Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 2: Freedom - Notes, Important Questions and MCQs (2026-27)

Free PDF notes from Nextoper.in | Session 2026-27 | Read online:
https://nextoper.in/class-11-political-science-theory-chapter-2-pdf-notes/

These Class 11 Political Theory Chapter 2 notes cover “Freedom” from the NCERT textbook Political Theory (2026-27): the ideal of freedom, examples from Nelson Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi and Subhas Chandra Bose, what freedom means, sources of constraints, why we need some constraints, the harm principle, negative and positive liberty and freedom of expression – with tables, Q&A, 10 MCQs and a free PDF.

Use the table of contents below to jump to the part you need, or read top to bottom for a complete revision of the chapter.

Table of Contents

- Chapter Overview
- Important Topics and Concepts
- Negative vs Positive Liberty
- Constraints: Justified or Not?
- Important Definitions and Terms
- Short Answer Questions
- Long Answer Questions
- MCQs with Answers
- Quick Revision Points
- Chapter Summary
- Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Conclusion

Want notes for every chapter? Explore the full Class 11 Political Science notes on Nextoper, arranged book-wise and chapter-wise.

Chapter Overview

Freedom has inspired people to struggle against oppression – Nelson Mandela spent 27 years in prison fighting apartheid, Aung San Suu Kyi saw freedom as release from fear, and Indian freedom fighters like Subhas Chandra Bose valued freedom above everything. Freedom means both the absence of external constraints and the conditions in which people can develop their potential.

No society can exist without some constraints, so the key question is which constraints are justified. J.S. Mill’s harm principle offers one answer, while the ideas of negative and positive liberty show two dimensions of freedom.

Important Topics and Concepts

The Ideal of Freedom

- Mandela’s struggle against apartheid in South Africa (Long Walk to Freedom).
- Aung San Suu Kyi’s idea of freedom from fear in Myanmar.
- Subhas Chandra Bose and Indian freedom fighters valued freedom and swaraj.
- Freedom is valued because it allows people to make choices and develop their capacities.

What is Freedom?

- Absence of external constraints – being able to make choices without coercion.
- Also the presence of conditions that let people develop their talents (expansion of opportunities).
- Swaraj, for Gandhi, meant self-rule – rule over oneself and freedom from domination.
- A free society lets individuals pursue their interests with minimum constraints.

Sources of Constraints and Why We Need Them

- Constraints can come from force, government laws, social customs, economic inequality and domination.
- Some constraints are necessary to protect others’ freedom and maintain order.
- Constraints must be justified, reasonable and agreed through democratic processes.
- The question is not whether to have constraints but which ones are legitimate.

Harm Principle

- Proposed by J.S. Mill: the only purpose for which power can rightfully be exercised over an individual against their will is to prevent harm to others.
- Self-regarding actions (affecting only oneself) should not be restricted by the state.
- Other-regarding actions that harm others may be restricted – serious harm by law, minor harm by social disapproval.
- Restrictions should be proportionate.

Negative and Positive Liberty

- Negative liberty: an area of non-interference where the individual is free from external constraints (“freedom from”).
- Positive liberty: freedom to develop oneself, requiring enabling conditions like education and health (“freedom to”).
- Both are linked: positive liberty often needs state action, negative liberty limits state action.
- Freedom of expression is a key negative liberty; restrictions on it (banning books, films) must be carefully justified.

Negative vs Positive Liberty

Most-asked comparison.

Negative liberty	Positive liberty
“Freedom from” interference	“Freedom to” develop oneself
Protects a private zone	Needs enabling conditions
Limits the state	May require state action

Negative liberty	Positive liberty
Example: free speech	Example: right to education
Focus: individual	Focus: individual within society

Constraints: Justified or Not?

Constraint	Source	Justified?
Traffic rules	Law	Yes – prevents harm
Ban on caste discrimination	Law	Yes – protects equality
Social pressure on dress choices	Customs	Usually not
Censorship of political criticism	State	Usually not
Ban on hate speech	Law	Yes, if proportionate

Important Definitions and Terms

Term	Meaning
Freedom	Absence of constraints and ability to develop
Constraint	Restriction on choices
Swaraj	Self-rule
Harm principle	Restrict only to prevent harm to others
Self-regarding action	Affects only the actor
Other-regarding action	Affects others
Negative liberty	Freedom from interference
Positive liberty	Freedom to develop oneself
Apartheid	Racial segregation in South Africa
Censorship	Restricting expression

Short Answer Questions

Q1. What does freedom mean?

The absence of external constraints and the presence of conditions to develop one’s potential.

Q2. What did Aung San Suu Kyi mean by freedom?

Freedom from fear.

Q3. What is the harm principle?

The state can restrict an individual’s action only to prevent harm to others.

Q4. Who proposed the harm principle?

J.S. Mill.

Q5. Define negative liberty.

Q6. Define positive liberty.

Freedom to develop oneself, requiring enabling conditions.

Q7. Why are some constraints necessary?

To protect the freedom of others and maintain social order.

Q8. Give an example of a self-regarding action.

Choosing one’s hairstyle.

Long Answer Questions

Q1. Explain negative and positive liberty with examples.

Negative: freedom from interference – e.g. free speech.

Positive: freedom to develop – e.g. education.

Negative limits the state; positive may need state support.

Both are complementary.

Balance needed between the two.

Q2. Explain the harm principle and its significance.

Proposed by J.S. Mill.

State may restrict actions only to prevent harm to others.

Self-regarding actions should be free.

Serious harm – legal punishment; minor harm – social disapproval.

Protects individual liberty against excessive control.

Q3. Why do we need constraints in society?

To protect others’ freedom.

To maintain law and order.

To prevent violence and discrimination.

Constraints must be legitimate and justified.

Decided through democratic processes.

MCQs with Answers

1. Harm principle was given by(a) Rousseau (b) J.S. Mill (c) Marx (d) PlatoAnswer: (b) J.S. Mill

2. “Freedom from fear” is associated with(a) Mandela (b) Aung San Suu Kyi (c) Gandhi (d) BoseAnswer: (b) Aung San Suu Kyi

3. Negative liberty means(a) freedom to develop (b) freedom from interference (c) no freedom (d) economic freedomAnswer: (b) freedom from interference

4. Positive liberty requires(a) no conditions (b) enabling conditions (c) censorship (d) warAnswer: (b) enabling conditions

6. Self-regarding actions should be(a) heavily regulated (b) free from state interference (c) banned (d) taxedAnswer: (b) free from state interference

7. Long Walk to Freedom is the autobiography of(a) Gandhi (b) Mandela (c) Suu Kyi (d) BoseAnswer: (b) Mandela

8. Constraints are justified when they(a) protect others from harm (b) benefit rulers (c) limit criticism (d) enforce customsAnswer: (a) protect others from harm

9. Freedom of expression is mainly a(a) positive liberty (b) negative liberty (c) duty (d) taxAnswer: (b) negative liberty

10. Swaraj means(a) self-rule (b) foreign rule (c) no rule (d) anarchyAnswer: (a) self-rule

Quick Revision Points

- Freedom: absence of constraints + conditions to develop.
- Mandela, Suu Kyi, Bose examples.
- Sources of constraints; need for justified constraints.
- Harm principle (Mill).
- Negative vs positive liberty.
- Freedom of expression and its limits.

Chapter Summary

Freedom inspires struggles against oppression, as seen in the lives of Mandela, Aung San Suu Kyi and Indian freedom fighters. It means both the absence of unjustified external constraints and the presence of conditions for self-development.

Some constraints are necessary, but they must be justified. Mill’s harm principle allows restrictions only to prevent harm to others. Negative liberty protects a zone free from interference, while positive liberty seeks conditions for people to develop; freedom of expression requires careful protection.

Exam Tips and PYQ Pattern

- Negative vs positive liberty table is frequently asked.
- Explain the harm principle with examples.
- Use Mandela and Suu Kyi examples in introductions.
- Discuss justified vs unjustified constraints.
- Link freedom of expression to democracy.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this chapter in the 2026-27 CBSE syllabus?

Yes. It is part of the NCERT Class 11 Political Science textbook “Political Theory”, prescribed in the CBSE 2026-27 syllabus.

Can I download these notes as a PDF?

What is the difference between negative and positive liberty?

Negative liberty is freedom from interference; positive liberty is freedom to develop oneself, often needing enabling conditions.

What is the harm principle?

J.S. Mill’s idea that society may restrict an individual’s action only to prevent harm to others.

Conclusion

Freedom explores what it means to be free and when limits are justified. Learn the liberty table, practise the Q&A here and save the free PDF for revision.

More Notes: Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 1: Political Theory: An Introduction notes | Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) Chapter 3: Equality notes | All Class 11 Political Science notes

Author Bio: Written and reviewed by the Nextoper Editorial Team, a group of CBSE political science educators who build chapter notes directly from the NCERT textbook and past board paper patterns.

Freshness Note: These notes follow the NCERT Class 11 Political Science (Political Theory) textbook, Political Theory (NCERT reprint 2026-27, rationalised syllabus), and the CBSE syllabus for the 2026-27 session. Last checked on 25 November 2026.