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## **Notes for UG semester 4**

### **Rousseau's Social Contract Theory (Short Notes)**

#### Introduction

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was an important French Enlightenment thinker. His famous book “The Social Contract” (1762) presented his political philosophy. His main idea was that sovereignty belongs to the people, not to a king.

#### Main Ideas of the Social Contract

##### 1. State of Nature

Rousseau believed that in the state of nature, human beings were free, equal, and happy. However, the development of private property created inequality and conflict.

##### 2. Social Contract

To protect themselves and maintain order, people formed a social contract.

Through this agreement, individuals gave up some personal freedoms to the community in order to gain collective security and protection.

##### 3. General Will

The most important concept in Rousseau's theory is the “General Will.”

It represents the common interest of all people. Laws should reflect the general will, not the interests of a single ruler or group.

##### 4. Popular Sovereignty

Rousseau argued that sovereignty resides in the people. Government is only an agent of the people and must follow their will. If it fails, people have the right to change it.

## Conclusion

Rousseau's Social Contract Theory promoted democracy, equality, and popular sovereignty. His ideas greatly influenced the French Revolution and modern democratic systems.