

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2018 · 10 marks

John Stuart Mill is a 'reluctant democrat'. - C. L. Wayper

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

- R1 defends representative government → but conditions democracy at every turn
→ **Wayper's** 'reluctant democrat' → captures caution, not commitment
- R2 representative government is his best practicable form → yet refuses
unqualified majority rule → **Wayper** names this hesitation

Body flow

best practicable form (society too complex for direct rule) → also educative (reason, judgement, political efficacy) → but democracy no free gift → fitness via civic culture + education → benevolent despotism for colonies (India, China) → **Tocqueville's** fear: majority tyranny, mediocracy, mobocracy → safeguards: plural/weighted voting, educational filters, second chamber

Counter-view

radical-democratic strands pull back → women's suffrage, minority representation, broad participation, open voting, state education → not anti-democratic

Conclusion routes

- R1 reluctant only in scope, pace, institutional design → label fits hesitation, not faith
- R2 champion of democracy, critic of crude majoritarianism → committed in principle, hesitant in form

John Stuart Mill defends representative government, yet conditions democracy at every turn. This is why C. L. Wayer calls him a 'reluctant democrat' - a label that captures his caution, but not his commitment.

For Mill, representative government is the best practicable form, since modern society is too complex for direct rule. It is also educative: participation trains reason, judgement and a sense of political efficacy.

But democracy is not a free gift; people and society must first become fit for it through civic culture and education. He therefore restricts self-government to 'civilized' nations and accepts benevolent despotism for colonies like India and China.

Influenced by Alexis de Tocqueville, he fears tyranny of majority, mediocracy and mobocracy, so he builds in safeguards - plural & weighted voting, educational filters and a strong second chamber.

He still supports women's suffrage, minority representation, broad participation, open voting and state education. Mill is democratic in principle, reluctant only in scope, pace and institutional design. The label fits his hesitation, not his faith.