

Enlightenment
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Enlightenment was a period in the 18th century when governments, philosophy and social organization were based on reason. The results of the enlightenment were revolutionary. Many people held the belief that reasoning contributed to freedom. The main goals of enlightenment period were to gain freedom in all aspects of life like religion and government.

Some people understood the concept of enlightenment as the process through which a society is governed other than having a democratic government. Some philosophers like Immanuel Kant and Jean Jacques Rousseau advocated for freedom but it was difficult task for people.

Government leaders who had unlimited powers argued that the society would be happy once reason is applied even though this would not necessarily guarantee their freedom.

The belief that reasoning leads to enlightenment caused many changes in politics. New governments were formed in Europe, America and India to replace the monarchy systems. They were based on the liberty and equality principles or else the rule of the people (Reilley 753). David Hume an enlightenment philosopher discussed the occurrence of miracles and life after death.

He strongly believed that there is nothing like life after death. Hume puts it clear that the foundation of religion is faith and not reason. In addition to this, he argued that miracles never happened and he does this by giving out four reasons to support his idea. Even though many cases have been reported especially in the bible about resurrection, Hume does not agree. He does not believe in the existence of miracles and that is why according to

him, miracles cannot happen. A miracle according to Hume is the violation of the laws on nature. Hume came up with four arguments to support his idea that miracles did not happen.

First of all, we cannot trust the people who testify of miraculous events happening to them. They may be lying or testifying under the influence other people so as to get fame. Human beings like being associated with mysterious things which can lead to formation of false beliefs. He also argued that miraculous events mostly happen to primitive and uncivilized societies. Normal and everyday activities can be regarded as a miracle in these societies where the level of technology is low. Finally, miracles are not universal.

Different religious beliefs have different miracles which they belief are true but the same miracles are not accepted in other religions (Reilley 754).

French enlightenment thoughts were influenced by the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau on indifferences in the formal religion. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a French philosopher whose political works greatly influenced Germany. He argued that politics should be based on the will of people in the society rather than social contract in his political theory.

Sovereignty should therefore be achieved through individual's submission to the will. Jean-Jacques Rousseau believes that human beings were in nature good before the influence of greediness and rivalry of civilization. He asserts that human beings should regain their natural harmony so that they are freed from all kinds of vices, become equal as well as general will (Reilley 754). General it will give a way to people's diversities and freedom. He

argues that general will is directly related to sovereignty not only to those in power but the society members at large.

True Sovereignty should be for the benefit of the society. General will is theoretical in the sense that it crafts “ regulations, social classes and monarchy government without specifying which people are subjected to such rules, who should belong to which class or the rulers of the government because general will makes all societal members equal”(Reilley 749). His ideas were influential in the events of the French revolution.

In France, the wealthy minority groups were benefiting at the expense of the majority who suffered in poverty and inflation . The majority were in need of equality and a new government which would cater for their needs. According to him, human beings are not given their freedom as they were born to be. Many societies have become slaves of their masters where they are forced to follow desires of their master. However, he argues that if the people manage to escape from the forced leadership, they will be better placed.

He was against slavery basing on his belief that all people were born to be equal. Nobody has the right to use force on his fellow men. Slavery has no meaning in addition to which it's illegal. Slaves are entitled to basic human rights as other human beings. They should not be used by people for their own benefits.

He assumed that human beings should not accept in any changes to the state of nature. They should employ the laws already in existence which will help in developing the societies. New changes may affect the welfare of the

society negatively (Reilley 750). During enlightenment period in Europe, new theories were formed to define the concepts of humanity and reality.

The political needs of the society also changed especially after the end of American and French revolution. In Europe, the theorists were mainly concerned with two things. Understanding the need for the formation of a state and the best type of society was the main goal of enlightenment period. Abigail Adam and John Adams had different views in the letters they wrote to each other.

Abigail was more concerned with the formation of laws which would favor ladies. The laws that his ancestors had formulated were very harsh on the ladies and he wanted them to be loosened. The power that husbands possessed needed to be reduced. This is because they used their excessive and superior powers to oppress women. In addition to this, women were not represented in the government and they were not allowed to make any decisions. According to him, women views were to be listened to and a number of them to be included in the government system. The harsh leadership that men had based on their power possession was to be replaced with a friendly one. He argued that failure to meet these requirements would lead to rebellion.

John Adam was against the views of Abigail. He suggested that time was not yet for declaration of independence. It was a difficult task for women to be given full power. He believed that women were to remain submissive to men (Reilley 761). In America, scientific inventions and reasoning caused influenced the changes of societies, religion and the nature of human beings.

Democracy, liberty and religious freedom were the main characteristics of the new state. Attempts to merge religion and science led to rejection of prophecies and miracles as discussed by Thomas Jefferson in his small bible which eliminated all supernatural aspects. He held the belief that a better and efficient society could be emerge from reason.

He closely observed peoples rights granted to them by God which they did not enjoy. Voltaire based his argument on the assumption that human beings had rights because there was no logical reason permitting an individual to have control on other people. He declared independence in his writings as a mark of enlightenment. It is the right of the citizens to rebel against governments which violate and oppress people's rights. He established learning institutions where people from all religious groups were allowed. Jefferson was therefore an important figure in enlightenment (Reilley 764). India is a country in which the caste system was flourished. The society was divided into different classes.

The elite dominated in the society. They formed the government and most of the resources were channeled towards them. Merchants and slaves suffered as a result of exploitation. Each group had different social institutions like schools and hospitals (Reilley 764). The period of enlightenment changed the living conditions of the slaves and middle class men. The rights of these groups were considered.

The enlightenment period brought about equality in the Indian societies. In conclusion, the enlightenment period greatly influenced living conditions among the societies in Europe, America and India. People were educated on

their rights so that the societies, which were oppressed by their leaders, rebelled against them. Many societies did not have the freedom of expression, movement and choosing religion they want.

The enlightenment period brought to an end all kinds of mistreatments that people experienced.

Work Cited

Reilley, Kelvin. Worlds of history volume two: A comparative reader since 1400. New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2007. Print.