

Viscount John Morley's Attitude to Society Exposed in His Writings: A Critical Study

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Abstract: Literature can shoulder the responsibility of reforming and improving societies when truly dedicated, loyal writer like Viscount John Morley pens against all odds and represents the true picture of the society. Morley reveals the real stories of old scholars that have proven the marking point in history. As a thinker, critic, literary writer, statesman, orator, journalist, biographer Morley's creative thinking, management skills and intentional powers represents his neutral attitude towards society. The study aims to demonstrate Viscount John Morley's approach and contribution towards society through his writings.

Introduction

Viscount John Morley (born Dec. 24, 1838, Blackburn, Eng.—died Sept. 23, 1923, Wimbledon), English Liberal statesman who was friend and official biographer of W.E. Gladstone and who gained fame as a man of letters, particularly as a biographer.¹ As a long-time member of Parliament (1883–95; 1896–1908), he was chief secretary for Ireland (1886; 1892–95) and secretary of state for India (1905–10), and was raised to the peerage in 1908. Among his published works major are Edmund Burke (1867), Voltaire (1872), Rousseau (1873), Diderot and the Encyclopaedists (1878), The Life of Richard Cobden (1881), Ralph Waldo Emerson (1884), Studies in Literature (1891), Oliver Cromwell (1900), Life of Gladstone (1903), Critical Miscellanies (1908), and Recollections (1917).² His major essays are **1.** Carlyle **2.** Byron **3.** Macaulay **4.** Emerson **5.** Robespierre **6.** Turgot **7.** Vauvenargues **8.** The Death of Mr. Mill **9.** Mr. Mill's Autobiography **10.** The Life of George Eliot **11.** On Pattison's Memories **12.** France in the Eighteenth Century. Viscount Morley of Blackburn was one of the principal Victorian expositors of the ideas of the Enlightenment. He was a leader of the Liberal party and his writings drew nourishment from those political ideas.³ Morley was a dedicated writer and he invested a great amount of time in his life for literature. He has a great sympathy for mass people and being a political leader and a great writer, he utilizes every single opportunity to represent human sorrow, suffering, dream, imagination, corruption of the society and so on. He could depict the realistic thing of people's life through his writings. As a good writer he is disciplined, bears clarity, strong vocabulary, open to change. Besides he considered John Stuart Mill as an iconic figure of his life.⁴

Methodology

The study adopted a content analysis method to reveal John Morley's approach to literature and its impact on society. The data had been incorporated and administered by illustrating relevant contents derived from academic research articles, government databases, newspapers, magazines, original documentaries and research reports. Both exclusion and inclusion criteria were followed to adjust with the overall objective of the study.⁵

Limitations of the Study:

Some limitations or barriers were faced at the time of conducting the study, for instance:

- Insufficient study on relevant topics.
- All latest information and analysis on Morley's work is not available.
- Majority of Morley's work centers on the biography of some famous person.⁶

Objective of the Study

- This piece of research evaluates Morley's attitude to society.
- The objective of this study is to illustrate Morley's outlook towards contemporary society and politics.
- It addresses the writer's view to the integration of politics and society.

Morley's Contribution to Bengal's Partition

Morley had a great influence and played a vital role to Bengal's Partition. That partition divided Bengal's province into West Bengal and Eastern Bengal and Assam, provoking heated opposition from the Bengali-speaking leaders of India's National Congress, who viewed it as imperial "divide and rule" with a vengeance. The line divided the Bengali-speaking majority just east of Calcutta, the heart of long-united old Bengal, leaving its Hindu Bengali-speakers as a minority to Bihari- and Oriya-speakers in West Bengal, while elevating its Muslim Bengali-speakers to majority control over their own province. British India's first Muslim-majority province thus emerged with its new capital of Dhaka, where the Muslim League was born in December 1906. When Morley was pressed by Congress leaders like Gopal Krishna Gokhale to reverse that "cruel partition," he refused, calling it "a settled fact." He hoped that would silence opposition, permitting him to move on to what he considered more important reforms. But Congress's anti partition forces only grew louder throughout Morley's tenure, its extremist "New Party," led by BalGangadharTilak, introducing bombs to add explosive emphasis to their petitions and pleas. Before leaving office in 1910, Morley drafted Bengal's reunification announcement made by King George at his Delhi Durbar in 1911.⁷

John Morley's Role in India Council Reforms

Morley introduced several major reforms in British India's Constitution, enacted as the Indian Councils Act of 1909, less accurately termed "Morley-Minto Reforms," since Minto's role was primarily to delay and undermine the effectiveness of the original bill Morley had proposed. Great Liberal that he was, Morley pressed for and achieved the introduction of two Indian members, the first in 1907, to his own India Office Council in Whitehall, the second, Satyendra P. Sinha (1864-1928), to the Viceroy's Administrative Council of the Government of India in 1910. Expanded Legislative Councils under Morley's act all had many new directly elected Indian members, another principle doggedly opposed by Minto and his die-hard British civil servants. Another of Morley's gifts to India was to prevent the appointment of Lord Kitchener, whom he considered an arrogant racist, to the job Kitchener coveted: viceroy of India.⁸

Morley Minto Reform

Indian Council Act of 1909 is also known as Morley- Minto Reform. It was instituted to placate the Moderates (Congress) and introduces separate electorates on the basis of religion. Constitutional changes in British India, introduced to increase Indian participation in the legislature. They were embodied in the Indian Councils Act (1909) following discussions between John Morley, Secretary of State for India (1905-14), and Lord Minto, viceroy (1905-10). The reforms included the admission of Indians to the Secretary of State's council, to the viceroy's executive council, and to the

executive councils of Bombay and Madras, and the introduction of an elected element into legislative councils with provision for separate electorates for Muslims. The reforms were regarded by Indian nationalists as too cautious, and the provision of separate electorates for Muslims was resented by Hindus.⁹

Rousseau (1873)

Rousseau (1873) by Morley addressed various issues on Rousseau. Morley tells of Rousseau's main concern of Rousseau was the question of where "civilization" was leading mankind. His view was that civilization had taken a wrong turn and lost the essence of what really mattered in life. It was still possible to set it right, Rousseau argued, through dedication to the rule of law, individual liberty, and bold innovations in education. In the words of R. A. Leigh, Rousseau "are not only the most original, the most profound and the most controversial of all the great eighteenth-century writers: he is also the most topical. He will always remain both the prophet and the critic of modern times." Through the character of Rousseau Morley represents the criteria of social norms and values.¹⁰

The Struggle for National Education (1873)

Education is the most powerful weapon to change society even the world and Morley shows his optimum concern for the education system in England. Throughout the decades 1866-1876 Morley was completely engaged with the intellectual's perennial problem of defining his relationship with politics and finding a way to solve the crisis of the education system. In *The Struggle for National Education* he observes some basic issues of education system like the real problem addressed by the people in this issue is inadequate, church and dissent plays great role, political superiority of the rebels in history, mass people's expectation in 1870 and their disappointment, The Education act of that time was a perpetuation of the old time, lack of qualified teachers, lack of funds or grants, concept of free education, the proposal for the deduction of education cost. Consequently by discussing all this issue he was able to give an overall view of England's National Education policy, its strength, weakness and progress. All the discussed issues are closely connected to the progress of society.¹¹

On Compromise (1874)

On Compromise (1874) is the reflection of some constraints of our life we always face in our day-to-day life, various parts of adjustment, financial system, administration, traditional values or compromise. Compromise becomes an essential part of our life, we need to compromise with our freedom of thinking, freedom of activity, and need to show unconditional obedience to the values and custom of society which has already been widely accepted. This leads us to a society where no positive change will be possible.¹²

Studies in Literature (1891):

Studies in Literature (1891) has a good number of chapters which contains diverse areas under discussion. Wordsworth's life and works are highlighted in the first Chapter. Wordsworth's family background, different works, contribution towards literature and society, strength, steadfastness, judgmental power of Wordsworth everything was covered in his writing. This text also focuses on Aphorisms, Maine on popular government, about French model, Study on literature, a discussion on Victor Hugo, memory of a man of letter. Morley gives a classic definition about wisdom in this book:

"What is wisdom? That sovereign word, as has often been pointed out, is used for two different things. It may stand for knowledge, learning, science, systematic reasoning; or it may mean, as

Coleridge has defined it, common sense in an uncommon degree; that is to say, the unsystematic truths that come to shrewd, penetrating, and observant minds, from their own experience of life and their daily commerce with the world, and that is called the wisdom of life, or the wisdom of the world, or the wisdom of time and the ages. The Greeks had two words for these two kinds of wisdom: one for the wise who scaled the heights of thought and knowledge; another for those who, without local method technical phraseology, or any of the parade of the schools, whether "Academics old and new, Cynic, Peripatetic, the sect Epicurean or Stoic severe," held up the mirror to human nature, and took good counsel as to the ordering of character and of life."¹³

Walpole (English Statesmen series; 1889):

Morley's *Walpole (English Statesmen series; 1889)* is an outstanding work of biography of Walpole. The moment of Walpole's entrance upon parliamentary life got one of critical importance in national history. In April 1721 he was appointed First Lord of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons. He was an influential figure serving for twenty years as the first British Prime Minister. Morley expresses the quality of a ruler as well as Walpole "rulers who have been great in peace usually move us by qualities of a wise and benign morality. Sir Robert Walpole's position is in this respect a peculiar one. He was a powerful ruler, who guided the country through a long and profoundly critical ordeal; yet his name possesses no heroic associations. He was a great peace minister, yet his career suggests neither the attractions of private virtue nor the inspiration of lofty public ideals. It is impossible to make one of the grand heroic figures of human history out of nothing more sublime than strong sagacity, penetrating common-sense, and tenacious public spirit. Both the nature of Walpole's task and the characteristics of his time were fatal to the heroic."¹⁴

Recollections:

In *Recollection* Morley's career at Westminster is embodied. This is a classic book which gained worldwide fame and is a publication of political recollections. It reveals that British government is confronted with a situation almost parallel to that which existed in the United Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada from 1841 onwards, when Baldwin and Lafontaine and their contemporaries of the Liberal or radical party were demanding the establishment of a responsible or parliamentary government. Morley's Political career and late life of Queen Victoria is also represented in the book *Recollections*.¹⁵

Indian Speeches:

This work holds historical, cultural, and intellectual importance in the literary importance. Morley proves here "Leadership skill" is the power to set people in action. *Indian Speeches* gives an overall view of Indian politics and society. This is the collection of some significant speeches which change the entire scenario of India politics and society under the British rule. This book contains important speeches on Unrest in India and Partition of Bengal, Directorship of Public Instruction in Bengal, The Partition of Bengal, Indian Government and the Rhodesia Mines, Indian Army Reorganization, Imperial Customs Services for India, Free Trade, Indian Military Administration, Indian Army on the North-West Frontier, Flogging in the Native Indian Army, Sale of Drugs to Children in India, India and the Opium Traffic, Orders for Indian Railway Material, Tibetan Indemnity, Processions in India, Indian Excise Revenue, Government Arms Factories in India, Indian Provincial Settlements, Indian Trade Journal, Indian ViceRegal Council Debates, Church Consecration in India, British Indian Native's Incomes, Prosecutions of Indian School Boys, Outrages By British Soldiers in India, Public Procession in Bengal, Indian Execution, Martial Law in Eastern Bengal, Swadeshi Movement, British Cotton Growing Association and the India Office, Agitation in Bengal, Indian Excise

Administration, Fever at Rawal-pindi, Royal Scots at Bombay, Religious Service and many more issues closely connected to the society and politics.¹⁶

Conclusion

Morley is considered as a versatile genius. He is the inspiration not only for his contemporary times but the leading figures of the 20th century, including Mahomed Ali Jinnah, the founding father of Pakistan. Being a political leader, he got an ample of opportunity to make a great contribution to the society, simultaneously his involvement in literature creates a benchmark for the society. As a writer Morley tries to set a paradigm by writing about the life and works of some outstanding people.¹⁷

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