

“ . . . We are prone to imagine that the problem of freedom lies in gaining more and more freedom from external restraints—social, political and moral . . . but we have also the more important . . . task of acquiring and realizing our own individual selves and become . . . more free in our mind, in our spirit . . . ”

FREEDOM AS A FACTOR IN INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT *

DR. KALI PRASAD

ACTIVITY IS THE most fundamental characteristic of human experience. Long before the infant is born it engages in activity in response to inner pressures and external stimuli in his pre-natal environments. Birth marks only a crisis in its life, a traumatic experience. For it represents entry into an alien world, a strange complex of chaotic forces which require a completely new mode of orientation and adjustment. From the self-subsistent economy of the intra-uterine existence in which everything is provided for in a pre-fabricated fashion, such as food, shelter, conditioned temperature and a secure but limited field for operational movement, the newly born infant enters in a world of adventure and uncertainty. Here there is incessant rain of atmospheric stimuli which demand continual reactive responses and adjustments. Learning has to occur very fast and the capital-fund of already acquired experience has to be utilized to the fullest extent. Stresses and strains inevitably occur and they make for individuality and character as also their distortions.

Activity-Restraint Continuum:

While activity demands unlimited freedom of movement, the field of operation is always limited. Indeed without this limitation activity itself would become impossible. For activity is a reactive response to internal needs and external pressures. It involves *selection* of appropriate movements, especially those that would *effectively* meet the needs, and the elimination of those that on trial—error are found to be unsuccessful or unrewarding. The selected activity or movement or course of action is a function of initial effort organized in the limited framework of the field of operation. In thus learning to coordinate his project of action

* Abstract of a speech delivered in the regular Lecture Forum Series at the Institute of Asian Studies on July 18, 1963.

to the requirements of the situation, the individual is already beginning to experience the meaning and implications of freedom. By and large, these are represented by restraints, restrictions and, what would be called in the future, responsibilities.

'Vectorial' and 'Scalar' Concepts of Freedom:

Sometimes freedom is taken in a 'Vectorial' sense, i.e., it is understood to be completely unlimited. According to this view any restriction is a threat to freedom. But one has to recognize that not only 'unchartered freedom tires' but that it is impossible. We have mentioned that freedom assumes a field for activity which occurs in relation to ends and goals, and these in turn are achieved by overcoming obstacles and hindrances. The exercise of freedom assumes certain conditions without which freedom is unintelligible. For instance, the general right to say 'what one thinks' is often restricted by demands of prudence and custom and cultural modes. Freedom is not abrogated when one takes into account such conditions. Indeed it is these conditions (restraints) that lend significance and content to freedom.

Three Levels of Freedom:

There may be three levels of freedom: i) Psycho-biological; ii) Cultural and, iii) Moral or Spiritual.

At the psycho-biological plane the physical and biological needs (the 'instincts') demand freedom of satisfaction. But their satisfaction requires a suitable environment. In this environment there are others who likewise demand freedom of satisfaction. This must inevitably lead to adjustment or conflict. Hobbes thought that conflict was the 'original state' and that adjustment came later, i.e., if at all. This is not necessarily true. History shows that conflicts and tensions, when they occur, do resolve themselves, that an equilibrated or adjusted society is at least an equally original state (if not really primordial). Actually, conflicts and tensions occur *because* there is an unceasing attempt to secure stability, not *vice-versa* as Hobbes thought. Here it may be pointed out that to desire (demand) stability is as much a *need* (instinct) as anything else. Stability is a function of understanding and cooperation and adjustment. It implies not only freedom to adjust relations but also recognition of *limitations* inherent in this process. In every act of freedom there lies as its basis factors that limit it.

This limitation arises from the inevitable process of socialization of these needs and drives. The socialization process, while modifying their character in some ways, offers them opportunity for richer and fuller ex-

pression. This suggests the essential role of others in an individual freedom of satisfaction. In this regard the view of Freud that the individual comes fully equipped with all his drives and needs in an environment where others are mere "objects" to fulfill them is unsatisfactory. Here the relation is one-sided and egocentric. The psycho-analytical theory overlooks the fundamental fact that an individual finds his true development in his group, in his social-cultural milieu. This *cultural aspect of freedom* is very important, because it qualifies freedom in the context of prevailing norms and values in a particular culture. Similarly, the moral and spiritual contexts qualify freedom in a society. The concept of freedom consequently can hardly be understood without these contexts.

We have said that the growth of the individual depends upon the structure of the group in which he has been brought up. Broadly speaking, a group may be looked upon as either dominantly paternal or fraternal. A paternal group is characterized by an attitude of ambivalence, authority, dependence and submissiveness to the parent or the parent substitute. A fraternal group on the other hand permits the individual to develop not at the cost of another, not as a privileged elite but as an individual amongst others, who is destined to play his role in the group where equality of opportunity and freedom are stressed. In such a group men are guided not by anxiety or fear of destruction, nor are they dominated by authoritarian modes. They do not feel isolated or alone and do not develop anxiety or existential isolation. They do not feel alienated and do not suffer estrangement from society. They feel free to grow and to realize their possibilities to the fullest extent.

The development from the paternal to fraternal group is often marked by transitional processes in which there are conflicts and tensions, chaos and confusion. This development is often paralleled by economic and industrial development where the modes of production determine, to a large extent, the patterns of the group structure and its activities, no less than its norms and values. In this development there are resistances stemming from within the individuals themselves. For instance, there is a strong emotional resistance to relinquish the comforts of maturity "sweet, self-pity, childish-helplessness and irresponsibility, emotionalism unrestrained by reason." Often we find great reluctance to emerge from this state of childish dependence to the responsibilities of a mature society. In this connection it would be interesting to see how the child grows and how there is a development from the undeveloped personality to a grownup and mature personality. One might see that at least a social age of 15-plus might be attained before an individual can function as a grown-up person in a mature and fraternal society.

TYPICAL SCALES OF SOCIAL AND PERSONAL AGES PRODUCED IN
CLASS OR GROUP-DISCUSSION

SOCIAL AGE (Identifi- cation)			PERSONAL AGE (Identity)
15+	Identity highly developed	Adult—age of wisdom begins	15+
15	Active in society	Ambition, growing sense of balance	15
12	Interest in neighborhood beginning of responsibility	Begins to assert whole per- sonality	12
10	Age of conformity with envi- ronment (good or bad)	Growing intellectual intensity and personal values	10
6	Would like to be anti-social but dare not	Growing emotional intensity	6
4	Resorts to violence when in a temper	Can tell right from wrong	4
2	No identification	Completely egocentric and self.assertive	2

HOW THE HUMAN PERSONALITY GROWS FROM THE UNDEVELOPED
TO THE HIGHLY DEVELOPED

SOCIAL AGE (Identifi- cation)			PERSONAL AGE (Identity)
15 } 12 }	Growing social personality	Personality developing	15 } 12 }
10 } 8 } 6 }	Keeping up with Joneses A-social	Personality underdeveloped	10 } 8 } 6 }
4 } 2 }	Anti-social	Personality un-developed	4 } 2 }

The Fear of Growing up:

The prospect of reaching social maturity is not unfortunately attractive to every individual because it implies leaving behind the security and comfort of dependence, and going out on one's own. Social adulthood imposes upon a man certain responsibilities which can be met only after he gives up his emotional dependence on authority. Faced with this situation, a number of people would simply refuse to grow up. The I-ego remains dominant with them as with a child and their behaviour is characterized by ambivalent attitude of domination, stubbornness, cruelty.

etc., on the one hand, and sheepish dependence on authority, security and submissiveness, in general, on the other. When such people become leaders in their group they usually function as authoritarians. Even if they are placed in this position by some kind of a democratic process they continue to behave as immature adults with all the psychological paraphernalia associated with children varying in their age from 2 to 10 years. There are many patterns of such a personality but all of them are characterized by emotional instability, dependence feelings, Narcissism, excessive tendency to projection, fanaticism, etc. These are individuals representing arrested growth or regressions in their development.

Pathology of Growth:

It is not possible to go into details about the distortions and deviations that occur in the developmental process. But it is important to recognize some well known psychological mechanisms that operate in pathological thinking and behaviour and obstruct the individual's development and his freedom. One such process is known as *paranoid thinking* (behaviour). The man who tells us that everybody is against him or after him, that his friends and even his wife are conspiring to overthrow him if not to murder him will be recognized by psychiatrists as insane. On what basis does he come to those conclusions? Obviously, there is no factual basis, but it is *possible* that such a conspiracy could exist although it is so highly improbable that only an insane person will entertain its possibility. The paranoid, however, is mercilessly logical and he cannot be argued out of the mere theoretical and phantastic possibility that he entertains. This is an extreme illustration but there are elements of paranoid thinking in many people who have not grown up.

The second mechanism which threatens realistic and effective thinking or behaviour is known as *projection*. Everybody knows how a person who is himself prejudiced or hostile or destructive will accuse others of these. Many human relationships are soured by this attitude.

Sometimes projection may be mixed up with paranoid thinking and the result is a dangerously explosive psychological mixture which prevents sane and rational behaviour.

The next mechanism is *fanaticism*. A fanatic is one who appears to have genuine conviction in his own ideas and in the "content of his assertions." The fanatic is a highly narcissistic person who keeps himself sheltered from the approaches of reality. He builds up an idol, an absolute to which he not only surrenders completely but makes it a *part of himself*. He represents an arrested individual at the ages between 2 and 4.

Another mechanism which may also be mentioned is the familiar mechanical thinking resulting in *doublethink* i.e., holding-on-to too con-

tradictory beliefs at the same time. For instance, people give support to rigid hierarchies and believe in a classless society; or with an elaborate apparatus of a power-state, people believe in the withering away of a state; or believe in non-violence along with attitudes and postures associated with violence.

Such pathological thinking is common today and specially in a transitional society where norms and values are changing rather rapidly. It is not merely dangerous to the individual but it is even more fatal in a group, which is still organizing itself. In a democratic pattern the mischief which such pathological behaviour might inflict is enormous. There is a danger because the individual does not grow, and also because he is not able to appreciate the advantages of normal growth and development which are associated with freedom and democracy. This leads to a number of questions which might be raised.

What is freedom as human experience? Is the desire for freedom inherent in human nature? How does this desire express itself in different cultures? Is freedom the absence of restraints or is it something more positive? What are the social and economic factors that lie at the root of this desire? Can freedom become a burden too heavy to carry and hence something to escape from? Along with the desire for freedom, is there not also a desire for submission? Is submission always to an overt authority, or also to internalised authorities like conscience, duty, inner compulsions, and anonymous influence like public opinion? Is there a hidden pleasure or satisfaction in submitting; what is its nature? Is there an insatiable lust for power? What is its source? Is it vital energy or is it some kind of weakness or inferiority, an inability to experience life in its wholeness and comprehensiveness, that lies at the base of this *fear of freedom*?

These questions have been asked before but most of them are difficult to answer. We shall not attempt a review of these answers but may offer brief comment on some of them. It is a remarkable paradox of contemporary times that while there have been persistent and continuous battles to win freedom in many countries, there have also been willing, conscious and unconscious, surrender of freedom once it has been acquired, as if it was a suspicious gift which the individual could not keep.

Dialectical Property of Freedom:

One might observe a dialectical property in the development of freedom. Modern society has affected man in two ways at the same time; he has become independent, self-reliant, critical and ego-centric on the one hand, and isolated, alone and afraid, on the other. The two processes

have gone on together and are two aspects of a dynamic system, viz., the individual. It is sometimes difficult to see both these aspects, especially the *inner* processes. We are prone to imagine that the problem of freedom lies in gaining more and more freedom from external restraints--social, political and moral. This is traditional freedom which undoubtedly has to be increased and maintained, but we have also the more important and difficult task of acquiring and realizing our own individual selves and become more and more free in our mind, in our spirit and soul. This is sometimes known as spiritual freedom. All other types of freedom are but stages toward this ultimate goal.

The early stages in the development of this freedom are represented by movements toward the emancipation of man from external bondage. In Europe the industrial revolution was such an attempt. This revolution introduced a system of technology that stressed individual-achievement as well as cooperative effort and superseded traditional modes of production and along with them also traditional mores, norms and values. The industrial system developed capitalism as its basic tool and this gave considerable emphasis on enterprise, adventure and freedom to innovate--qualities which prepared the individual to realize his intrinsic worth--what Protestantism had done to free man spiritually, capitalism was doing mentally, socially and politically. Economic freedom was the basis for the other freedom. The protestant ethic was the foundation of this freedom (Max Weber). Man became free from the bondage of nature, and superstitions, and gained confidence in his own powers and capacities.

While this was one effect of capitalism, there was another side to the picture. Individualism fostered by this system not only implied freedom to do certain things but also freedom from other man and things. While precious in itself this independence emphasized the "aleness" of the individual, his isolation and his consequent fear of freedom. Having destroyed the traditional security-system a new support had not yet materialized and this naturally meant isolation and fear--all the more frightening because it was psychological. "Modern man's feeling of isolation and powerlessness is increased by the character which all his human relationships have assumed. The concrete relationship of one individual to another has lost its direct and human character and has assumed a spirit of manipulation and instrumentality. In all social and personal relations the laws of the market are the rule."

Existential Anxiety and Loneliness:

All this is reflected in a philosophy of life which uses the concepts of anxiety, 'fear and trembling,' disgust and 'sickness unto death' to empha-

size the purely *subjective* character of reality, the extreme freedom which the individual can experience is the only fundamental reality of death, the final and the most authentic experience of life (Heidegger and Sartre). And yet man must go on leaning *not upon himself* (for he is too weak to bear the burden) but on something or someone else to give him support (Kierkegaard, Jaspers, Camus). In this way there is some mitigation of the oppressive sense of loneliness. For the surrender of freedom is compensated by the much needed feeling of security and assurance given by the external support. This might offer some explanation of the desire to be free and yet dependent, to rebel against authority and yet submit to authoritarian postures.

Freedom and Democracy

The increasing isolation and powerlessness brought on by economic conditions in contemporary culture lead to escape either into authoritarian ways or to compulsive conformism. In either case the individual is suppressed and has little opportunity for development. Spontaneity and the freedom to grow suffer and his potentialities are dwarfed. Either of these represent systems where the individual cannot develop fully. This development is possible in a system where there is escape for free, creative activity. The democratic pattern offers this opportunity by creating the economic, political, and cultural conditions for the full development of the individual—wherever this system has been established it developed primarily in the framework of *economic* needs. These needs are *obviously based on the acquisitive* character of our desires which make *competition* an inevitable virtue. In this economic context aggressive competition, enterprise, and success-at-all-costs, are values in which the individual is trained from his early childhood. The processes of education and socialization seem to emphasize this market-mentality or market-morality in present-day democracies. Values that make for the realization of the individual's other capacities, such as *cooperation, mutual respect, self-sacrifice, humility, love, etc.*, do not get much chance for development. It is expected that the democratic structure can be so organized as to make their development possible and even necessary. Along with economic planning there has to be '*planning*' of *non-economic and intangible factors*. This planning is not regimentation or indoctrination or brainwashing, but a planning or organization of human resources and the spiritual forces that lie buried in each individual in such a manner that humanity as a whole moves up in a higher dimension and at a higher level of life. This is no dream or phantasy, for we feel that democracy has enormous possibilities which have yet to be realized. There may be no retreat but a move forward in the confidence that the enlargement of

freedom of the individual in a democracy would make for his fullest development.

Prospect of Democracy

We have noticed the paradox in contemporary times that while there has been continuous struggle to win freedom, there has also been a surrender of this freedom once it has been attained. A number of *coup d'etats* have occurred paradoxically again to establish "peoples" democracies. One may ask for an explanation of this paradox. At least a partial explanation is suggested in terms of the familiar social-psychological category of *security*. People who have had their anchorage in traditional security-systems and who have been accustomed to dependence upon authority figures for ages suddenly found themselves thrown on their own resources once their time-honoured refuge was lost. Like a prisoner undergoing a life sentence who has been suddenly set free finds himself dazzled by his freedom and returns to the security of his prison, in the same way after having won freedom, the new countries find themselves unequal to the responsibilities of independence. Hence the acceptance of authoritarian rule as a kind of a reversal or regression to the benevolent strength of a paternal figure which guarantees security and relieves people of their uncertainty and anxiety. This situation occurs because the new security structures associated with democracy have not yet developed fully. And as long as this continues there would be a tendency toward the acceptance of authority and dependence on it. This does not mean a retreat of democracy but a further elaboration and organization of its content.

In an earlier part of this paper mention was made of existential anxiety and loneliness of man. It was said that, not being able to face his responsibilities, man has to throw himself upon something or someone else to give him support. This prompted the desire to seek something or someone outside oneself to give support; and this was the genesis of the phenomenon of emergence of authoritarian systems and dictatorship. In this circumstance it is said that either one has to accept the position that there is no freedom at all or that freedom could exist only by surrendering oneself completely to an external, possibly other-wordly authority (God). This existentialist thesis, however, is entirely nihilistic. The alienation and the consequent anxiety stemming from lack of stable source of security need not necessarily mean the denial of freedom and its possibility. If the democratic system inevitably implies a greater and greater sharing and participation by the individual in the life of the group, by the same token the individual can develop alive and satisfying relation-

ships with other fellow-men around him. In this sharing in the life of others he would find his own fulfillment.

The thesis of this paper is that the concept and the process of democracy has not been fully elaborated; that so far we have been content with enlarging only one dimension of this concept, namely, the *economic dimension*. In developing this dimension there may be a tendency to overemphasize material factors associated with it (namely: highest production, efficiency, standardization, competition, etc.). But economic democracy with its inevitable market mentality and market morality does *not* represent the *whole content of the concept*. Values that make for the realization of the individual's other capacities such as *self-sacrifice, toleration, humility, love, respect and sanctity of the person*, etc., need an equal emphasis.

All this would need a re-orientation of the various socialization processes like, family upbringing, education, community organization, communication system, etc. Once the individual is trained and oriented into these other dimensions of his democratic existence he would find that he has struck new roots and has found new security systems for himself. This would also mean that democracy is a system of new culture, for it is a whole way of life. The hope of democracy lies in exploring and elaborating the *multi-dimensional character of the concept*. We have to guard against accepting its too restricted meanings; we have to understand it in a sense such as would permit room for the fullest development and flowering of the possibilities of man.