

# J. S. Mill

J. S. Mill (1806 - 1873) was not only an economist, he spent most of his life time in other fields of knowledge i.e., philosophy, logic, ethic and politics. *Principles of political Economy* with some of their Applications to social philosophy (1848) which brought Mill name and fame in Economics. Mill's important writings in the fields of logic, politics, ethics and philosophy are the *Logic* (1843); *Liberty* (1859); *Representative Government* (1860); *Utilitarianism* (1861); *The Examination of William Hamilton's philosophy* (1865).

## Main Ideas

### - Economic Method:

J. S. Mill developed inductive logic to be used in scientific research. In inductive logic, we proceed from known to unknown and thus enlarge our knowledge. Inductive logic which starts from the actual facts and leads to the empirical generalization, filled the gap in the logical reasoning by making empirically surfaced research proposal. But Mill could not realize that the inductive reasoning was incapable of providing an adequate methodology for scientific research. Induction does not distinguish between the discovery and justificatory aspects of scientific research.

While deductive logic is purely speculative and its premises cannot be empirically tested. Deduction means arguing from general to particular. Later developments in the scientific philosophy shows that it is not induction but

hypothetico-deductive process (or explanatory induction) which provides an adequate methodology for scientific research because it distinguishes between the process of discovery and justification.

### - Utilitarianism:

- \* J. S. Mill accepted the central tenets of Bentham's utilitarian philosophy that our actions are right if they contribute to "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". After accepting Bentham's utilitarian principle in general, Mill considerably modified it in many ways.
- \* He criticised Bentham for making the science of human conduct an exact and mathematical science by reducing all distinctions among all pleasures to quantitative distinctions and ignoring ~~altogether~~ altogether the qualitative differences.
- \* Bentham emphasised the utility-for-happiness criterions for human conduct in which he allowed different kinds of ranking of all pleasures by different persons, Mill adopted the utility-for-true-happiness criterions in which he approved a particular kind of ranking. Men should, instead of seeking to satisfy all the current wants in order to achieve maximum pleasure, should try to satisfy only those wants which yield the finest pleasures.

### - Liberalism:

According to Mill men should seek to achieve not only their own greater happiness but also the greater happiness of the society. The ultimate

aims is the all round happiness of all the individuals and not of a few individuals. And if the liberty of some individuals is harmful to the others, it should be controlled.

Mill ranked human welfare higher than liberty on the ground that human liberty, being an end in itself, is intrinsically good and liberty, as ~~the ground~~ that human liberty ~~is not~~ is itself, is ~~inherently~~ good and liberty on the ~~process of ideal human liberty~~ as a means to achieve the good goal of human welfare, possesses only the instrumental value. A society of completely free individuals will not be a perfectly happy society. Absolutely free actions of individuals may be reducing the welfare of others and the welfare of all will not be maximum. Mill thus recognised internal clashes and conflicts within an entirely free society.

\* This however does not mean that Mill was against democracy and was in favour of the government by the minority. What Mill actually wanted was an ideal division of power between different groups of the society so that all the groups could have enough to protect themselves but none of them could have enough to protect themselves at the cost of others; he supported a democracy in which the liberties of the minority group are protected.

- The Principle of laissez-faire:

\* While discussing the role of government, Mill distinguished between authoritative and nonauthoritative

interference of government. Authoritative interference means controlling the free agency of individuals by restricting them from doing certain things. Unauthorised interferences aim at giving advice and propagating information or establishing government agency without disturbing the free agency of individuals.

\* Mill favoured the extremes of unauthoritative interferences in many fields like education, regulation of hours of work, colonisation, construction of public works etc. Mill was the first to put forward an economic justification for government interferences in the field of education.

\* In the sphere of international trade, Mill was no doubt a supporter of free trade policy. He criticised the mercantilist because of their restrictive policy.

### Socialism:

Mill distinguished between the laws of production and laws of distribution to show that while the former are the natural laws that cannot be disturbed, the later are man-made rules capable of being changed whenever desired.

His socialist schemes can be summarised under three heads:

\* Replacement of wage system by a system of Association:

Mill rejected the theory of dependence and protection according to which the lot of manual labourers is not regulated by them but by the higher classes who guide and restrain them like children.

He recommended that the wage system, under which the labourers were placed at the mercy of their masters and were deprived of any claim on the product they produced, should be replaced by a system of labourers' associations, under which the labourers collectively determined their own destiny and were no longer dependent upon their employers.

The associations of labourers can be of two forms:

- (a) association of the labourers with the capitalist
- (b) association of labourers among themselves.

#### \* Socialisation of the 'Unearned Increment' of Rental Values:

As the society progresses, the incomes of the landlords increase both in absolute terms and in proportion to the wealth of the society. Till considered this increase is the income as unearned increment and condemned the landlords who grow richer as if were in their sleep, without working, risking or economizing.

Thus Till proposed two methods to reduce the injustice of rent; one is the tax on the unearned increment of rental values and other is the peasant proprietorship.

#### \* Reform of the Institutions of Inheritance:

The institutions of inheritance allow people to dispose off their property according to their will even after death. Till criticised this institution because it leads to unequal distribution of income. He believed in the freedom of bequest but not in the freedom of inheritance. Till,

proposed progressive duties on the wealth received through inheritance. Progressive taxation would make it difficult to inherit more than a certain limit.