quality of action.

Negative liberty is best understood as a doctrine about the meaning of liberty. Negative liberty is often condemned as the 'freedom to starve', but such a view is somewhat misleading. It does not necessarily put a prohibition on state intervention, but merely holds that this cannot be justified on the ground that it increases freedom, although arguments from the arena of inequality may be called into force for justification. However, the historical link between negative liberty and the *laissez-faire* economics cannot be denied, and most of its advocates favoured a minimal state. The concept is neutral in the sense that it is compatible with a wide range of politics, and describes a condition of liberty without indicating whether it is good or not.

The liberals in the 19th century, mainly T. H. Green and J. S. Mill, developed some of the earliest critiques of negative freedom. They felt that capitalism had done away with feudal hierarchies and legal restrictions, especially of economic pursuits, but it had also subjected large masses of people to poverty, unemployment and disease. Such circumstances were seen as obstructing freedom as much as legal restraints and social restrictions.

T. H. Green (1836-82) was one of the first liberals to accept the positive notion of liberty. He defined freedom as the ability of people to make the most and best of themselves. This freedom consisting not only of being left alone, but in having the power to act, changing attention thereby to the opportunities available to each individual. The concept of positive liberty, which has been at the basis of the Welfare State, has acted as the moving force behind social welfare provisions taken up by states, merging freedom with equality.

J.S. MILL'S NOTION OF LIBERTY

In the 1960s, J. S. Mill's view on liberty was influential in the academic debates. Mill believed that the purpose of liberty was to encourage the attainment of individuality which means the distinctive and unique character of each human individual. Freedom is the realisation of this individuality, which is personal growth or self-determination. The property of individuality in human beings makes them active rather than passive, and critical of existing modes of social behaviour, enabling them to refuse to accept conventions unless they are found reasonable. According to Mill, freedom does not simply the absence of restraints but the deliberate cultivation of certain desirable attitudes. For this reason, his view on liberty gravitates towards a positive conception of liberty. He believed that a person who allows others to choose his plan of life for him does not display the faculty of individuality or self-determination. The only faculty he or she seems to have is the 'apelike' faculty of 'imitation'. A person who chooses to plan for himself, employs all his faculties. To realise one's individuality, and attain freedom, it is essential that individuals resist forces or norms and customs which hinders self-determination. Mill also believed that very few individuals have the capacity to resist and make free choices. The rest are content to submit to apelike imitation, existing thereby in a state of unfreedom. Thus, Mill's view of liberty for this reason is seen as elitist because individuality can be enjoyed only by a minority and not the masses at large.

Mill differentiated between self-regarding and other-regarding actions. They are actions, which affected the individual only, and actions which affected the society at large. Any restriction or interference with an individual can be justified only to prevent harm to others. Over actions that affected only himself, the individual was sovereign. Such an understanding conveys the idea of a society in which the relationship between individual and society is not parental which means the individual is the best judge of his interests.

Similarly, the idea that an act can be constrained only if it harmed others, rules out the idea that some acts are intrinsically immoral and therefore, must be punished irrespective of whether they affect anyone else. Besides, Mill's framework rules out 'utilitarianism', as enunciated by Bentham, which would justify interference if it maximized the general interest. Yet, the division between the individual and the society is not strict in Mill in the sense that all acts do affect others in some way, and Mill believed that his principle did not preach a moral indifference towards the self-regarding behaviour of others, and felt that it was permissible to use persuasion to discourage immoral behaviour.

Also, Mill strongly believed in the instrumental value of liberty in the promotion of social goods. This is especially true of his arguments for the complete liberty of thought, discussion and expression and the right to assembly and association. Mill felt that all obstructions on free discussion should be removed because truth would emerge from a free competition of ideas. It may be pointed out that in today's catalogue of liberties, freedom of expression is valued perhaps more than economic liberty as a democratic ideal. Free exchange between individuals is undoubtedly an important exercise of liberty and a society, which forbade all kinds of liberty and this would still be relatively free.

#### **ISAIAH BERLIN AND THE TWO CONCEPTS OF LIBERTY**

Isaiah Berlin, in his *Two Concepts of Liberty*, tries to resolve the negative and positive notions of liberty. He says the negative notion of liberty can be understood by understanding in what area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do or what he is able to be without any interference by others. The positive notion of liberty can be understood by understanding the question what, or who is the source of control or interference that can determine someone to do, or be, this rather than that.

Positive liberty does not interpret freedom as simply being left alone but as self-mastery. The theory involves a special theory of the self. The personality is divided into a higher and a lower self. The higher self is the source of an individual's genuine and rational long-term goals, while the lower self caters to his irrational desires which are short-lived and are transient in nature. A person is free to the extent that his higher self, is in command of his lower self. Thus, a person might be free in the sense of not being restrained by external forces, but remains a slave to irrational appetites; as a drug addict, an alcoholic or a compulsive gambler might be said to be unfree. The idea of positive liberty involves a special interpretation of the self and assumes not just that there is a realm of activity towards which the individual ought to direct herself/himself.

The notion suggests that the individual is being liberated when he or she is directed towards it. Critics of Berlin's notion of positive liberty feel that a belief in positive liberty may involve the idea that all other values, equality, rights, justice etc., are subordinate to the supreme value of higher liberty. Also, the idea that the higher purposes of the individual are equivalent to those of collectivities like classes, nations and race, may result in the espousal of totalitarian ideologies.

#### **MARXIST CRITIQUE AND THE IDEA OF FREEDOM**

Marxists' view on liberty is based on the understanding of the individual and society, the

relationship between the individual and society and their views on capitalist society. On the other hand, the liberal view is based on the centrality of the individual and his freedom of choice.

Marxists say individual is not separated from others by boundaries of autonomous spaces for the free exercise of choice. They are rather bound together in mutual dependence. They say freedom lies in the development of creative individuality and cannot be achieved in a capitalist society where individuals are separated by boundaries of self-interest and where they can only imagine themselves to be free when in reality they are bound by structures of exploitation. They say freedom can exist in a society which is free from the selfish promotion of private interests.

Friedrich Engel's *Anti-Duhring* and Karl Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* have these views. Engel says a communist society has no class exploitation where freedom is achieved. Man has the capacity to identify and understand the forces, which condition and determine his life. Thus, man has obtained scientific knowledge about the laws of nature, which determine his existence and learnt how to live with these laws in the best possible way. Ironically, man has not been able to break free from the bondage of the forces of production, which have historically kept him under subjection, or in other words, confined him to the realm of necessity. To reach a state of freedom, man not only has to have knowledge of human history, but also the capacity to change it. It is only with the help of scientific socialism that man can hope to leave the realm of necessity and enter the realm of freedom.

In *Manuscripts*, Karl Marx says capitalist society separates the individual from his true self and from the creative influences of society. Marx proposes that freedom be can restored by transforming those conditions in which alienation happens. Thus, it was only in a communist society where the means of production were socially owned, and each member of society worked in cooperation with the other for the development of all, that true freedom could be achieved. In Marx's framework, thus freedom is seen in a positive sense, denoting self-fulfillment and self-realisation, or the realisation of one's true nature. Marx described the true realm of freedom as 'the development of freedom for its own sake'. This potential could be realised, Marx believed, only by the experience of creative labour, working together with others to satisfy our needs. Under this framework, *Robinson Crusoe*, who enjoyed the greatest possible measure of negative freedom, since no one else on his island could check or constrain him, was a stunted and therefore unfree individual, deprived of the social relationships through which human beings achieve fulfilment. Marx says under capitalism, labour

is reduced to a mere commodity controlled and shaped by de-personalised market forces. In Marx's view, capitalist workers suffer from alienation in that they are separated from their own true nature: they are alienated from the product of their labour, alienated from the process of labour itself, alienated from their fellow human beings, and finally alienated from their true selves.

#### OTHER CONTEMPORARY IDEAS ON LIBERTY

Milton Friedman was a liberal. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, he says the freedom of exchange is an essential aspect of liberty. To promote this freedom, Friedman says the state should give up its concern for welfare and social security and devote itself to maintaining law and order, protecting property rights and implementing contracts. Friedman believes not only was liberty essential for free and voluntary exchange among individuals, it was only within a capitalist society that this freedom could be achieved. Besides, it was economic freedom that provided the opportune and essential condition for political liberty.

In *The Constitution of Liberty* (1960), F. A. Hayek emphasises the negative role of the state. Hayek says a state of liberty is achieved when the individual is not subject to the arbitrary will of another individual. Hayek calls this individual freedom and differentiates it from other forms of freedom, establishing at the same time the primacy and independence of individual liberty from other forms of freedom, including political freedom. Hayek says that the original meaning of liberty as the 'absence of restraints' should be preserved. The enlargement of state intervention in the name of freedom would mean the demise of real liberty which has the freedom of individual from restraints.

Another group of thinkers evidently influenced by the Marxist notion of freedom emphasised that liberty as practiced in modern capitalist societies breeds loneliness. Eric Fromm (1900-1980) argues that in modern societies, aloofness was brought about due to the separation of the individual from his creative capacities and social relations. This separation generated physical and moral aloofness in the individual affecting his mental well-being. It was only through creative and collective work that the individual could restore himself to society.

In *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (1968), Herbert Marcuse says that the creative multidimensional capacities of the individual get thwarted in capitalist societies.

#### CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

**Q. 1. Distinguish between positive and negative conceptions of liberty.**

**Ans.** Negative liberty means the absence of external constraints and positive notions of liberty is the existence of conditions which enable or facilitate. Negative liberty is the freedom to do something and positive liberty means one has power to do it. To be free to do something means not to be restricted from doing it, while to be able to do is to have the capacity, financial or otherwise, to do something.

**Q. 2. Discuss J. S. Mill's views on liberty.**

**Ans.** J. S. Mill's view on liberty is an exposition of the negative concept of freedom. He suggested that restraints on individual's actions are evils but did not consider restraints to be entirely unjustifiable. He believed that within the society there was always a presumption in favour of liberty. Any constraints on liberty, therefore, had to be justified by those who applied them. For Mill any free action, no matter how immoral, had some element of virtue in it, by the fact that it was freely performed. He held the view that the purpose of liberty was to encourage the attainment of individuality which means the distinctive and unique character of each human individual. Freedom is the realisation of this individuality, which personal growth or self-determination. The property of individuality in human beings makes them active rather than passive, and critical of existing modes of social behaviour, enabling them to refuse to accept conventions unless they are found reasonable. Freedom does not simply the absence of restraints but the deliberate cultivation of certain desirable attitudes. For this reason, his view on liberty gravitates towards a positive conception of liberty. His view of freedom is also rooted in the notion of choice. He believed that a person who allows others to choose his plan of life for him does not display the faculty of individuality or self-determination. The only faculty he or she seems to have is the 'ape-like' faculty of 'imitation'. A person who chooses to plan for himself, employs all his faculties. To realise one's individuality, and attain freedom, it is essential that individuals resist forces or norms and customs which hinders self-determination. Mill also believed that very few individuals have the capacity to resist and make free choices. The rest are content to submit to ape-like imitation, existing thereby in a state of unfreedom. Thus, Mill's view of liberty for this reason is seen as elitist because individuality can be enjoyed only by a minority and not the masses at large.

Like other liberals, Mill emphasised a demarcation of the boundaries between the individual and society. While talking about reasonable or justifiable restrictions