CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

All the important points concerning Mill's Principle of Liberty, or at least those points which have appeared important to me, have been indicated at appropriate places in this thesis. A brief outline of all the points discussed and not discussed (like the Principle of the Freedom of Thought and Mill's arguments for it, which fall outside the scope of this thesis) in this thesis have also been outlined in Chapter II which is an overview. In view of the above, there is not much to say by way of a conclusion. There is not also much to say because I have not been able to find any serious problems in Mill's concept of Liberty. As I have tried to show, Mill is a much misunderstood thinker and I will be quite happy if I am not found to contribute to the misunderstanding through this work. Therefore, this conclusion will be limited to pointing out the relevance and importance of Mill's concepts and ideas in the contemporary world.

We know from the life of Mill that he not merely tried to formulate the Principle of Liberty, but also actively tried to work for its realization in the society in which he lived. He was not interested in mere speculative thought. His interest lay in the actualization of the ideas he thought about. To actualize the thoughts, they must be made permanent constituents of one's life. Mill did that in a great way. Even if he had not written the book On Liberty, it is quite possible to deduce the main contents of his thought from the details of the life of Mill himself. He was an embodiment of the very Principle of Liberty.
Because Mill lived his principles, his writing is very persuasive and powerful. I believe that his book On Liberty is a "living book." Actually, I have felt that Mill is still living in that book and that sometimes I have felt that he was talking to me. But I do not claim that I have either very clearly or completely understood him. But I have been thrilled by the little I have been able to understand in the thinking of Mill. I have found it to be relevant to my own life and for our present day world.

Today we live in a world in which our liberty is invaded. It was no less invaded in Mill's own times, and in Mill's own life. Therefore, liberty has to be as much important to us today as it was for Mill more than a century and half ago. When liberty is invaded, there will be exploitation and sometimes there may also be persecution. This exploitation and persecution may be personal, social, economic, political, religious or racial.

We must not think that Mill was old-fashioned in thinking of the Principle of Liberty as a moral principle. Liberty is a moral principle. It is only when individuals, societies and nations are immoral that they readily invade the liberty of other individuals, societies or nations. Intolerance, religious or racial, is also due to the lack of moral worth and therefore it also results in the denial of liberty to others.

Liberty is not anything abstract. It is distinctly related to certain types of "concrete" interests. Therefore the question of whether any individual, society or nation is a champion of liberty can be readily decided by looking into the fact of what kinds of interests they are serving. Is one country at liberty to (i.e. is justified) in freely using up the available resources of other less fortunate countries for its own comfort and enjoyment? Are the
countries of the world at liberty to, or are justified in, arming themselves to the teeth ignoring the misfortunes of other fellow human beings in other parts of the globe? Is one race at liberty to promote its own interests at the cost of the interests of other races? These and a host of similar questions which Mill did not face or anticipate, are before us today. In the scheme of Mill the question "Are we free to do X?" is always accompanied by the question "Are we justified in doing X?" If there is no justification, there is no freedom to do that thing. The justification needed is not rational, but moral. The moral character of our ends determine the justifiability or otherwise of our actions.

It is a pity that in our world none of the above considerations are taken seriously. Most of the time, our ends are not moral. Therefore, the means employed by us to achieve our ends are also not moral. Ends justify the means, but not at all in the sense of Mill but in the reverse sense. There is a brazen attempt to condition human thinking to make it less sensitive. Mill was sensitive to the injustices done to the black people thousands of miles away, but we just ignore injustices nextdoor. What is worse, many times we are ourselves actively responsible for these injustices. This is because we have lost our moral sensitivity. Our moral sensitivity is dimmed because our notion of liberty itself has dimmed. The degree of the invasion of liberty and the degree of moral insensitivity are directly linked. When moral insensitivity increases, the invasion of liberty also increases automatically.

There has been a lot of "development" and "progress" in the world. But this progress has been made at a certain "moral cost" which would be totally unacceptable to Mill. The great tragedy in the world is that politics and economics, the two spheres which vitally determine human
welfare, have very loose links, or no links at all, with morality. In the scheme of Mill, economic and political activity have to be necessarily pursued in a moral framework. The "moral cost" of any economic or political activity was very important to Mill. But this "moral cost" is least important in the modern world. The price we will have to pay for neglecting the moral cost of our activities is indeed going to be very high.

Another dark aspect of modern civilization is the sad fact that common interests are perceived only locally and not globally. Therefore, it has become very easy to sacrifice the common interests of others in the pursuit of selfish interests. Since the human race no longer lives in isolated pockets as in the past, such acts of selfishness have more direct effect on many more people than in the past. Only a strong moral sense can produce a sense of global obligation. Mill had this moral sense to a very high degree. If we need any evidence we only have to recollect his active role in trying to get Governor Eyre convicted for his offenses against the black people. These black people were thousands of miles away, but Mill could feel and act to protect their interests only because of his built-in moral sense, his sense of liberty.

The only way the invasion of liberty could stop is through the cultivation of a moral sense or moral consciousness. Without the development of such a consciousness on a large scale, the problems our world is facing will only intensify further. The crisis in politics is perceived as merely political in character; the crisis in economics is also perceived as merely economic in nature. The crisis in the lives of individual men is of course perceived merely as a personal crisis. But at the root of every one of these kinds of crises, there is an unperceived moral crisis. It is the total lack of moral considerations
In the activities of men, societies and nations that is responsible for all the evils we are facing today. Therefore, the solution to the political crisis is not merely political. Political solutions very soon cease to be real solutions because the problem, at bottom, is not a political one but a moral one. When the moral base of a political problem is not seen, a solution to that problem based on moral considerations is never suggested. Without such a solution, the problem remains, grows and develops new dimensions. The same principle applies to social, economic and all other problems.

If we keep in mind Mill's most basic ideas, viz.

(a) liberty is a moral principle concerning which actions are permissible and which not
(b) liberty is required only because there are certain kinds of interests common or non-common to all men which need to be realized
(c) actions get classified as self-regarding or as other-regarding depending upon the nature of the interests they are connected with, and
(d) interference or noninterference with these actions must always be justifiable in terms of well justified sets of rules,

we can create new patterns of behaviour and new structures in the world which will gradually bring about much greater degree of human happiness and welfare than what exists today.

At least as far as I am concerned, the importance of a deep study of Mill's thought to help us set right our messy world, still remains very great. Fortunately for us, we have Mill's thoughts to guide us. But, also, unfortunately for us, we have no other better alternative to them.
CHAPTER 1: LIFE AND BACKGROUND

1. See Mill's *Autobiography*, (1873), page 5.


4. *Ibid*, page


6. (In a letter to E. Lytton Bulwer), *Letters I*, page 104.


8. Look at his statement: "How the book came to have, for a work of the kind, so much success, and what sort of persons compose the bulk of those who have bought, I will not venture to say read, it, I have never thoroughly understood." *Autobiography*, page 159. Also pages 180, 221 and Mill's letters of this period to Sterling, Lytton Bulwer and Bain.


CHAPTER III
MILL’S THEORY OF MORALITY AND MORAL RIGHTS


2. Ibid, Page 104.

3. Ibid.


11. Ibid, Page 96.


13. Ibid, Pages 3, 117.


15. Ibid, Page 43.


17. Ibid, Pages 26, 45.


20. Ibid, Page 35.


22. Ibid, Pages 24, 35, 56. (Also see On Liberty, Page 101.

23. Ibid, Page 22

125
25. Ibid, Page 100.
26. Ibid, Pages 11, 49, 75-76, 78, 81 and many other places. Also in Utilitarianism, Pages 33, 35, 47.
30. Ibid, Page 76.
31. Ibid, Pages 51, 54.
32. Ibid, Page 117.
33. Ibid, Page 91.
37. J.S. Mill, A System of Logic, Book VI, Chap. XII.
38. Ibid.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid.
41. This point is well presented by Gerald F. Gaus in "Mill's Theory of Moral Rules," Australasian Journal of Philosophy, 58 (Sept. 1980), Pages 271-
42. J.S. Mill, A System of Logic, Book VI, Chap. XII
43. See Alan Ryan, John Stuart Mill, Pages 215-216.
46. Ibid, Pages 56-57.
47. See his statement "The utilitarian doctrine is that happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable as an end; all other things being only desirable as means to that end." Utilitarianism, Page 37.
48. See his statement "Happiness is the sole end of human action, and the promotion of it the test by which to judge all human conduct; from whence it necessarily follows that it must be the criterion

52. *Ibid*.
55. *Ibid*.
56. *Ibid*.
CHAPTER IV

THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERFERENCE AND NONINTERFERENCE


2. Ibid., Page 80.


5. Ibid., Page 12. (emphasis added).

6. Ibid., Page 75.

7. Ibid., Page 95.

8. Ibid., Page 78.


12. Ibid., Page 124.

13. Rees recognizes this point. Ibid., Page 123.


15. Ibid., Page 12.

16. Ibid., Page 91.

17. Ibid., Pages 81, 94, 99.


23. Ibid., Page 11. Also pages 78, 97.

24. This example is discussed by D.G. Brown, "Mill on Liberty and Morality," Philosophical Review 81, (April, 1972), Page 145.
32. *Ibid*, Page 12. Also see pages 36 and 42.
34. *Ibid*, Pages 75-76.
36. *Ibid*.

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A. WORKS BY MILL

Dissertations and Discussions, London, 1859-75 (4 vols). This includes Mill's essay on Bentham (1838) and his essay on Coleridge (1840).


A System of Logic, New York and Bombay: Longmans & Green, 1904.


Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, London, 1865.


Various editions of many of the above works, in particular, of Utilitarianism, On Liberty, and Representative Government are available. They are also reprinted in Everyman's Library, World's Classics, Blackwell's Political Texts and the Thinker's Library.

B. WORKS ON MILL


Brown, D.G. "Mill on harm to Others' Interests," Political Studies, 26 (September 1978): 305-98.


