

I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it

Outline

1. Introduction

2. People do not always disagree because the view of another person is wrong, but they also do for degrading or discouraging others. Understanding the various motives of dissent.

3. What is the importance of dissent?

On individual level:

3.1 - Fosters divergent thinking

3.2 - Enhances the quality of decision making

3.3 - Encourages open communication, leading to stronger relationships

On the societal level:

3.4 - Helps in formulation of effective and public-centric policies

3.5 - Develops an enlightened and empowered society

3.6 - Improves and uplifts economic well-being of a society by encouraging better innovations

4. Importance of freedom of speech in a society

4.1 - Increases effectiveness and efficiency of institutions

4.2 - Leads to enactment of legislations that drive social progress

4.3 - Prevents flagrant violation of human rights

4.4 - Lays a fertile ground for accountability and transparency

4.5 - Promotes forbearance and tolerance

5. How dissent can be encouraged in societies

5.1 - By developing a culture of appreciation of dissenting voices

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6. How freedom of speech can be protected

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7. Suppression of dissent, resulting in the 1971 tragedy: A case study

8. Conclusion

Centuries ago, disapproving the established dogmas and notions in a society was deemed as a severe crime; therefore, the dissenting person would be punished miserably. When Galileo, for the first time in human history, floated the helio-centric theory, he was put behind the bars and subjected to gruesome punishment. It was because he challenged and ridiculed the ubiquitous belief that earth was superior and that all other celestial bodies orbited around it. However, societies evolved with time and advancing education. Though dissent still faces backlash, it, somewhat, has managed to receive some acceptance in the present-day world, which understands the fact very well that it is an essential requisite for individuals' and society's growth and betterment. On an individual level, dissent provides cherished dividends such as divergent thinking, better quality of decisions and stronger interpersonal relationships. In the same way, it extends laudatory boons to a society as well. It leads to formulation of public-centric policies, emergence of a well-enlightened and empowered society, and culture of new and better innovations. Similarly, freedom of speech is

also as important as dissent for individuals and a society. It enhances the effectiveness and efficiency of a country's institutions, and leads to enactment of public-centric legislations. Moreover, it prevents flagrant violation of human rights and promotes the culture of accountability and transparency, thus resulting in a robust progress of a nation. However, the real challenge for societies is to promote and encourage dissent, and safeguard the right of freedom of speech. For the promotion of dissent, culture of appreciation for differing voices must be evolved, along with educating the public about its significance. Likewise, freedom of speech can be protected by making media independent and seeking the active role of civil society. In fact, dissent and freedom of speech are two essential ingredients for a comprehensive and robust growth and betterment of not only individuals but also a society.

Basically, the words, "I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend ~~you~~ to the death your right to say it" are from Voltaire. Through these words, he has signified two major rights of every individual: the right of dissent and freedom of speech. Every person has the right to agree or disagree with someone, which all other people are morally and lawfully obliged to respect and uphold. In the same way, free speech is also a basic right of people. Unless they are adhering to the reasonable restrictions, they are allowed and free to speak anything. Ultimately, it is individuals and a society that benefit from these two rights. Hence, encouraging and protecting dissent and free speech are necessary in order to reap lucrative benefits. These benefits can materialize in a plethora of ways, especially in the form of individuals' social mobility and growth, and a society's holistic transformation.

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First and foremost, dissent is very important for individuals as it fosters in them divergent thinking. Basically, dissent arises as a result of creative ideas, which leads a person to adopt divergent thinking. In absence of dissent, an environment emerges where individuals feel compelled to agree to majority opinion, which kills creativity and capacity of generating innovative ideas in them. As a matter of fact, allowing individuals to freely express their dissenting views enables them to cultivate in themselves the seed of critical thinking since they need to validate their opposite stances. Moreover, dissent inculcates the stamina of risk-taking in individuals, which encourages them to explore every possible avenue of a problem or a matter, thus helping to brainstorm novel and unique ideas. Considering this upside of dissent, organizations, such as Google, are creating an environment within to encourage employees to express their difference of opinion freely. To sum up, creative thinking gets birth in individuals as a result of dissent.

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Apart from divergent thinking, dissent encourages open communication in individuals, which leads to stronger relationships. There is no denying the fact that communication is a cornerstone of healthy relations. When a person feels free to easily express his differences, it increases the trust factor in relationships. Similarly, healthy dissent brings forth prevailing issues, which may go on to attenuate a bond between two persons, thus enabling them to resolve those at priority to salvage their ties. Furthermore, it removes doubts, suspicions and element of hypocrisy as individuals do not hold back their paradoxical and contradictory opinions. Aurangzeb, the Mughal king, killed his all ~~the~~ brothers under the fear of them becoming threat to his reign, which transpired because of lack of open communication and dissent in them. In a nutshell, relationships become long-lasting through dissent and unrestrained communication.

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In the same manner, dissent enhances the quality of decision making, which is its another important benefit for individuals. Decision making is a very delicate practice in a person's life as a flawed decision can engender many disastrous outcomes. Basically, disagreement of opinions in the process of decision making helps in digging out other possible alternatives and their better evaluation. Moreover, dissent can aid to detecting and correcting flaws that may go off the board in the contrary scenario. Above all, dissent leads to emergence of such a culture where people share their differing perspectives freely, which ultimately translates into more effective and profitable decisions. For instance, Muhammad Bin Tughlaq, the Sultan of Delhi, completely ignored the objections of his courtiers before ~~taking~~ shifting the capital from Delhi to Devagiri, which proved extremely catastrophic decision later. Hence, difference of opinion is very essential for making quality decisions.

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Moving on to the societal level, dissent helps in formulation of effective and public-centric policies. Effective policies are very vital for a society because they become a catalyst of its socio-economic prosperity. Through dissent, policy-makers are sensitized with what a particular policy must encompass and what must be omitted out of it. Similarly, dissent surfaces different perspectives about a problem, which result in formation of a robust and comprehensive policy, the one that yields greater results. In the same manner, disagreement expressed by the public prevents a government from introducing such policies which may turn out to be hostile towards general populace. For example, the government of Pakistan had to roll back its policy of shutting down the utility stores because it faced a widespread discontent in the masses. This illustrates that dissent contributes to the formation of sound and efficient policies.

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In the same vein, dissent develops an enlightened and empowered society. Widespread enlightenment and power to express differences freely are two essential ingredients for cooking a sweet recipe of prosperity for a society. Allowing free dissent enables people to ponder on issues deeply and debate about them every possible, which, thus, contributes to fast expansion of their knowledge. Moreover, dissent leads them to question deep-seated dogmas and untrue beliefs, hence prompting them to embrace well-proven realities and facts. In addition, expression of dissent sows a sense of empowerment in individuals, encouraging them to put everything to question and accountability that is based on falsehood, deception and malicious intentions. For instance, one of the reasons that forced the Bangladeshi ~~government~~^{population} to rise up against the regime of Sheikh Hasina was the growing suppression of their right of dissent, which was making them vastly powerless. This demonstrates that dissent is all-needed for empowerment of a society.

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In addition, dissent improves and uplifts economic well-being of a nation by encouraging better innovations. A culture of innovations changes the fate of a society by raising its standards of living and boosting its economy. Freedom of dissent allows individuals to think creatively, thus leading them ^{to} discover new and unique solutions for problems. Similarly, an enabling environment of disagreement promotes a competition in individuals for discovering new ideas, which can result in novel innovations in existing technologies or inventions of new ones. Likewise, a culture of open dissent encourages individuals to take risks by embarking on the journeys of their creative entrepreneurial ideas, which, if become successful, will add manifold to a country's economy. Clayton Christensen, a renowned American business scholar, said, "The most innovative companies are those that are able to harness the power of dissent." This plainly reflects that dissent fosters innovations, which ultimately benefit a society.

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Firstly, freedom of speech increases effectiveness and efficiency of institutions. Institutions play a paramount role in the transformation and growth of a society. Basically, when individuals freely express their opinions or criticize any institutions, this enhances its performance.

Moreover, freedom of expression allows people to highlight an institution's malpractices without any fear of reprisal, which helps authorities to promptly control them. In addition, freedom of expression encourages people to easily portray their discontent regarding the dismal performance of an institution, which will enable a government

to introduce needed reforms into it. For instance, Jahangir, the Mughal emperor, introduced the Chain of Justice, helping his subjects express their grievances freely, which immensely consolidated the judicial system.

Hence, freedom of expression ramps up the performance of institutions.

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Secondly, freedom of speech leads to enactment of legislations that drive social progress. Effective laws and policies contribute to the socio-economic betterment of a society. With the freedom of expression, individuals can easily put forward their deprivations and grievances, which help a government to pass such laws or policies that can address them. In the same manner, by exercising this right, people can highlight the prevailing social evils, such as corruption, extortion, kidnappings, discrimination, etc. leading a country to ^{either} implement the existing laws robustly or introduce new ones. Above all, it promotes fairness and impartiality in policies which yield effective outcomes. For example, emboldened by the right of freedom of speech, the climate-vulnerable countries, including Pakistan, demanded climate justice from the developed world, which led to the formation of the Climate Fund in 2023. Thus, freedom of expression aids in formulation of effective policies.

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Thirdly, freedom of speech prevents flagrant violation of human rights. The topmost priority of a state is always to facilitate individuals' lives and protect their rights. With help of freedom of speech, people can easily highlight transgressions of their rights and demand their protection from a state. Similarly, it enables them to demand from their government ^{the} provision of basic needs such as unhygienic living environment, drinkable or uncontaminated water, education, speedy justice, etc. Above all, they can easily take up the matter of rampant corruption, lack of meritocracy, the culture of bribery, biasedness and discrimination, and such forth. For example, the Palestinians expressed their miseries to the world through media, which led the world community to pressurize Israel for allowing aid to flow into starving Gaza. To sum up, freedom of speech comes to rescue of individuals' rights.

Fourthly, freedom of speech lays a fertile ground for accountability and transparency in a society. The culture of accountability and transparency is very essential for a country as it sets it on the path to achieving prosperity. In presence of curtailed and controlled speech, officials and authorities fear no consequences for their unlawful acts, in particular corruption, which creates an atmosphere of impunity for them. Similarly, exercising the right of free speech, individuals can question their government's policies, which promotes transparency in them. Likewise, freedom of speech strengthens a country's democratic system, which results in choosing of such representatives who uphold the pillars of a society, including accountability and transparency. For instance, Bob Woodward exposed the corruption of Richard Nixon, the former US President, in famous Watergate Scandal, which led to his resignation. In brief, the culture of accountability and transparency evolves as a result of freedom of speech.

Finally, freedom of speech promotes forbearance and tolerance in a society. In the present-day world, intolerance and biasedness are two core causes of social issues, including extremism, inter-communities conflicts, crimes, and such forth. Freedom of speech allows individuals to freely express their dissent, differences and contradictions, which can thereafter be easily addressed, leading to a peaceful society. In the same way, people can do constructive criticism of bad acts, which may go on to become a bone of contention, thus discouraging the doers. Above all, individuals can speak up against malpractices such as discrimination, lack of merit, nepotism and favouritism, and such forth, hence bringing inclusivity into a society. For example, the Global North does not face the menace of extremism because it has upheld the principles of freedom of speech. In a nutshell, extremist tendencies and narrow-minded engulf a society if it lacks freedom of expression.

First and foremost, dissent can be encouraged in a society by ^{developing} a culture of appreciation of dissenting voices. Dissent cultivates an environment of openness and tolerance in a society, which contribute to its prosperity. Educational institutions must play their part in promoting dissent by encouraging students to engage in discussions that involve debates and arguments. Moreover, a society must be open to those individuals who dare to express their differences and disagreements. Likewise, parents should also pay good heed to their children's opposite views and stances, which will lift up their morale, thus prompting them to indulge in healthy dissent. For instance, Maulana Muhammed Ali Jauhar would be appreciated by his mother for his contradictory opinions, which was the reason that led him to start the 'Khilafat Movement' against the Britishers. Thus, it is necessary to welcome and appreciate diverse opinions to encourage dissent in a society.

Besides, dissent can be encouraged in societies by educating individuals about its sweet dividends. Dissent builds creative thinking in individuals, who, as a result, brainstorm new ideas and solutions for problems. For motivating people to engage in constructive dissent, they must be taught about its importance through the help of media. Moreover, educational curriculum must encompass chapters highlighting the significance of healthy disagreements and difference of opinions. Additionally, historical examples of successful dissent should be shared with individuals, which may include famous whistleblowers like Bob Woodward, who fostered a culture of accountability. In a nutshell, it is imperative to create widespread awareness of dissent and its benefits in the masses, to promote it at a large scale.

Similarly, dissent can be encouraged in societies by establishing platforms of healthy debates and discussions. Comprehensive debates and discussions embolden individuals to voice their differences and contradictory opinions easily. In this regard, educational institutions should lay a sincere focus on holding full-fledged debate competitions and conducting open discussions on themes pertaining to contemporary issues. Moreover, governments should also sponsor and arrange such events which involve debates, at national levels. Likewise, media outlets should be encouraged to provide space for dissenting voices and hold more and more talk shows on socio-political and religious matters, while promoting the culture of open discussion. Hence, these steps will immensely contribute to nurturing dissent in societies.

First and foremost, freedom of speech can be protected by ensuring independence of media. In the present-day world, media has emerged as a guardian of human rights and a catalyst of a society's socio-economic development. Thus, its complete independence is essential, which can be materialised by enacting inviolable laws that uphold its freedom, more particularly, laying focus on anti-censorship laws. Moreover, the judiciary must ensure that a government does not influence newspapers' editorial policy by selectively giving advertisements. In addition, states must provide safe and secure environment to journalists in order to foster free speech. For instance, Jamal Khashoggi, a famous journalist—known for his open dissent of Saudi Arabia, was murdered, which served a significant blow to fair reporting and journalism. In brief, it is imperative to make media independent for protecting freedom of expression.

In the same vein, freedom of speech can be protected by seeking an increased and active role of civil society. In every country, a civil society plays an important role in getting justice to oppressed people and battling the socio-economic evils, ^{besides} ensuring protection of human rights. As the right of freedom of speech is under threat across the world, the civil society must leave no stone unturned to campaign for formulation of laws to safeguard free speech. Similarly, it must make efforts to educate the masses about the indispensable importance of their right of free expression. Above all, the lawyers' community should show extensive commitment to protecting the individuals' right of freedom of speech, which they can do by taking up cases of its violation. Hence, these steps collectively, being taken by the civil society, will keep the people's right of free speech insulated and unviolated.

Additionally, freedom of speech can be protected by enacting unsurmountable laws and implementing them in a true spirit. Effective laws are essential to safeguard the basic rights of humans, especially freedom of speech. In this pursuit, it is important to provide constitutional protection to individuals so that they can express their views without any fear of retribution. Moreover, societies must frame laws to punish those who dare to deprive people of their right of freedom of expression, especially ensuring that a free atmosphere of differences and disagreements is fostered. In the similar way, governments must make their judicial systems completely independent so that they can uphold the laws ^{that are} safeguarding the freedom of speech. With devising and implementing robust laws, freedom of speech can be kept afloat in societies.

There are many case studies which demonstrate that countries had to face and withstand extremely horrible consequences as a result of their failure to ensure dissent and free speech. Because of suppression of these two basic rights, either their tyrant governments were toppled—for instance, Shaikh Hasina's regime in Bangladesh and Rajiv Gandhi's government in Sri Lanka—or they disintegrated. For the latter case, Pakistan is an opposite example, which saw dismemberment of its Eastern Wing. In the elections of 1970, the Awami League, spearheaded by Shaikh Mujeeb-ur-Rehman, achieved a landslide victory, but it was refused its constitutional right of forming the new government. This was an outright and flagrant violation of the people's right who voted for it, which significantly resulted in their alienation with the state. Subsequently, as a result of their rampant resentment, the Eastern and Western Wings perpetually repeated in the 1971 tragedy, leading to the emergence of Bangladesh.

To conclude, no society can stride towards achieving exemplary prosperity and development without ensuring and upholding dissent and free speech. Besides a country, both of these are very essential for individuals, too. As for a person, dissent fosters in him divergent and critical thinking. Moreover, it enhances an individual's decision-making capability. It also encourages open and unrestrained communication, which contributes to strengthening the relation between individuals. In the same manner, dissent lucratively benefit a society as well. It helps in formulation of effective and public-centric policies and broadens people's knowledge and understanding levels, thus forging a well-enlightened and empowered society. Along with dissent, freedom of speech is also indispensable for a country, having which in a true sense will be like a cherry on the top of the cake for it. Basically, freedom of expression provides paramount benefits to a society, especially it ramps up performance of institutions, leads to passing of such policies which drive social progress, shields basic rights of humans, and such forth. In spite of their monumental and far-reaching dividends, both dissent and free speech are finding no secure and salubrious

space in our provincial and narrow-minded societies for their peaceful dwelling. Both of them are suffocating in ever-dwindling space, which necessitates immediate actions in order to keep them alive and kicking. Concerning dissent, steps such as developing a culture of appreciation of dissenting voices, educating the masses about its dire need, and establishing platforms of debates can prove very effective. In the similar way, freedom of speech can be protected by ensuring independence of media, enacting more robust laws, and seeking an increased and active role of civil society. With protecting and encouraging dissent and free speech, societies will become more democratized in a real sense, hence achieving socio-economic prosperity, which will result in significant transformations of individuals' lives.