

The Needs of Current Society and the Views of Johan Stuart Mill

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Abstract:

The current study is aimed to highlight the problems of contemporary society and to link them with Mill's ideas. Current society is facing a lot of challenges regarding liberty. The gap between higher, middle and lower classes has snatched the freedom of individuals. People in authority are using individuals illegitimately, and they have reduced the happiness of individual's life. Mill's theory lying concept of liberty in a real sense leaves a lot of room for social reforms.

Keywords: Liberty, Freedom, Society, Authority, On Liberty,

1. Introduction:

All the editions of "On Liberty" published in Mill's life. It was a joint production of Johan Stuart Mill and his wife. It is created between the dialogues which shared between himself and his wife. He dedicated this work to his wife. His wife helped him to analyze each page of the work. Before marriage, they wrote each other long letters in which they discussed the state affairs in England, and this is clearly reflected in this job. In "On Liberty" he supported women's rights and educational standards. In the Nineteenth century in England, there was a

struggle between religious strictness and the rebellion against this religious strictness. Mill's work indicates this fight in this essay, as he was not a supporter of religion because he was in favor of personal integrity. He emphasized the principle that individually has must give absolute freedom in actions if his actions are self-regarding. The first edition of "On Liberty" sold out and a second edition followed in late 1859 and a third in 1864. Mill originally planned it as an essay to be included in a volume of essays. Latter he decided to expend it and published it as a separate volume.

It was a view of social tyranny leading to the fatal decline of individuality. Some questioned the fact of the drop of individuality, but others denied that the oppression of society was responsible for the decline. The object of this essay is to assert on very simple principle entitled to govern absolutely the dealing of society in the way of compulsion and control. The rest of the book was an elaboration of this one very simple principle. His point of view is that the liberty of individual should be absolute except in the one case where the liberty did harm to others. "On Liberty" shows us Mill's capacity for applying ideas to fields in which they would bear fruit was unexampled.

2. Research Question:

- Is there any gap between higher, middle and lower classes?
- Have individuals their liberty?
- How authority treats individuals?
- Is our society need reforms?

3. Objectives:

- To bridge up the gap between higher, middle and lower classes.
- To introduce the rights of an individual.
- To point out how authority treats an individual.
- To indicate the fields where society needs reformation.

4. Methodology:

This research article is related to Johan Stuart Mill views about liberty in his essay "On Liberty" published in 1859. In this article his views are linked with current

society, for this purpose data has been collected from various sources and a broad study of the essay "On Liberty" has been carried out. This research is analytical as well as descriptive in nature.

5. Literature Review:

"It is, therefore, clear that before there could be a fertile ground for any militia to germinate there must be a perceived or real injustice by one section of society who has no way of expressing themselves other than means recognized by international community as stated in No. 2 of Article 20 of the African Charter on Human Rights to which Nigeria is a signatory: Colonized or oppressed peoples shall have the right to free themselves from the bonds or domination by resorting to any means recognized by the international community." (Adams, 2003: 97)

" [Mill] does not argue that we have a fundamental right to these freedoms, or that the government is under some sort of moral obligation to maximize our freedom or that such freedoms are divine commandments. His argument is a thoroughly utilitarian one: he argues that adopting his principle will bring direct social benefits for everyone, they will permit faster progress in all sectors of society...Without such principles, Mill believes, society is in danger of stagnating... [For] people will not threaten the stability of society if we give them much more freedom than they presently possess" (Johnston, 2002: 8).

Let everyman please himself without hurting his neighbor; and every moral system which aimed at more than this, either to obtain benefits for society at large other than protection against injury or to do good to the persons affected, would be wrong in principle" (Stephen, 1966: 43).

”... the belief by an adherent that his own religion is the only one favored by God and therefore, superior to the others; as a mark of gratitude to God for conferring this exclusive privilege and superiority on his own religion, the adherent is prepared to go to any length using all means – civilized or crude, peaceful or violent – to defend his religion or impose it on others. Incidentally, a fanatic’s knowledge and learning in his own religion may not be very profound. The fanatic is outward looking (Momoh, 2003:37).

Wolff observes “homosexual acts between men were illegal until as recently as the 1960s in Britain. It remains against the law for a prostitute to solicit for customers”.(Wolff, 1996: 116)

“For centuries people have been persecuted for worshipping the wrong god or for not worshipping at all” (Wolff, 1996: 117)

” if peace is not to be disturbed, all incentives for aggression must be eliminated; a world order must be established in which nations and national groups are so satisfied with living conditions that will not feel impelled to resort to the desperate expedient of war” (Wolff, 1996: 117)

“Mill never succeeded in welding the diverse intellectual traditions by which he was influenced by an integrated system.” (Gray: 1979, 30)

R.J. Halliday has noted, "for Mill, there was no question of an elite organized as a separate ruling group or party controlling opinion and demanding deference from the non-elite ... The elite, whatever its composition, was primarily a means of persuasion or education, either institutionalized in government or active within society" (Halliday, 1970, 476).

For Mill, as Brandon Turner has argued, then, “the experience of antagonism is fundamental in developing a more robust understanding of our beliefs—whose weaknesses and strengths are revealed only in contest with opposing opinions,” but “more important, it is critical in producing reflective, autonomous individuals” (Turner , 2010, 40).

6. Data Analysis/Findings:

In the light of Karl Marx’s theory of “Social Change” the theory of “Liberty” by Johan Stuart Mill is implemented on current society. Theory of liberty by Johan Stuart Mill is the master piece in the history of prose. There were different governing systems like democracy, dictatorship, and monarchy. The age in which Mill lived was perhaps the monarchism. There was no liberty. That's why there was no prosperity and development. Same is the situation in current society. The existing democracy is no doubt very type of monarchism. Here few people are ruling and imposing their desired laws and regulations on individuals. Masses have only to receive the orders from cruel rulers. Here we focus on Mill’s views as well as current society. Struggle between liberty and authority was the most prominent feature of Mill’s society. Mill says that:

“Conservatives are not necessarily stupid, but most stupid people are conservatives.”

19th-century society in England was in great struggle with authority for their liberty. The authority was in full power and individual was their toy to play with. Mill highlighted the wrong acts of authority and denied the concept to snatch the liberty of individuals. In current society, authority is in power to

use individuals and to interfere in their lives. Liberty has become the usage of powerful people, and lower class has to serve them and entertain them. The misuse of authority existed at that time when Mill was highlighted this, and the same thing can be found in contemporary society.

So the concept of Mill to use authority in case of right ways and not to use authority in wrong ways is very important and one to reform the current society. Mill says that authority should serve the people and not to use their powers for their own benefits. This is the thing which makes liberal, where people live in limits, and everyone enjoys liberty in real sense.

“A party of order or stability and a party of progress or reforms are both necessary elements of a healthy state of political life.”

Mill says that majority is not always right. There should be freedom for everyone to speak and express his ideas. Mill says:

“If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.”

Limitations on freedom of speech and expression remained as continuous problem for most of the societies. Mill argues that it is not necessary that majority is always right. Every person has right to express his views. There should be no limitation on expressing views otherwise this is against the liberty of individual. The concept of freedom of speech is the need of the current

society. Contemporary society needs to improve with the views of Johan Stuart Mill, and there should be freedom regarding speeches and expression.

“Every man who says frankly and fully what he thinks is so far doing a public service. We should be grateful to him for attacking most unsparingly our most cherished opinions.”

Speeches against Government and powerful people, critical writings and the demand of right should be allowed to every individual. Mill is of the view that Government is responsible to people under the control of that government. A good government has to provide five major necessities to its state people. The first responsibility is regarding health, a good government should arrange for better health system. The second thing is education; a good government needs to provide equal and proper educational system to all people under its control. There should be no class difference in provision of education; this should be the manifesto of good government.

“Education for all.”

The third thing is law and order; Mill signifies that legislation and order are the most important aspect of peace and prosperity, a good governmental system provides law and order. The maxim “Everyone is equal before law” is vital for a good government. Fourth thing is to provide better food to the masses. The state government has to manage for food. The last thing is to provide jobs to educated people. It is the duty of a state ruling government to handle for jobs. There should be proper system to provide jobs according to

educational merit. Mill stresses upon merit. All jobs should be given with merit. Everyone should get what he deserves.

In current society, these five things have become very necessary. Less attention by government side needs to change. There is a great need to reform the state duties with Mill's views to make a peaceful society.

“A state dwarfs its men, so that they may be more docile instruments in its hands even for beneficial purposes mill find that with small men no great thing can really be accomplished.”

Terrorist activities, corruption, inflation, poverty, injustice, and cruelty have made the people dissatisfied. Chaos is everywhere. By the imposition of Mill's views, we can bring change and make a happy and united state. There are also some activities on behalf of individuals. Mill is of the view that everyone should perform his duties individually; it will further make progress collectively. So Mill's views are the need of our society.

“The worth of a state, in the long run, is the worth of the individuals composing it.”

Rossouw says:

“We are born free but every where we are in chains.”

Mill is of the view that religion is personal matter of every individual. To him, there is everywhere chains in religion. Every person has right to choose his religion. There should be no restriction and suppression on others to adopt some one's desired religion.

“It is conceivable that religion may be morally useful whit out being intellectually sustainable. The principle itself of dogmatic religion, dogmatic morality, dogmatic philosophy, is what requires to be booted out; not any particular, manifestation of that principle.”

Mill signifies that old traditions of the society limit the life of an individual and suppress his liberty. There are chains everywhere. Mostly the women side is under restrictions. Mill points out these limitations as chains. Every individual should be responsible for his acts regarding others, but if one's acts are self-regarded, then there should be no interfere with any other person. He makes the harm as subject matter for this case. He says if one's acts harm any other then he can be harmed or restricted. If there is no harm, then there is no restriction for an individual.

“The principle is that the soul ends for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection.”

The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercise over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral is not sufficient warrant. Something is denied in current society to individuals, which secures their personal acts. Self-regarded acts also interfere with majority. So views of the Mill can change the situation of the contemporary society, and it will bring prosperity.

7. Conclusion:

Mill has depicted a very good thing named Liberty. Liberty has become the most prominent thing for current society. Everywhere individuals are under suppression. Power is crushing the lives of weak people. Weaker side is becoming dead with the cruelty of stronger side. There is no proper system and no management to control our injustice and cruelty. Dissatisfaction is everywhere. Mill's views are a light for enlightenment of dark society. With the implementation of these, we can change our society. The educational system, judiciary, and government all these systems can be reform well by Mill's views.

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