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Voltaire

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Writing is one kind of arts. Some people may think it is boring, but not for Voltaire's writings: Francois-Marie Arouet, the famous French writer and philosopher, whom the world known as "Voltaire". He wrote poetry, prose and letters about his history¹. His controversial, criticizing, and scathing writing style have captured the inner thoughts and feeling of the readers. His ideas and thoughts have been informed to the public through the philosophy that he composed. Voltaire is one of the few writers who is excellence in both writing and philosopher skills. Many of his works are very famous; for example, The Age of Louis XIV (1751), Philosophical Letters (Lettres philosophiques) (1734), History of Charles XII (Histoire de Charles XII) (1731). His works are very outstanding and also sparked readers' thoughts which it has led to French Revolutions.

On the other hand his inspiration was against families' will; Voltaire strived his way through to obtain his dream and became one of the most powerful philosophers. Voltaire has quitted from being a lawyer and chosen to work as a writer. Voltaire was born in Paris². His interests in politics, contemporary history, and literature have inspired him to become a writer; in order to share his thought to the world. In contrast,

¹ Wikipedia contributors. "Voltaire" Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia. 4 September 2012 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voltaire>>

² Wikipedia contributors. "Voltaire" Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia. 4 September 2012 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Voltaire>>

his father expected him to be a lawyer so that he was sent to study law, and worked as lawyer for a while³. Voltaire did not give up from trying being a writer; however: he continued to write and spent a lot of time on it. Finally, after he had attempted to fulfill his father's wishes, he had become a writer. His early writer life began in Paris. "The Age of Louis XIV", the first writing in history of him, is about vicegerent parody in the period of Louis XIV. Due to the parody, he was sent to Bastille prison⁴. Meanwhile: he was writing "E'dipe", the first tragedy, opposing beliefs in religion, faith and emphasizing relationship of the liberty among humanities. When people have a dream they should follow their dream, even though, obstacles might exist.

However, the main factor which heavily influences his work, turning him from writer to philosopher, is when he was exiled to England. Voltaire once again was sent to prison resulting from having an argument with, a noble, Duc de Rohan-Chabot. After he was released, he was exiled to England. When he was in England, John Locke, an English philosopher, and William Shakespeare, whom he was interested in their works, had an influence in his works. For example, *Zaire and Brutus*, his poetry, and *La Henriade*, an epic, which praise Henry IV of France, who legislated "L'Edit de Nantes" the law that helped ending the war between the Catholics and the Protestants. This Epic cannot be published in France, as indignant of parliament and pope. After he returned to Paris, he started to create his own philosophy. He did not believe in

³ Shank, J.B., "Voltaire", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2010/entries/voltaire/>>.

⁴ Fitzpatrick, Martin (2000). "Toleration and the Enlightenment Movement" in Grell/Porter, *Toleration in Enlightenment Europe*, p. 64, footnote 91, Cambridge University Press

religious tradition that has to believe in god⁵, so he used scathing technique in writing religious philosophy. He refused all of the religious system and believed in universal laws. Liberty is included in his philosophy; he focused on people's freedom; freedom of expression and freedom of religion. "Lettres philosophiques", his most famous philosophy, is about praising English's customs and assailing French regulations and government in English language⁶. This philosophy was written while he was in England; therefore it was based on his experience. For his other philosophy "Candide", slavery remark and assured his philosopher⁷, and "Zadig": are also famous. He was personifying as an Enlightenment philosopher because of his well-oriented philosophy and particular philosophy attached. People often become overwhelmed with their hard times but for Voltaire, he turns his most hopeless situation into the most valuable experience by trying to make a change in the society.

Voltaire still created his work throughout last year of his life; even in the last stages of his life. All of his works show us that he was a prolific-quality writer and philosopher. He spread his philosophies and thoughts to the people to provoke critical thinking in the French to fight against the unfairness in the society and opposed to old thoughts about hierarchy, of monarchy, superstitions and craziness in religion. Moreover, he also is the voice of reason and an outspoken critic of French

⁵ Voltaire. W. Dugdale, *A Philosophical Dictionary ver 2*, 1843, Page 473 sec 1. Retrieved 31 October 2007.

⁶ Wikipedia contributors, "Letters on the English" The Free Encyclopedia, 10 July 2012 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Letters_on_th_English>

⁷ Davis, David Brion, *The problem of slavery in Western culture* (New York: Oxford University Press 1988) p. 392

government and religion⁸. He was a symbol of critical thinking in the 18th century. In the time, he was brave to express his thoughts and ideas through his works; however, it is against the social valued, tradition, people's faith, and principle. Hence, it has brought "L'esprit critique" or critical thinking to the French. His philosophies create doubts to people; they started to question in everything in the society. In addition, Voltaire brought "L'esprit scientifique" or reasoning to people and let them adapt then use it in everyday life; by using reason to solve the problem and think about what you should believe in before you will believe something easily.

In conclusion, Voltaire was successful in his career and his purpose that he is willing to spread his ideas and thoughts to the world. He used his works as a tool to help him spread the philosophy into the society and made people become more controversial. All of his thoughts have like an intellectual light for the people who have absorbed his philosophies. Voltaire has influenced people's freedom of thoughts and made people interested in England's Constitutional Monarchy. His works have a lot of influenced in changing the society of France, little by little and a few people agreed with his idea since the beginning. Moreover, time passed by many more of people agreed with his idea so it has become an idea that everyone accepted it. From little change, it has caused to a big change, "the French Revolution", which occurred after he died. The main cause of this revolution is about changing monarchy and politics of France. His works were said to be the component which led revolts in France and it was overthrown within three years. This revolution not only had impacts

⁸ Lucidcafe contributors, "Voltaire" Ludidcafe Library, 26 June 2012
<<http://www.lucidcafe.com/library/95nov/voltaire.html>>

on France but also had on the rest of Europe. Sometimes people think writing is only for entertainment and knowledge but actually it is misunderstood to be just that. From Voltaire's writing, it shows us that writing also can make a world's changing. The main purpose of some writer and philosopher is not for entertaining, but it was aimed to make a better world like "Voltaire".