**Question: Discuss the nature of state as outlined by J.J Rousseau with special reference to his theory of General Will. (2014)/ (2015).**

**Introduction:**

Jean Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva, a French family in 1712. His mother died while giving him birth. His father fostered him at the infant period but could not give proper attention to the child. Therefore, Rousseau was not properly educated. At the age of sixteen he had left home and spent a vagabond life. Rousseau started his career as a political thinker since 1749. He wrote so many books in his career and among them “Has the Progress of Science and Arts helped to purify corrupt morals”, “Discourse on the Origin and foundation of inequality”, “The French Encyclopedia”, “Social Contract”, “Principle of Political Rights” etc. are important. It may be noted that Rousseau was a very famous of his time.

**State of Nature:**

The state of nature as postulated by Rousseau is different from that of Hobbes and Locke. According to Rousseau, the state of nature was peaceful and the people enjoyed much freedom to fulfill their natural needs. Rousseau viewed that in the state of nature all individuals were equal and there was no any oppression and poverty. In the state of nature men spent an isolate life from his fellow and therefore, men were not guided by his instinct. The instinct of men ultimately compelled him to give up solidarity of life and take to group life. The natural men did not have any language and therefore, it was impossible for them to justify what was good or bad. So the natural man was neither moral nor vicious and though he was not social and amoral yet he developed the capacity of morality and reason.

**General Will:**

Rousseau developed the theory of General Will for establishing popular sovereignty which is the corner stone of democratic system of govt. Soon after the time of Rousseau, this theory led the democrats to take the revolutionary path against absolutism.

**Meaning of General Will:**

Rousseau, while developing the concept of General Will states that every individual has two types of wills **(a) Actual Will and (b) Real will.**

1. **Actual will: -** The actual will of the individual’s is his impulsive and irrational will. Individual’s actions become unreasonable and senseless when they are done under the impact ‘Actual Will’. It is narrow and selfish will. It compels the individual to think about his own interest. It is emotional and therefore changeable. It is not based on reasons.
2. **Real will: -** It is rational, selfless will of the individuals. It aims at general interest of the society; Real will thinks more of the common good than the good of the individual. Thus the ‘Real Will’ of the individual promotes harmony between the individual and society.

**General Will:** An average individual has an actual and a real will. The General Will is the synthesis of the ‘Real Will’ of the community and represents the consciousness, regarding the common good.

**Characteristics of General Will:**

1. **Indivisible: -** Itis common will of the whole community. The general will is the rational will of the community. It comes from all and applies to all. There is unity in this will, therefore it is indivisible.
2. **Right Will: -** It aims at the general good. It tries above all selfishness. It always thinks welfare of the people.
3. **Best for all: -** Obedience to this will is supreme freedom and fulfillment because it is one’s own best will. The best will cannot create a contradiction between individuals and society. General will is the expression of the inner, the right consciousness.
4. **Inalienable:** - Rousseau locates sovereignty at the general will. Hence of the state and General Will are inalienable. Its decisions, in the form of law are binding on all individual
5. **Not changeable:** - It is constant and permanent. It springs from the genius of the whole people i.e. community. It will base on the rule of law and equality before law.
6. **Unrepresentative: -** Rousseau did not believe in the government by the representative of the people. He believes in the direct democracy. So General Will of the people cannot be represented by any government or any institution, but by the community as a whole.

Rousseau showed that the social contract did not create a government. It created the state. It is done under the direction of the General Will of the people. Once state is created individual obeyed it him and remain free as in the state of Nature.

**Characteristics of Social Contract Theory of Rousseau:**

1. The theory postulates a state of nature as the original condition of man.
2. It was the desire of the individual to escape from the state of nature and entered into a contract with his fellow subjects.
3. The individual is made to surrender everything to the society but receives back what he surrenders as a member of the society. In this sense he is not loser but a gainer
4. The Individual surrenders all the rights not to any individual but to a body he is also a part of that body.
5. The contract gives rise to an organic society. It is a moral being possess its own life, will and entity. Rousseau calls it public persons.
6. The contract leads to material and moral transformation of individual.

**Criticism:**

1. **Combined theory:** It seems that the social contract theory of Rousseau is the combined theory of Hobbes and Locke. The contract of Rousseau is social like that of Hobbes and governmental like that of Locke. It combines the individuals with one another and also to the sovereign state.
2. **The condition of contract presuppose the existence of law:** The contract was done in the later stage of human development. In the developed stage there was existence of law. But in the state of nature there was no any law to do the contract.
3. **Men did not have the quality to do contract:** To conclude a contract study and experience is very much important. Butthe man who lived in caves and desert could not acquire quality to do contract with each other.
4. **State has no any personality:** Rousseau holds that as a result of contract a state with a personality of its own emerged which possesses a separate of the individuals constituting the state. But the state is something impersonal and cannot possess an independent personality of its own.
5. **It is Contradictory theory:** Rousseau had faith on the two contradictory theories i.e. the organic and mechanic theory and on the basis of these theories he postulated his theory. If the state is manmade, it could neverbe an organism. On the other hand if it were organism, it could never be created by human ingenuity.

**Conclusion:**

Despite the numerous criticisms leveled against his theory from different angles, the social contract theory of Rousseau had a profoundly influence many parts of the Europe. The state is very essential for the development of the individual’s personality. Rousseau was the first political thinker who viewed about the popular sovereignty. Idealists like Kant and Hegel was very much influenced by the General Will of Rousseau.

**Human Nature** **according Rousseau**

The nature of human as postulated by Rousseau is explained as follows;

1. Rousseau believes that men are basically not bad but some time social environment make men to be wicked.
2. According to him man is governed by two instincts – one is self-love and other is mutual aid or sympathy. Naturally man gives first preference to the first instinct i.e. the self-love. Though the second instinct is less significant yet it helps man to be social and it also help him to be a good individual.
3. According to Locke, there is possibility of clash between first these two types of instincts. This clash creates another instinct known as ‘conscience’. It is conscience which helps him to resolve the conflict between the first two instincts.
4. A question arise that if man is individually and socially good, then why they involve in unsocial and evil activities. Rousseau gives answer to this question that when self-love change its direction and gives rise to pride, the pride becomes the root cause of evils.
5. According to Rousseau conscience of human being plays a significant role to keep the individual intact in right path.

**Question: Critically explain the social contract theory of Rousseau.**

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**Social Contract:**

The Social Contract Theory of Rousseau begins with his famous sentence “Man is born free, however, he is somewhere in chain”. The sentence means that the man is bound by some restrictions and obligations. The social and political institutions are responsible for imposition of restriction on the people. The state is also the highest political institution which plays a significant role and imposes some restrictions on the people. Then question arises that why people created state? There are two reasons which compelled them to come to close to each other and to create state. The first one is that men were driven to form state due to the physical condition of nature like flood, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes etc. which compelled them to organize and spent a social life. The second one is the rise of private property. According to Rousseau, “The first man, having enclosed a piece of ground, he thought himself of saying ‘this is mine’ and found other people simple enough to believe him, was the first real founder of civil society”. Thus he said that it is the private property that the pre-civil state had to abandon because the scramble for land and other private property create war, murder and horror. Therefore, people entered into a social contract among themselves and formed state to redress from state of nature. Thus Rousseau completely transformed the individuals from natural state to political society and the political society was fully based on the consent of the people. His contract was double sided. His individual, as a part sovereign, is bound to other individuals and as a part of state he is bound to the sovereign which Rousseau coined as the General Will.

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