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Voltaire

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In the present time, people have more freedom to present their ideas of whatever they want to present to their society. As technology of internet that let people to be able to connect to others all time all places, so internet websites become the place where people show their opinions about everything like movies, media and politics and it becomes influential to readers' thought like in Thailand's politics of the recent event of yellow shirt and red shirt, it also began from a small group of people criticizing about the politics and influence others and form a group that lead to a mop of politic remonstrant and finally lead to 2006 Thai coup d'etat.¹ This event is similar to the event of French revolution 1789,² the philosophers presented their ideas and critiques about the politics into their literatures and influenced readers thoughts which later lead to a big change of French monarchy. Voltaire, one of the most influenced philosophies played an important role in the way of insetting his critiques into his literature that eventually lead to the uprising of people in French revolution.

As a French philosopher and also a writer, Voltaire had created a lot of literatures in many ways such as novels, philosophic tales, history and poetries. He

¹ "Thailand coup d'état - 19 September 2006." *Sun search Thailand for the internet*. 1 Feb 2013.
< <http://sunsearch.in.th/thailand/hua-hin/sights-information/history-thailand-coup-19-september-2006/>>

² "French Revolution." *The History Chanel website*, 1 Feb 2013.
< <http://www.history.com/topics/french-revolution>>

was admired from the people at that period as a great play writer and great poet, but also admired as a satirist who wrote his own critiques into his literatures. He presented his logical ideas so that his readers could understand the point of his writings easily. Most of his works give his readers the philosophic ideas that caused an effect on French society at that time. The thoughts that altered into critiques aroused the French people who rejected an old system of absolute monarchy³ to gather and fight for the justice in the society, not only that, also superstition in religious. The idea of Voltaire also agitated for human rights, civil liberty and freedom for people to present their opinions.

Voltaire's works had caused the influential critique to the French. His critique presented the situation in French society. He inveighed against the absolute monarchy in France that the royal institution was able to freely use evil power without restraint to oppress their people such as collecting a high rate of taxes, which the royal at the period lived in wealth, joy, luxuries and extravagance. The high class people cheated on their duty, finding the ways to avoid paying tax. Corruption was spread in every level of works while peasants and slaves or middle and working class suffered with poverty, oppressed from those nobles. People at the time also had a limit right to present their own idea, anyone who showed their idea against the government would be punished same as Voltaire who inveighed against one man in the royal service of Louise XVI de France⁴ was captured and send to the Bastille, a prison. People were

³ "The Rise and Fall of the Absolute Monarchy." *Creating French Culture*. 1 Feb 2013.
<<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/bnf/bnf0005.html>>

⁴ "French Revolution." *The History Chanel website*, 1 Feb 2013.
<<http://www.history.com/topics/french-revolution>>

blinded with the media that was under the power of government broadcasted distorted news to them.

With these conditions of French society at that time, Voltaire strongly inveighed to the monarchy and those selfish nobles. Voltaire wrote a philosophical novel named *Candide ou l'optimisme*. He also inset the critiques about the government and justice into the novel. This novel represents Voltaire as a symbol of critiques leading to French revolution at that time. Also as in *Les Lettres philosophiques ou Lettres anglaises* (1734), Voltaire satirized that France was still obsolete compared to England, that France needed equality of paying taxes between the lower class and the upper class, balance in political power and that the government should allow freedom in arts and science. Voltaire had presented his idea of the French society he wanted to be as individualism.⁵ Everyone was born with equal rights, treated equally and along with freedom in their life. He also presented a government with a monarch king or sovereignty with lords or serfs because he thought that this system with a monarch king had been successful to France for a long time since history and he had seen this system in England of how successful their country were once he was exiled from France and lived in London. But other philosophers did not want a monarch system as Voltaire presented. But his idea of the monarchy system was accepted by rulers of other nations such as Frederick of Prussia.

Voltaire also strongly condemned about religion and religious people and leaders of the church. He inveighed against the religious institution that taught people with superstition and fought against the people who did not respect for Catholic. Plenty of his works were written about religion such as *Les Lettres*

⁵“Individuualism.” *Clearly Cultural*. 5 Feb 2013. < <http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/individualism/>>

philosophiques ou Lettres anglaises (1734), *Traité sur la Tolérance* (1763) and a well known novel, *Candide*,⁶ all of his works show the ideas of Voltaire against superstition and rabid religion. He inveighed that the church seized the freedom of people to worship in their religion, having too much power over the people. Voltaire also criticized about the pope for getting into the politics. Voltaire also had convinced readers to think rationally, not to believe in superstition and not being credulous in God. He mainly focused on the idea of universal laws,⁷ to follow scientific methods. His actions on religion caused enlightenment on people's thoughts. In the same time, the critiques of Voltaire in his works caused the antagonists to Voltaire by the church and religious people. Even when he died, his body was not allowed to be buried under the church.

All Voltaire's works were about criticism of France. These critiques caused the French to realize about the real situations happening in their society, what was right what was wrong. Voltaire promulgated rationalism to people to solve their problems in their life, to analyze information they had before believing it. He used his works as a media for people to acknowledge philosophy. He was a person who influenced people to have freedom of thoughts and to pay more attention to their society. Moreover, he fought for equality, justice, freedom and human rights. Therefore, it is said that Voltaire had greatly caused an influence to 18th century society which finally led to a huge revolution in politics, social and religion which is known as French Revolution 1789.

⁶ Wikipedia contributors. "Candide." *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*. 4 Feb 2013. <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Candide>>

⁷ Chuck Danes. "Universal Laws." *Abundance and Happiness.com*. 8 Feb 2013. <<http://www.abundance-and-happiness.com/universal-laws.html>>