

Importance Of Civil Liberties

Posted on September 2, 2019

Introduction

Civil liberties constitute an important part of the laws and regulations of any country. They are personal freedoms and promises of security that the government of a state assures to deliver to the people that it rules over. These rights and freedoms are necessary because they develop a sense of security in the public and create a feeling in them that they can live comfortably in the countries that they consider home. Civil liberties can, in short, be precisely defined as the limitations that are placed on the power of the government from intruding on the activities of the people in order to protect their liberties. Civil liberty is an integral component of a nation, and freedom of speech is the most important and absolutely necessary civil liberty that all governments should provide to the public.

Importance of Civil Liberties

There are many civil liberties that have been put in place to give the public some space from the government and the state intervention in their lives. This allows them to live freely and contentedly. These liberties are enshrined in the US Constitution. They are not just important for the people in America but are equally important for people all over the world. Liberty as a social value is a fairly recent idea that has emerged over the course of the past few decades. It is based on the ancient Greek concepts of freedom and democracy. However, in Greek society, there were people who were slaves and women were also not given many rights. Since then, the society that we live in today has evolved and become a lot more mature. It has realized the true essence of liberties and their importance and has also made sure that they are granted not to just a particular group or class of people but to everyone.

Civil liberties are important because when people are given space from the government, they have more freedom to pursue their choices. Oftentimes, these can yield very progressive results. It has been found that civil liberties lead to economic freedom. Centuries ago today, the Enlightenment thinker Adam Smith argued in favour of the free hand of the market. He argued that the government should step back and stop intervening in the way the market functions and let the “free hand of the market” do its job (Naggar, 1977). In recent years, the principles of Neoliberalism emerged, which are more or less based on Adam Smith’s laissez-faire. Neoliberalism also calls for the government to let the market function on its own and give the people the freedom to make their own economic choices (Centeno et al., 2012). Both these ideas have resulted in a tremendous increase in the production as well as profits of various countries all over the world. The free market can be considered a civil liberty because it also asks for space from state intervention. Thus, civil liberties can guarantee economic

success for the people as well as for the states.

Freedom to practice one's religion is also important, particularly in the context of the United States (Importance of Liberty in Society, 2014). This is because the American population is characterized by a vast diversity of people from all over the world due to extensive migration. These people belong to different cultures and ethnic backgrounds and practice a vast range of religions. Stopping them from following their religions would be highly unfair because that would mean that they are not being welcomed or accepted by the state. They need to be made to feel that they are at home, for which they need to be made comfortable, not scared. One important way of doing that is by allowing them to practice their religion.

Significance of Freedom of Speech

When people feel that they have the space and liberty to express themselves without the danger of being thrown in jail or sued into silence, they can take more artistic risks. They do not have to worry about being threatened, arrested, or brutally silenced. This is something which results in great art being produced because it encourages people to think and speak critically. Herein lies the importance of freedom of speech. When people are not afraid to speak their minds, they write/read books about religion, philosophy, art, psychology and other similar disciplines. They also make films, dramas, documentaries, soap operas, music, and so on regarding the same topics. These topics can sometimes be very provocative, but they challenge the mind and encourage people to think critically. When this kind of freedom is provided to the people, they come up with theories and philosophies of their own and gain fame. When people are not confined and suffocated by the limits enforced onto them by the government, people like Karl Marx, Nelson Mandela, Adam Smith, and Galileo are produced. Though the governments during Adam Smith and Galileo's time did put bans on them, the state eventually did realize that it needed to hear the views of the people and listen to what they had to say to promote progress (Porter, 1990). As we can see, it is because of these brilliant people that the world has progressed to what it is today. If it weren't for them, if they had not been able to freely express their ideas to the people, society today would quite possibly still have been stuck in the ages of ignorance and darkness.

Rachael Jolley, the editor of a magazine called Index on Censorship, said, "Free speech has always been important throughout history because it has been used to fight for change. When we talk about rights today, they wouldn't have been achieved without free speech. Think about a time from the past - women not being allowed the vote, or terrible working conditions in the mines - free speech is important as it helped change these things" (Timms, 2016). This makes it clear that freedom of speech is fundamental for the progress of any society.

When people feel they can freely express themselves, they feel more satisfied and content. They do not feel anger and frustration building up and accumulating inside of them. They don't feel bottled up. They don't feel suppressed and pressed down by the force of the government (Importance of Liberty

in Society, 2014). Furthermore, freedom of speech promotes freedom of thought and conscience because freedom of speech gives rise to unmatched cultural and artistic forms of expression. When that happens, people feel relieved and at ease. They feel more complete and fulfilled.

Political Campaign Donations

Political parties promote their agendas, strategies and promises to the public through campaigning. Campaigns, thus, are very important for them because that is the sole source for them to be able to gain public support. Political campaigns can often get heated because one political party might bash another one and its strategies on various grounds. This can sometimes be disrespectful and demeaning. However, campaigns still do count as freedom of speech. There are certain rules that have to be followed, but parties are still allowed to get their message delivered to the targeted audience, which is the public.

Oftentimes, famous personalities like large business owners or other influential people and celebrities donate to political parties to declare their support for them. This strengthens the parties because people who admire those personalities might also start following that particular political party (Bryant, 2018). This also counts as freedom of speech because it gives a person the space and liberty to make his/her political opinion known to the public at large. The fact that declaring one's political affiliation in the United States is allowed in itself shows that this is a civil liberty because the government does not have any right to impose restrictions on such actions. Nor can the government restrict political campaigns, therefore they can be considered as a civil liberty in the form of freedom of speech.

Conclusion

This essay discusses the importance of civil liberties for any state and argues that they are absolutely necessary for the people of a society to progress. If they are not granted to the people, they will always feel under threat. They would never be comfortable and would not feel at home. This goes for the American indigenous population as well as the immigrants. Civil liberties are also characteristic of democratic states because, without them, the nature of the state would be more authoritarian than democratic. The civil liberty of freedom of speech, in particular, has been the particular focus of the essay, and it has been shown through various examples that, among others, it is the most important civil liberty. It must under no circumstances be denied to the people. Through discussing various examples of famous personalities from history, it has been argued that freedom of speech is necessary for the progress and advancement of societies. Without it, people would always be confined and feel suffocated and suppressed by the power of the state.

Works Cited

Naggar, Tahany. "Adam Smith's Laissez Faire." *The American Economist*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1977, pp. 35-39. *JSTOR*, JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/25603120.

Centeno, Miguel A., and Joseph N. Cohen. "The Arc of Neoliberalism." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 38, 2012, pp. 317-340., www.jstor.org/stable/23254598.

Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment* (London: Macmillan, 1990), pp. 12-31.

Timms, Josie. "Why Is Free Speech Important?" *Index on Censorship*, 4 May 2017, www.indexoncensorship.org/2016/04/free-speech-important/.

Liberty And Justice, 2014, www.aprenderlalibertad.org/2014/05/the-importance-of-liberty-in-society/.