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usual interpretations of indifference and non-attachment to the consequences of action supposedly enjoined by the *Gītā*.

However, whatever be one's interpretation of the millennia-long tradition of Hindu thought on this matter, it seems certain that there are two major directions of human seeking and that the direction which involves externally-oriented action essentially involves one also inevitably in causality, time, society and history. One has to mortgage oneself to others and to the future and to feel responsible for what one has not done and to feel helpless in the face of the immensity of time and the multitudinous others that are really 'others'. The search for freedom, then, may take one away from all these and may see externally-oriented action as one's main enemy. It may be seen as both the consequence and the cause of one's bondage to the temporal and causal chain which binds one to the wheel that eternally rolls on. It may be felt that History and Time cannot be overcome through action and that Freedom cannot be won through it either.

But freedom itself may be conceived in diverse ways and each of the conceptions would tend to affect the individual or society which conceives it in that way in a certain direction. The freedom conceived would be attempted to be actualized and actions and institutions would be moulded and judged in its light. Freedom is not all of a piece and before we proceed forward, we may as well become aware of its diverse forms and the various perspectives under which it can be conceived.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The Active and the Contemplative Values. Forthcoming in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, U.S.A.
2. Daya Krishna, 'Is Īśvar Kṛṣṇa's Sāṃkhya-Kārikā really Sāṃkhyan?' *Philosophy — East & West*, Hawaii, U.S.A.

PERSPECTIVES OF FREEDOM

Freedom is a word resonant with many meanings. It is one thing which perhaps everybody wants and yet the very fact that everybody wants it makes it impossible that each one gets it to the extent he wants it. The problem, at least at one level, is not so much of freedom as of freedoms. One's freedom seems to be essentially limited by the freedom of others and thus nobody can be free, for each is limited by the other. This limitation, it should be noted, is far more intrinsic than the usual limitations pointed out with respect to the enjoyment of goods and services which everyone cannot have because there are not sufficient to go around. The limitation here is a function of relative finitude which can possibly be overcome. The limitation on freedom arises, however, by the very fact of the multiplicity of persons in interaction. The fact that there is another centre of freedom with whom one is in some sort of an active inter-relationship leads essentially to the limitation of one's freedom. The only way in which it could possibly be avoided at this plane is by the postulation of either there being only one centre of freedom or of denying any interaction between them, if there happen to be more than one such centres. Both the alternatives seem difficult of postulation even at the logical level. There seems no intrinsic reason why, if there is a centre of freedom (whatever may be meant by that phrase?), there should only be one and never more than one. Similarly, if there are more than one such centres, the possibility of interaction between them can never be denied. There seems, thus, an inevitability about the fact that the problem of freedom may only be resolved by giving up the dream of absolute freedom and accepting the limitation of one freedom by another. The freedom of each is

limited by the freedom of everyone else and in this lies the essence of the human situation.

Is this seeming inevitability really inevitable? The Hindu thought over more than two millennia may be seen from one angle as an attempt to seek the answer to this question. Is absolute freedom not possible in a situation where there are not only natural constraints but multiple centres of freedom? The Faustian quest for freedom and power has been supposed to be a specific characteristic of the Western man and his culture. But it has rarely been noted that the Hindu quest is also for infinite freedom and power, though conceived in a different sense. The extroverted Faustian seeking of Western man can only be realized through the annihilation of the freedom of all others except oneself. And if it be accepted that freedom in its foundations is unannihilable in a certain sense, then the Faustian seeking is intrinsically impossible of realization, for it is a contradiction-in-terms. The seeking for infinite freedom and power has, therefore, to be conceived in such a way that its realization in absolute terms by one person does not conflict with its equal realization in absolute terms by another. This is the inward Faustian Odyssey of the Hindu spirit over the ages and it is perhaps in its terms alone that its most significant striving and contribution may be understood and articulated.

Freedom itself, then, may be conceived in diverse and different ways. The difference in conceptions would affect the striving of individuals and societies to realize and actualize it in the way they have conceived it to be. The difference here, however, lies not so much in the nature of the actual that is attempted to be conceived and whose nature is such that the way we conceive it affects the way we tend to discover it to be. Rather, it leans more, in a significant way, in the direction of what is conceived to be desirable and which thus affects, shapes and moulds the actual in a certain way. The way in which the actual is affected through the cognitive activity of

conceiving its real nature is to be distinguished from the way it is affected by the conceiving of the desirable through the imaginative faculty of man. The former is primarily confined to the human reality in its predominantly conscious aspects, while the latter is applicable to all reality, human or non-human, physical or non-physical.

The thinking about freedom has a long tradition both in India and the West. But in the West, somehow, freedom has always been thought of in relation to action, whether it be the action which is not done under constraint of anyone else or action which is in accordance with an external (law) or internal (moral) or internal-external norm. The action may even be conceived apart from these norms, whether internal or external or both, and thought of in terms of its seeking the satisfaction of one's needs and desires with or without reference to any norm whatsoever. However it be conceived, freedom in the West seems to have been usually thought of and discussed in terms of action. There is, of course, a strand of thought in the West which recognizes that 'action' is too much dependent on external factors to be considered as the heartland of freedom. What one is actually able to do depends not only on other human beings but also on the state of one's psycho-physical organism. If freedom, then, is to depend solely on oneself, it cannot be considered as centring in action but rather in 'willing' or even in 'intention'. The famous dictum of Kant that nothing in the world can be called good without qualification except a Good Will derives, most probably, from such considerations. The Stoics are the other great group in the Western tradition who have envisaged freedom in terms of 'willing' rather than action. As Mortimer Adler writes: "They indicate that such freedom is held, not in relation to the power or wills of other men, nor in relation to the impact of physical forces; but rather in the relation of a man's own will or mind to forces within himself, over which he has the requisite power.

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Accordingly it consists in being able to *will as we ought*, whether or not external circumstances permit us to *do as we will*".¹

This is perhaps the farthest that Western thought has gone in the direction of conceiving freedom as an internal state unrelated to anything outside itself. But even here freedom, though unrelated to society and specific circumstances, is conceived of in terms of *willing according to a norm*. It is still essentially conceived of in relation to a *possible* action. Fundamentally, both 'will' and 'intention' are concerned with the achievement of some state of affairs relating to persons, situations or things. It is only an accident that what is willed or intended does not take the form of overt action, just as it is an accident whether the action, even when performed, achieves the end for which it was undertaken. However, in both cases, freedom is conceived of in relation to something external which is sought or desired to be achieved.

As against this, the Indian conceives of freedom in a totally different way. For him, freedom has got nothing to do with action. It is rather a state of being or consciousness which, because it is free, is intrinsically joyous and blissful in its very nature. Suffering and bondage are closely related to each other; the former, in fact, is a sign of the presence of the latter. Complete liberation or *mokṣa*, therefore, is usually defined as that where even the possibility of suffering lapses or ceases. Ultimately for the Indian, suffering which is a sign of bondage is due to something wrong within the self itself. It is not a restriction or limitation imposed from the outside, but rather something within the self that is the cause of this bondage. The 'outside' in this case includes not merely others but one's own body and mind as well. Freedom, therefore, is not the release of a capacity from the restrictions imposed on its exercise through which one achieves the ends which one wants to achieve and which one could not achieve because of those restrictions. Rather, it is a state of continuously enjoyed consciousness which

does not seek any end whatsoever and whose freedom is an immediately felt reality expressing itself in the twin facts of being calm and joyous, on the one hand, and of being essentially unaffected by anything else, on the other. The latter fact does not mean that one becomes incapable of entering into any relation with the other but, rather, in K. C. Bhattacharyya's classic phrase, in relating oneself to the other without getting related.² The point obviously is that one's freedom is not affected in any way by the relationship with the other into which also one enters because of one's freedom.

The very concept of the other, however, may also be denied, and this has actually been done in a powerful school of Indian tradition. The possibility of the other is itself the possibility of bondage and thus unless this possibility be eliminated, freedom, it has been felt, will always be precarious and open to subversion. The *Advaitic* solution in terms of the ultimate unreality of the other seems to be motivated by some such feeling. In a certain sense, it comes close to the Faustian Ideal of the West where the other's freedom is subjugated or annihilated. However, the other must be there to be overpowered and conquered. The exercise of the Will presupposes the other and thus even in this respect the West tends to differentiate itself from India. The similarity, therefore, extends only so far as the affirmation of the one for the preservation of freedom is concerned. As far as the denial of the other is concerned, there is no such absolute denial in the West as in the *Advaitic* tradition. What is attempted to be denied there is not the reality or actuality of the other, but rather his freedom.

The *Advaitic* denial of the other, however, operates only on the plane of the transcendent where the modalities of space, time and causality become completely irrelevant. It is because of this that each person may realize this absolute for himself without in any way affecting the realization of the same absolute by others. In a certain sense, if for the realization of absolute

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freedom the other has to be abolished, whether in his freedom alone or in his being also, the issue whether this is to be done at the empirical plane, or the transcendental plane, assumes tremendous importance. At the empirical plane, such a conception of freedom can translate itself into reality only by a perpetual process of each trying to subjugate the other to his own will as far as possible. The process is unending, but in its unendingness it will also generate the essential dialectics and development of history. Further, in so far as it is difficult for an individual to realize such an end on his own, he would have to ally and identify himself with groups and the conflict for supremacy on the historical stage will be more between groups than between individuals. The conflict between individuals will be within the groups rather than outside them. At the transcendental plane, on the other hand, the elimination of the other is to be achieved at the psychic level of conscious awareness. It has nothing to do with one's relationships to others at the empirical level except that they should be least possible in number and of such a nature as to avoid one's being disturbed by them. The *sāṃkhya*s tried to achieve this through a process of absolute de-identification with the other; the *Gītā* suggested a process of absolute non-attachment with the other to achieve this. The latter is perhaps only a consequence of the former spelled out clearly in the field of action. It was only the *advaitin* who argued that even the awareness of the other in any form is bound to affect one's freedom and hence if absolute freedom was to be achieved, the very consciousness of the other has to be got rid off and the possibility of its recurrence finally abolished. The dialectics of the achievement of freedom, however, in all cases was to be internal and psychical in nature.

The history of the two traditions, Western and Indian, supports to a great extent the different dialectics which the two concepts of freedom involve. It is not that Indian history does not show a struggle between groups for mastery or between

individuals for supremacy within a group, but this struggle, however fierce and prolonged, has seldom been ideologically oriented as in the West. It is a *meaningless* struggle in which nothing of essential value is gained or lost. What matters lies outside the struggle and cannot even be gained through it. There is not merely no epiphany in history but none *of, or through, history* also. No ultimate value lights the empirical struggle and it, thus, is relegated to a plane which is essentially neutral with respect to genuine values. Only the individual psyche is the seat of genuine value-conflicts, for in it alone can ultimate freedom be actualized.

The history of the West, on the other hand, is essentially temporal and empirical in character. Men and groups are the embodiment of values and their social conflicts, the conflicts between values and ideals of different kinds. Whether the vision be Jewish, Christian, Hegelian or Marxian, the historical process stands at the centre of this vision and the violence, struggle and suffering of men stand vindicated as meaningful in and through that context alone. The Indian tradition views it all as meaningless except as indicating some wrong knowledge, some ignorance of which it is an indication. The temporal life of man with all its suffering and struggles has no significance except to indicate that there is something basically wrong with us or with it or both.

It may be objected that I am ignoring the whole epic tradition of India in which it was the duty of a person to engage in the battle of righteousness and in which God has been conceived of as incarnating himself in response to this prayer of the people to rid the world of the reign of people who made it difficult to pursue the path of righteousness. The concept of *dharma-yuddha* elaborated in both the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* may be thought of as a standing disconfirmation of much of the thesis I have been presenting in this lecture. Three things may be said in this connection. First, as I have already

pointed out in the previous lecture, the philosophic reflection that this problem of *dharma-yuddha* or righteous war gave rise to strikes at the very roots of all empirical action, whether for the establishment of *dharma* or anything else. Secondly, it may be interesting to note that the task of establishing the reign of righteousness was left to the Lord. The people could only suffer and pray; they perhaps were not supposed to fight the battle for righteousness themselves. Or, even if they could fight, they were not supposed to win the battle on their own without the express help of the Incarnate God on their side. Thirdly, even if it be agreed that the establishment of a righteous society was the duty of the people, specially *Kṣatriyas*, the people belonging to the warrior-caste, the concept of a righteous society basically was that which permitted or rather did not interfere with the pursuit of transcendental freedom.

The last point is important. The view of freedom as transcendental and a-social is not compromised at all. Rather, society itself is seen and judged in terms of its facilitation for the individual's pursuit of such freedom. Indian thought, in this context, both presupposed and specifically argued for the social *recognition* and facilitation of the pursuit of transcendental freedom on the part of the individual. *Mokṣa* was not only recognized as the highest value, but also as something whose seeker was to be held in the highest esteem and whose pursuit was to be facilitated by society with every means possible at its command. It was a-social or rather trans-social; but even though it was such, it was to be *recognized* by society as superior to itself. The *sannyāsī* had no *caste*; he was supposed to be virtually dead to all social obligations; the rites of death were performed on his initiation and yet he was venerated by all men-in-the-world including those that belonged to the highest of castes. Not only this, every man within the social nexus from the king downwards was expected to give him the facility required for his pursuit, that is, to leave him alone *institutionally*

and to provide him the bare wherewithal through which he could sustain the body for the transcendental pursuit. The recognition of the individual wandering mendicant who was theoretically dead to the society, its societal and familial obligations, and who was not even supposed to have a father or mother, brother or sister, as the highest was a recognition by the society of its own secondary character.

The *sannyāsī*, however, was merely a symbol for one who had given up the world for the pursuit of transcendental freedom. Basically, Hindu society granted that status to anybody who was pursuing or supposed to be pursuing that ideal. The great devotional saints of medieval India transcended their caste by becoming men of God, even though they did not become *sannyāsīs*. It may be interesting in this respect to note that the status of the temple priest in traditional India was never very high and that even the ritual-knowing Brahmin who was indispensable for most domestic ceremonies was held in lower spiritual esteem than the *sannyāsī*. India, as is well known, never developed an institutionalized church which unified within its system the monk and the priest. Nor did it generally unify the functions of the priest as the specialist in the ritual of temple worship and those of a specialist in the ritual of domestic ceremonies. The two were generally different and there was a great difference between the social status of the two types of persons. The tradition records an early conflict between the status of the Brahman priest who was a householder and a specialist in the technical rituals of various types of sacrifices and the wandering *sannyāsī* who rejected all obligations of being a householder and made fun of the ritual sacrifices of the Brahmans. The controversy between the Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa traditions, however, was resolved by the time of the *Upaniṣads* with the virtual incorporation of the *sannyāsa* as the fourth *āshrama* and *mokṣa* as the fourth *puruṣārtha* into the main body of Brahmanical Hinduism. By the time the temples

came into being and the role of the worshipping priest became differentiated, the supremacy of *sannyāsi* was already established and there seems little evidence of any controversy on this score. Similarly, within the empirical-social nexus, the Brahman with his knowledge of the rituals relating to vitally crucial elements of the life-cycle reigned supreme and there seemed no question of disputing his status on the part of any social functionary, specially the temple priest.

However it be, the recognition by society of the a-social and trans-social pursuit of the *sannyāsi* as superior to any other that concerned empirical or social ends seems to have been a fact. Similarly, it seems to have been accepted that it was the supreme duty of society to facilitate such a pursuit. The only parallel that I can think of to such a situation in the Western tradition seems to relate itself to aesthetic values in the nineteenth century. In the last half of this century, the arts sought their independence in the cult of art for art's sake and many of the artists became some sort of self-conscious a-social beings. The artist claimed the right of pursuing the value of aesthetic beauty in its own right without reference to other individuals or society at large. Yet, though a-social, the artist and his activity came to be recognized by society itself as something superior and infinitely valuable to it. The cult of the artist went together with the cult of art for art's sake and to this period we owe the concept of the artist as a demi-god above the rules of the social order.

The parallel, however, does not go very far. The idea of an a-social or trans-social activity which yet is recognized by society as superior to itself and which it has the obligation to foster, promote and facilitate goes so much against the deepest strand of Western thought that it cannot accept it for very long without feeling guilty about it. Thus, it did not take long before the West discovered the social function of art and the whole debate began to range round it. The communist and the fascist regimes

used the whip to bring the artist into line, while in the democratic countries it was the critics who performed this function. Even if the artist tended to forget his social function, the critics were always there to remind him of his social origins and thus indirectly suggest that he should do something for the society to which he owed everything he had.

As against this, in India we hardly find any traces of a debate of this kind with respect to the trans-social seeking of man in the spiritual dimension. The early debate between the Brāhmaṇa and Śramaṇa traditions had sometimes a suppressed flavour of this kind. But after the *Upaniṣadic* synthesis and acceptance of the *sannyāsi*'s supremacy, hardly anybody ever seemed to have asked as to why he did not work except recently under the influence of Western social norms. There is another difference also. It was only gradually that the myth of the artist as a non-social, non-moral demi-god creating works of beauty began to be socially accepted by a fairly large section of Western society. In the initial stages, the society was positively hostile to such a conception of art and the artist. The artist in the later half of the nineteenth century felt so rejected by the society of his times that he withdrew into esoteric sects and perhaps elaborated the idea of the artist as a being superior to society as a reaction to such rejection.³ There might have been some such stage in India, but at least from the *Upaniṣads* downwards there seems little evidence of any hostility of the society towards the *sannyāsi*.

The basic contrast in the conception of freedom, then, may be delineated in terms of freedom as a state of being and freedom as that which is essentially related to action. However, the basic differences in the conception of freedom, though fundamental and of profound importance to the society and the people who conceive of it that way, contain within themselves substantial differences between what may be called sub-types falling within the two major types we have already talked about. Much of

the history of the cultures that have subscribed to one or the other of the basic conception of freedom may be understood in terms of the predominance and conflict of the various sub-types falling within one or the other of the basic types. If, then, a concrete perspective of freedom is to be spelled out with the full consciousness that it might possibly affect society to shape itself that way, it would have to be done in terms of the diverse sub-types of freedom and the interrelationship between them. Even if we forget, for the moment, the transcendental freedom and its various sub-types, the realm of empirical freedom itself is so diverse, so vast and so complex in its interrelationships that its delineation and articulation can be seen as a formidable task for the social scientist and the social philosopher for decades to come. The interrelation between the various sub-types of the transcendental freedom and their complex relationship with the sub-types of what may be called empirical freedom are even more difficult to discover and articulate. Yet, the task is a challenging one to anyone who is interested in freedom and the fate of human society. If freedom is to be enlarged, then its diverse types, their interrelationships and the factors which contribute to their maintenance, spread and growth have to be studied. It is only when an empirical knowledge is available with respect to diverse types of freedom and the factors that sustain them that we may reasonably expect social policy to be guided by the consideration of maximizing them also.

The idea of maximizing freedom and achieving it through social policy, however, involves the notion that freedom is the sort of thing that can be measured and about which it can significantly be said that it has increased or decreased. Also, if freedom is intrinsically and essentially of diverse types, then the question arises as to how we can compare one with another. Further, in what sense, if any, could it ever be said that one type of freedom is more desirable or valuable than another?

Can we, so to say, grade freedoms in any order of importance and does the grading change with different contexts and different circumstances? These are some of the questions that need an answer if thinking about freedom is to be made concrete and effective in contemporary times.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Mortimer J. Adler, *The Idea of Freedom*, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1958, p. 254 (Italics author's).
2. K. C. Bhattacharyya, *The Subject as Freedom*, The Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner (Bombay), 1930, p. 23.
3. I am indebted for this idea to the late Prof. M. M. Bhalla, Professor of English, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.