

Thomas Hobbes

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It is not wisdom but Authority that makes a law.

Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was a mid-seventeenth century English philosopher who gave a new direction to Western political thought. He was the son of a minor clergyman who abandoned the family in his early years. Hobbes was brought up by a prosperous uncle who sent him to Oxford for higher education at the age of fifteen, as he displayed an early aptitude for classical languages. On completing his education, in 1608 he became a tutor to the son of the Earl of Devonshire, and stayed with the royal household for the rest of his long life.

Between 1610 and 1615 Hobbes accompanied his pupil William Cavendish on a European tour when he had an opportunity to meet Galileo and other leading scientific and literary figures of his time. This experience had a profound effect in shaping his philosophy and attitude. During 1630s when his pupil had attained the royal position, Hobbes seems to have become a royalist, that is the supporter of the Crown's authority against its critics. The views expressed in his two major works, *The Cive* (1642) (translated in English as *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society*; 1651) and *Leviathan* (1651) were in favour of the idea of monarchical government, but he did not endorse the prevalent theory of divine right of King, enunciated by Robert Filmer (1588-1653) to justify absolute authority of King. That is why when Hobbes sought to present a copy of the *Leviathan* to the exiled Charles II (1630-85), the former monarch refused to receive him.

Divine Right of King

The theory of Divine Right of King holds that the authority of King is derived from God; hence obedience to the King is as imperative as obedience to God. In Europe, this theory was developed during the ascendancy of monarchy. Its chief exponent was Robert Filmer (1588-1653), English political theorist.

Instead of invoking the divine source of absolute authority of the sovereign, Hobbes looked for the secular basis of this authority. He sought to discover the source of absolute authority of the sovereign in the 'will' and 'consent' of 'individual'. Hence he became an early exponent of 'individualism'. But as he ends up as a champion of 'absolutism', he failed to bring individualism to its logical conclusion. As he could not realize the full scope of individual's 'liberty', he stopped short of laying the foundations of 'liberalism'. Hobbes's individualism is based on the conception of discrete individuals involved in power struggle, and not of rational agents who contribute to social progress as well as to their own good.

Absolutism

Absolutism refers to a form of rule in which all powers of governance are held by a single entity. These powers are not restricted by any legal, constitutional, customary or moral limitations. The subjects are required to submit to the decision or commands of the ruler; they have no opportunity to question or resist his command.

Individualism

Individualism refers to a principle which regards individual as a rational agent. It requires that individual's dignity, autonomy and judgement should be given full recognition while making public policy and decisions. It upholds a legal, social and political order based on voluntary transactions between individuals for their mutual advantage.

Liberalism

Liberalism refers to a principle of politics which regards 'liberty' or 'freedom' of individual as the first and foremost goal of public policy. Liberty, in this sense, implies 'liberation' from restraints imposed by an established order. This principle was evolved in the West in late seventeenth century in order to liquidate feudal privileges of the land-owning class and to create favourable conditions for the new entrepreneurial class to enable them to contribute to social progress. Present-day liberalism regards individual as the fountain of wisdom and the object of welfare.

Hobbes throughout lived in turbulent times. Sense of insecurity was the chief characteristic of his life as well as his works. Hobbes used to say : "Fear and I were born twins and were ever thereafter inseparable." His father had deserted the family in his early age. The most striking political event of his times was the English Civil War (1642-49). Looking at the political scenario of his times, Hobbes was convinced that a

strong government was necessary to save human civilization from a possible disaster. He sought to lay foundations of a new science of politics in order to articulate his philosophical outlook. In short, the political disorder of his times furnished the occasion for his political philosophy, while the new standards of scientific knowledge provided him the appropriate *method* of inquiry.

English Civil War

In the history of England, the Civil War refers to the period of war (1642-49) between Charles I (1600-49) and his Parliamentary opponents. It represented the culmination of the dispute about the privileges and prerogatives of the Parliament versus the Crown. This dispute had existed since the reign of James I (1566-1625). Then during the reign of Charles I, the Parliament challenged the doctrine of divine right of King, and demanded that the appointment of Ministers and decisions about foreign and ecclesiastical affairs as well as taxation should be made on the advice of the Parliament. Charles I did not agree, and instead he dissolved the Parliament. Then he ruled for eleven years (1629-40) without Parliament. Thereafter the well-known 'Long Parliament' (1640-53) was convened which unanimously decided to divest the monarchy of all those powers that had enabled it to rule without Parliament. In 1642, Charles I tried to imprison the Five Members who were his severe critics. This resulted in the war between Royalists and Parliamentarians. Charles I himself was executed at the behest of the Parliamentary army in 1649.

Charles II (1630-85) was forced into exile; monarchy was abolished, and a 'commonwealth' was set up by the 'Commons'. The English Civil War dramatically changed the nature of English society and government. However, the attempt to find an alternative to monarchy eventually ended in 1660 with the restoration of Charles II in the wake of the death of Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658).

II

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN NATURE

Analysis of human nature is the starting point of Hobbes's political philosophy. He argued that if human beings could automatically adjust with each other, if they spontaneously took care of each other's good, no political institutions would be necessary. Hobbes does not accept Aristotle's dictum that 'man is by nature a political animal', or St. Thomas Aquinas' belief that 'man is by nature a social animal'. Hobbes's experience of the contemporary political scenario had shown that when the state becomes weak, men tend to behave like wild animals. He proceeded to imagine as to how men would behave, had there been no state at all. This led him to the hypothesis of the 'state of nature', that is the condition when there was no state, and people behaved according to their innate nature. This would explain the origin of the state.

HOBBS'S METHOD

In order to understand human nature, Hobbes turned to the method of natural science. He thought that in the new method of science, he had discovered the key for unlocking the door to political philosophy, and a sound foundation of political order. He was

particularly inspired by Galileo's theory of 'motion'. Earlier scientists (particularly Isaac Newton) had held that 'rest' is the natural state of each object, and that an external force must be applied to make it move. On the contrary, Galileo postulated that 'motion' is the natural tendency of all objects — animate or inanimate, and that an external force would be necessary to control their movements.

Hobbes now sought to evolve a new 'science of politics'. He argued that science tends to know the natural (that is the material world), and to eschew the supernatural. Scientific debate must, therefore, be conducted in materialist terms. Being inspired by Galileo's mechanics, Hobbes relied on 'mechanical materialism' for analysing human behaviour. Besides, he came across Euclid's *Elements* at the age of forty. He perceived the demonstrable certainty through geometrical reasoning. He realized that truth can be ascertained by laying down clear definitions and correct deduction of all their consequences. Hobbes argued that we may proceed from the philosophy of nature to the study of politics in three steps: (a) Perception of body in its simplest form; (b) Man as a natural body of a particular kind; and (c) Commonwealth as a type of artificial body contrived by reason. Philosophical reasoning deals with cause and effect relationship. It seeks to anticipate effect of the known causes and to ascertain causes of the known effect.

Hobbes observed that in the study of natural phenomenon, we can only attain the knowledge of *possible* causes. But in the sphere of politics, we are concerned with the study of the commonwealth which is an artificial body contrived by reason. In this sphere, causes can be established with certainty. These causes are demonstrable as precisely as in the area of geometry where we ourselves draw and define various figures. Definition of just and unjust, law and covenants, etc. — on which political order rests — are derived from human invention and agreement. Hobbes sought to determine definitions of those concepts from which the rules for founding a commonwealth could be deduced.

Galileo propounded the principles of mechanics that would explain the nature of all types of motions. He argued that the task of scientist is to discover the most primitive motions, for complex motions arise from the aggregate of simple motions. In his view 'quantification' was the key to scientific method. Deeply impressed by Galileo's mechanistic model, Hobbes postulated that all nature including human nature could be explained mechanistically. He argued that inner world of man was concerned with 'qualitative' sense-experience which was merely subjective. It was not a fit subject for scientific study. On the other hand, outer world was real and objective which could be described in 'quantitative' terms. It was, therefore, a fit subject for the application of scientific method.

UNDERSTANDING HUMAN NATURE

Following the grand design of new master philosophy, Hobbes argued that nature, man and society — all should be explained in terms of motion. Man is one creature who, like other creatures and physical objects, is always moving; he is engaged in incessant activity. He is constantly driven by his desire or appetite to gain power over others. For him, every other thing — creature or human being — is a means for his own satisfaction; hence society is also a means, and not an end. Appetite is the driving force behind men's struggle for power. In Hobbes's view, man is neither a social animal nor a political animal,

but only an isolated beast or a purely egoistic creature. Every individual is the captive of the motions of his mind which in turn are reflections of the appetites of his body. In this analysis, Hobbes closely follows Galileo's footsteps who held that all complex motions are derived from simple motions. In social sciences, this model of analysis is known as 'reductionism'. In Hobbes's analysis, political actions are sought to be explained in terms of psychological actions, which are then reduced to physiological actions, and further reduced to physio-chemical actions which are simplest to understand.

Reductionism

Reductionism refers to an approach that seeks to understand complex phenomena by reducing them to relatively simple phenomena, and then to more simple phenomena, and so on. For example, one may try to understand social life by reducing it to social behaviour, then to individual behaviour, and then to mental processes, to physiological processes, and finally to chemical processes which might be easiest to understand.

Critics point out that reductionism seeks to oversimplify complex things which may not yield reliable results. For example, men in association may behave differently from men in isolation; hence any attempt to reduce social behaviour to individual behaviour would not prove to be a correct approach.

The mechanistic model adopted by Hobbes implies that both natural and political worlds should be understood essentially as machines. In mechanical world, the whole is always the sum total of its parts. On this analogy, society or state is only an aggregation of individuals that compose it. They are joined together by mechanical unity because each part retains its original shape, and it can be replaced by a similar part. Hobbes maintains that functioning of civil government should be understood like that of a watch, because government itself is a mechanical device, similar to a watch with controlled movements.

THE STATE OF NATURE

The understanding of human nature in this form gives rise to the hypothesis about 'state of nature'. It is introduced in Hobbes's seminal work *Leviathan* (1651) as a condition that led to the formation of the 'commonwealth' (that is the state or civil society). However, its fuller description was given in his earlier work *The Cive* (1642) which was translated from Latin into English as *Philosophical Rudiments Concerning Government and Society* (1651). The state of nature refers to a hypothetical condition before formation of the state, but not in a literal or historical sense. It does not describe a state of affairs preceding the institution of sovereignty, but a condition that would certainly arise upon its dissolution. It is intended to illustrate how men would live without the state; so we may infer that the state (*i.e.* the commonwealth) was created to get rid of the extreme insecurity that prevailed in the state of nature.

In the absence of an effective external control (*i.e.* in the state of nature), men behave according to their innate nature. Hobbes thinks that men are inherently in no way better than wild animals; each individual in the state of nature is driven by endless appetite to grab everything within his reach. His self-concern blinds him to the needs of others: "He is like a king who believes that all creation was meant to do his bidding; and his

acts reflect this belief. Thus he is imperious and proud; and all objects which seem to get in the way of his appetite for power are ruthlessly crushed" (Hobbes : *Leviathan*).

However, when all men resort to extremely aggressive behaviour in the struggle for power, everybody is forced to get a shock, because everyone comes to realize that there are other men who are approximately equal to themselves. Here Hobbes introduces the concept of 'natural equality'. Apparently men are not equal to each other in all respects, but on balance their differences cancel each other out. Some may be physically stronger, hence capable to overpower others, but others may be capable of outwitting them by their mental sharpness. It may be recalled that natural equality of all creatures is metaphorically demonstrated in Aesop's tales (e.g. a hare is able to misguide a lion and kill him) as well as in the Indian classic *Panchtantra* (e.g. a frog is able to discover the misdeeds of a snake and kill him). Hobbes's concept of natural equality also implies that if a person is able to kill another today, he would be killed by still another tomorrow. This situation of anarchy is also exemplified by *Maatsyanyaya* in ancient Indian classic, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. It uses the analogy of fishes in the open sea where every fish is in the danger of being swallowed by a bigger fish. In short, Hobbes's concept of the state of nature envisages an atmosphere of extreme insecurity for everyone where each by nature wishes to kill and enslave others, each is also aware of a similar terror from the other side. According to Hobbes, this mutual fear "consists partly in the natural equality of men, partly in their mutual will of hurting" (*The Cive*). All men are potential enemies of each other; nobody knows what the other will do. With the mounting tension between them, each man eventually tends to break the tension by falling upon the other. Thus the state of nature turns into a state of war of everyone against everyone. In such a condition, life of man is "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short".

No arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short.

Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*; 1651)

In such a state there is no room for industry. 'Might is right' is the order of the day. Men are free to take what they can, and to rob whomsoever they can. There is no law to prevent oppression or to contain the 'law of the jungle'. It is a state of total anarchy. Hobbes is quite clear that he is not describing a historical fact, but only trying to demonstrate what would happen if there were no settled government for any length of time.

Hobbes argues that there can be no morality or consciousness of duty or obligation in the state of nature, because these are possible only after the establishment of law and government. Natural rights are, therefore, nothing more than the natural powers of men, used to oppress others. At best, natural liberty is nothing but 'the liberty each man hath to preserve his own life'. This urge for 'self-preservation' is embodied in the law of nature or natural law. In Hobbes's views, natural law does not express the rules of morality; it simply consists of the maxims of prudence and expediency. It is natural law which prompts men to abandon the state of nature and to establish law and government. It consists in the rules of self-preservation, particularly as follows: (a) Everybody should

aim at securing peace; (b) Men should be willing, in concert with others, to give up their natural rights; (c) Men should keep their contracts; and finally, (d) Men should show gratitude or return beneficence for beneficence. Thus, the requirement of self-preservation itself created a sense of duty in the minds of men which prompts them to form the state.

Hobbes's idea of 'natural equality' is also conducive to the idea of their mutual agreement on equal footing. If some men were absolutely stronger than others and could dominate them permanently, they would never agree to enter into any contract with them on equal terms.

III

ORIGIN AND NATURE OF SOVEREIGNTY

TRANSITION TO CIVIL SOCIETY

The setting up of the state or civil society is accomplished through a 'covenant' or a mutual agreement between all men, that is the 'social contract'. Through this agreement, the sovereign (a man or an assembly of men) comes into position which represents the supreme legal authority over the society. It enforces law and order throughout its jurisdiction, and provides protection to people's life and property. Hobbes postulates a single contract by which men abandon the state of nature and establish society and state together. *Through this historical fiction Hobbes tries to convey a philosophical truth — that the government does not rest on sheer force; it rests on the will of the people.*

The social contract, according to Hobbes, is concluded among the people themselves who emerge from the state of nature. The sovereign is not a party to the contract. According to Hobbes's logic, the sovereign did not exist before the conclusion of the contract — he comes into existence as a result of this contract, hence he cannot be a party to the contract. It is a contract of each with all and of all with each to set up a sovereign authority. By this contract every man gave up his natural rights and powers to a 'common power' who would 'keep them in awe' and give them security. Men entered into the social contract to set up a ruler, as if every man should say to every man: "I authorize and give up my right of governing myself to this man, or to this assembly of men on this condition that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all his actions in like manner." Hobbes maintains that there can be no obligation on any man which arises not from some act of his own; *all legitimacy and political obligation must eventually be traced to contract or consent.*

Thus the social contract brings a sovereign into existence who enjoys supreme and absolute authority. All men in society, apart from the sovereign himself, become his subjects. All natural rights of men are surrendered to the sovereign once and for all. The powers conferred on him cannot be withdrawn, because *if men chose to revive their natural rights, they would revert into the state of nature*, characterized by anarchy and total insecurity. Hobbes, therefore, does not admit people's right to revolt or revolution. On this basis he condemned the English Civil War (1642-49).

Since, according to Hobbes, the state and society come into existence together through a single contract, repudiation of the contract would result not only in an overthrow of the government but the disintegration of society itself. That is why Hobbes treats sovereignty as absolute, indivisible and inalienable. He creates unlimited political obligation.

Political Obligation

Political obligation implies that an individual living in a state is obliged to obey law and the commands of the political authority. This may be accompanied by such duties as the payment of taxes, participation in voting, serving on jury or armed forces, etc. when these are necessary for the maintenance of political institutions.

Hobbes's sovereign is contemplated to be morally neutral. In modern terminology, he resembles a programmed robot which has no interests, no intentions and no character of its own. He is directed to perform the function of providing security to people, issue necessary law and orders to accomplish this task. He has a will, but his will reflects the common will of all individuals. His own conduct is not liable to moral judgement.

JUSTIFICATION FOR ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGNTY

As a champion of absolute sovereignty, Hobbes is regarded the chief exponent of absolutism. His image of a sovereign is exemplified by *Leviathan*, that is a sea-monster who is largest of all sea-creatures and most powerful of them. Hobbes describes the 'Leviathan' as 'Mortal God, to which we owe under the Immortal God, our peace and defence'.

It is important to recall that the idea of sovereignty was introduced in political thought by sixteenth-century French philosopher, **Jean Bodin** (1530-96). Bodin defined sovereignty as "supreme power over citizens and subjects, unrestrained by law". He wanted to develop the idea of sovereignty into an 'absolute power', but while arguing his case he came to accept certain limitations which prevented it from becoming an absolute power. Hobbes set aside all those limitations and made it an absolute power. George H. Sabine (*A History of Political Theory*; 1973 ed. with Thomas L. Thorson) significantly observed: "Hobbes relieved sovereignty completely from the disabilities, which Bodin had inconsistently left standing."

Hobbes argued that society or state can be founded only on mutual trust, but because of the unsocial inclinations of men they cannot be expected to agree spontaneously to respect each other's rights. When they agree to enter into the social contract to form the civil society, the force of mere words will not be sufficient to bind them together. As Hobbes himself observed:

The bonds of words are too weak to bridle men's ambition, avarice, anger, and other passions, without the fear of some coercive power.

... ..

Convenants, without the sword, are but words, and of no strength to secure a man at all.

(*Leviathan*)

Accordingly, the sovereign can provide security to men only when he is powerful enough to curb all anti-social elements. He must be fully capable of punishing all offenders because it is the fear of punishment which makes the citizens law-abiding. An effective force is a necessary tool of the sovereign whether he is required to use it or not. Absolute power is, therefore, a necessary condition of sovereignty.

The obligation of subjects to the sovereign is understood to last as long, and no longer than, the power lasteth, by which he is able to protect them.

Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*; 1651)

Sabine has pointed to three disabilities in Bodin's theory of sovereignty which were removed by Hobbes's theory of sovereignty. In the first place, although Bodin makes the sovereign himself the source of law who is not legally accountable to his subjects, yet he had no doubt that the sovereign was answerable to God and subject to natural law. Sovereign is not obliged to seek consent of a superior, an equal, or an inferior while declaring law of the land; all other powers, such as the power to declare war or make peace, to appoint commissioners, to act as a court of last resort, to coin money and to impose taxes, etc. are the consequences of his position as the sovereign. But natural law exists within the conscience of the sovereign himself to which he must pay attention before declaring law of his land.

Natural Law

Natural law refers to a set of rules of good conduct which exist independently of the conventional law. These are derived from nature which can be discovered through moral intuition and by the application of human faculty of reasoning. Champions of natural law regard it as superior to any other law.

Secondly, Bodin held that the sovereign must abide by the constitutional law of his land. He maintained that the French sovereign was bound by his fidelity to the constitutional law of France. This meant that the sovereign was not empowered to set aside ancient usages and practices of the realm. For example, he could not modify the rule of succession, nor alienate any part of the public domain. Sabine terms this situation as a state of confusion: the sovereign is at once the source of law as well as the subject of certain constitutional laws which were neither made by him nor he was authorized to change.

Constitutional Law

Constitutional law refers to the part of law based on the provisions of the written constitution of a state, long-standing conventions and practices relating to the functioning of various organs of the government, or judicial interpretations of the constitution. Legally speaking, constitutional law is regarded superior to any other law, such as statutory law, customary law or natural law. The highest court of the land has the competence to declare any law, public decisions, administrative action or social practice as void if it is deemed to contravene the letter or the spirit of the constitution.

Finally, Bodin's theory of sovereignty was seriously flawed because of his very strong convictions about the inviolability of private property. In his view, the right to property was guaranteed by the law of nature, that is the natural law. Bodin goes to the extent of believing that the sovereign cannot exercise his power of taxation, without the consent of the owners of property. He regards the right to property as an essential attribute of the family, and the family as an independently existing unit was the cornerstone of the state itself. The sovereign could not enact even a positive law affecting the citizens' right to property without their consent.

Positive Law

Positive law refers to the law that expresses the will of the sovereign, and that is duly enacted by a legislative body and recognized by the judiciary. Positive law is binding on all those coming within its jurisdiction, and its violation is effectively met with punishment. Adherents of legal positivism regard positive law as the only law in the real sense of the term. In their view, morals, customs or social practices have no legal validity unless they are enshrined in positive law.

There is no room for any limitations, like those of natural law, constitutional law, or inviolability of property in Hobbes's theory of sovereignty. His sovereign is competent to make any law at his will in order to fulfil the function that was entrusted to him, that is to provide effective security to his subjects. Hobbes sought to define law as the command of the sovereign; it could not be defined in terms of its moral content. Positive law cannot limit sovereignty because the source of positive law lies in the will of the sovereign himself. Natural law cannot limit it because, strictly speaking, natural law is not a law; it does not express the will of a tangible entity. The idea of inviolability of property is, at best, rooted in long standing custom or popular belief. It cannot be invoked to impose any limits on sovereign's authority. In short, the sovereign is all powerful within his jurisdiction. Individual can use his liberty only in an area where the sovereign is silent.

It is, therefore, evident that in spite of treating the will of the individual as the source of sovereignty, Hobbes creates an order where individual's will is totally overshadowed by the will of the sovereign. There is practically no room for individual's liberty in this order. Hobbes is convinced that security of the civil state rests exclusively on terror: the ruler pools the powers of individuals, and uses them to intimidate those who might break the newly developed harmony.

Hobbes's theory of the social contract would appear flawless only if a perfect and infallible person or assembly could be found and established as sovereign. But how can imperfect mortals justify the exercise of such universal and absolute authority in the real world? Hobbes cleverly evades this fundamental question.

SIGNIFICANCE OF HOBBS'S PERSPECTIVE

It is important to note that Hobbes's theory of the social contract only provides for an artificial framework to keep men's aggressive tendencies in check. Conclusion of this contract largely represents a mechanical change. This does not transform the inherent nature or character of men. They learn to behave in a civilized manner in society, but in

their heart they remain wild animals as ever before. Scratch a man and you will find a violent beast coming out. When you are negotiating business, it is quite likely that the highly polished man across the table is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Men's deep-rooted egoism is not replaced by any measure of altruism. Now they tend to dominate others, or even deprive them of their due by following the 'rules of the game'. In short, *Hobbes's social contract provides the philosophical justification for the functioning of a ruthless, competitive market society.*

C. B. Macpherson (*The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*; 1962) identified the underlying assumptions of the political theory of Hobbes and Locke (1632-1704) as possessive individualism. This implies that individual is absolute, natural proprietor of his own capacities, owing nothing to society for them. He is therefore free to use his capacities in search of his satisfactions, provided he does not harm others. Accordingly, society is seen as an aggregate of free and equal individuals related to each other through their possessions, and not as those held together by reciprocal rights and duties. The relation of exchange, or market relation, is recognized as a fundamental bond holding them together. Thus Macpherson's interpretation of Hobbes's political theory confirms the view that Hobbes was a spokesman of the emerging competitive market society of his times.

In another important work, Macpherson (*Democratic Theory — Essays in Retrieval*; 1973) observed: "Hobbes's morality is essentially a bourgeois morality... Hobbes's analysis of human nature, from which whole political theory is derived, is really an analysis of bourgeois man; ... the assumptions, explicit or implicit, upon which his psychological conclusions depend are assumptions peculiarly valid for bourgeois society." Here 'bourgeois man' refers to a prototype of an entrepreneur who seeks to maximize his profit in a capitalist market society. Then 'bourgeois society' refers to the model of competitive market society itself which upholds bourgeois values. In other words, the civil society established through Hobbes's model of the social contract was thought to be a device for maximization of wealth, power and honour for each of its constituents. In short, Hobbes's political theory was designed to seek philosophical justification for the upcoming capitalist system.

Hobbes's ...sovereign state was designed not to deny men a life of competition and acquisition, but to ensure that they could have it: it was designed to provide the condition in which they could go on with that life securely, without endangering civil peace... they would have to acknowledge, as if they had contracted to do so, an obligation to obey the laws of the sovereign as long as the sovereign was able to protect them. It was the sort of long-term contract a businessman could be expected to understand and to enter into with a view to his own advantage.

C.B. Macpherson, 'Introduction' to his edited version of *Hobbes: Leviathan* (1968)

In Hobbes's times, businessmen were becoming increasingly important throughout Western Christendom. Entrepreneurs felt that they were not bound by the traditional obligations. Freedom of contract was the only way left to them to pursue their goal of maximization of profit. They were also fed up with the religious wars of the time, and wanted to have a strong government that would provide protection to their wealth as

well as their business operations. All social and political relations were sought to be reduced to a network of voluntary contracts for the furtherance of individual interests. Rulership was primarily designed to secure these interests.

In a nutshell, a close study of Hobbes's political theory enlightens us about the genesis of the new value system that was taking shape in mid-seventeenth century Europe in the wake of the scientific revolution, and which paved the way for industrial revolution and modern capitalist system. In any case, Hobbes regards society merely as an aggregate of isolated individuals, each pursuing his self-interest. There is little scope of any cooperative activity in this atomistic model of society. This model is fit to explain the mechanism for the protection of people and for creating a congenial atmosphere for business activity. However, this model is incapable of explaining all magnificent achievements of human civilization and culture, and all traditions of virtue and greatness.

Hobbes is only concerned with the genesis and functioning of law-and-order state. It only provides security to people, but does not promise to create the necessary conditions of good life. It would be futile to look for the foundations of welfare state or social justice state in Hobbes's political theory.

- Q. 1.** "Hobbes's view of the state of nature is the natural corollary of his concept of human nature." Elaborate and comment.
2. Examine the rationale of Hobbes's view of the social contract. Why did he fail to become an exponent of liberalism?
 3. What do you understand by absolutism? Write a short essay on Hobbes's status as the exponent of absolutism.
 4. Write short notes on:
 - (a) Hobbes's method of scientific inquiry
 - (b) Hobbes's idea of natural equality
 - (c) Hobbes as a spokesman of competitive market society.