

Practice Paragraph for Précis:

We must insist that free oratory is only the beginning of free speech; it is not the end, but a means to an end. The end is to find the truth. The practical justification of civil liberty is not that the examination of opinion is one of the necessities of man.

For experience tells us that it is only when freedom of opinion becomes the compulsion to debate that the seed which our forefathers planted has produced its fruit. When that is understood, freedom will be cherished not because it is a vent for our opinions but because it is the surest method of correcting them.

'The unexamined life', said Socrates, 'is unfit to be lived by man'. This is the virtue of liberty, and the ground on which we may best justify our belief in it, that it tolerates error in order to serve the truth. When more men are brought face to face with their opponents, forced to listen and learn and mend their ideas, they cease to be children and savages and begin to live like civilized men. Then only is freedom a reality, when men may voice their opinions because they must examine their opinions.

The only reason for dwelling on all this is that if we are to preserve democracy we must understand its principles. And the principle which distinguishes it from all other forms of government is that in a democracy the opposition not only is tolerated as constitutional but must be maintained because it is in fact indispensable.

The democratic system cannot be operated without effective opposition. For, in making the great experiment of governing people by consent rather than by coercion, it is not sufficient that the party in power should have a majority. It is just as necessary that the party in power should never outrage the minority. That means that it must listen to the minority and be moved by the criticism of the minority.

Precis Title: Democracy and the Freedom of Speech

Free oratory is not the end but the beginning of free speech to reach the truth. It allows men to freely voice their opinions, thereby initiating a debate between the opponents. The ensuing debate forces them to learn and mend their ideas, and they begin living like civilized men. Thus, the examination of opinions is the ultimate end of free oratory and is a virtue of civil liberty. One of the principles which distinguishes democracy from all other forms of government is effective opposition. In a democratic system, having a majority is not only sufficient for the governing party but it must also lend an ear to the opinions and criticisms of the minority.