

THE SARVAMUKTI IDEAL

The modern world is in a predicament. There has never been a time when men were not interested in their progress but never a time so very promising for this fulfillment as now. The mighty strides man has taken in the various fields do primarily promise this achievement of his life-long ambitions. The vast material of science and still more plentiful achievements in the fields of philosophy verily point to a fulfillment. But why despite all these does he hesitate and falter? Why is he unsteady in his attitude and suspecting in his progress? The reasons are complex. There has grown in him a vague and perhaps really well grounded insight which reveals a two pronged road, the road to his own attainment and the road to the attainment of all persons. The former is a swift and quick ascent, the latter an arduous and by no means clear path. One leads to his own salvation; the other to the salvation of all. Further problems have come up; the problem of unity of aspiration of science and philosophy and religion has fortunately been discovering leaders of thought. If science liberates man from the bondage to matter, philosophy liberates man from the senses, and religion liberates man from his isolatedness and egoistic purposes and pursuits. Liberation has indeed the enchanting world of all ages; and even a little liberation from some bonds even has meant a growing faith in the ultimate freedom from all bonds including oneself who has been striving to be free. That is why this has been described as the great liberation.

The attempt at *sarvamukti* or liberation of all has caught the imagination of all people all over the world. It has been the one attractive feature of common religions. The modern aspiration about realization is that it is something that has to be shared, for the test of love is 'sharing' consideration for the welfare of all. No great philosopher or saint lived for himself alone, rather he lives for all, for his digitization or universalisation or attainment of the universal consciousness has entailed this total deprivation of the egoist principle of self. He is one whose self has become all not necessarily of course in the sense of its becoming the self of each as such.

This means that the all that the self becomes, or loses itself in, is the basic self of all individuals and it is this that beckons the individual private soul to the experience of the all. In this liberation of the souls consists.

The mystery of unity of the one and the many is such that the goal of the individual is said to be the realization of the one basic oneness, which includes the many. This problem for experience is initially at any rate the achievement of the one basic Experience in which it has freedom or liberation. The experience of this liberation is held to be of two kinds, namely, that it can be felt to be a sense of growth; a growing sense of freedom is surely

1 *Sarvamukti* means liberation of all. The dogma which asserts that the liberation of one individual entails the liberation of all at the same moment is refuted by all pluralists ; and even monistic thinkers arguing for one self alone find it difficult to answer it. But in this paper I am considering not the argument for pluralism but the basic psychology of the desire for freedom for all in the liberated soul

a valuable thing. Man's evolution in one sense has been the experience of growing sense of freedom. The history of mankind during the past few centuries has revealed that man has now a consciousness of his freedom not as a dream but as an inevitable possession. Mankind has struggled to achieve liberties of many kinds and has been largely crowned with success. Truly it can be said that man today is free, more free than at any other period. In many directions, he has gained freedom to do things which he could not do without peril. Knowledge has been active in the process ; physical sciences, psychological sciences, and politico-social sciences have given man the wherewithal to affirm the inevitability of prosperity which is the manifestation of freedom.

Man has been assiduous in this art of cultivating his freedom which he has tied up with his own prosperity and this, he has seen, is impossible without taking into consideration the rest of the men, and creatures, living and non-living entities. His unity with all of them may not mean much at the beginning nor even during the period of his struggles for his own freedom, but it is something forced on him at the very moment of his attainment.

The welfare of one individual depends on the rest ; but here is the rub; his welfare depends on either their welfare or their ill-fare. That the former is more true is not easily grasped except by a mind that looks ahead and plans the future. In industry and in large undertakings alone does this insight develop : for the rest the untruth appears to be the truth, that one's own individual welfare cannot be got without the sacrifice of another's welfare. One cannot get more unless another got less. The quantum of welfare in this world is limited.; it is said therefore that equal distribution of goods, or anything for the matter of that, including incommensurable commodities such as liberty or freedom or happiness is the only solution of the problem. The arguments are indeed irrefutable. The calculus of equality is neat and perhaps appeal to all to be realistic in this matter by suggesting that both freedom and equality have degrees of availability in the different sets of persons, individual and creatures, and depend upon the age and equipment and so on, the ideal claims and clamors for an immediate practice of it in the world. For it is not by hastening its coming that it really arrives. Declaring that the ideal is inevitable and waiting for its coming is at least not realism. Men have to put into activity the spirit of the ideal and make it work. This is the genius of the karma-yogin , who practices the knowledge of the 'ought' that he has : in the world he only way by which knowledge manifests itself is through work for the ideal, the goal of universal welfare and freedom for all and manifestaion and growth for all. Abundant life is not had in mere contemplation, not in individual activity towards one's own small prosperity, but in acting in the spirit of manifesting the universal ideal. This dynamic secret of involving the spiritual ideal in the conduct of one's life through the participation of the ideal in the performance of individual activities directed towards ideal expression or abundant expression , is the underlying rationale of the *sarvamukti*. Social dynamics depend on this participation of the *sarvamukti* ideal in the very ordinary activities of each individual. Socialism thus owes its strength to this impulse. The basic metaphysical concept at the back of this impulse is the oneness of the many ness. But when it fulgurates into what we consider the herd instinct at the animal level, communal frenzy at the human level, racialism at the race level, and nationalism at the national or state level, then it is a and mixture of both the true and the false, and this combination is not only unstable but also suicidal , for it is

an unholy wedlock. There are some who plead for the principle of development as a justification for the view that man moves from his family circle to wider circles of community etc., goes on moving to larger and more all-embracing and comprehensive groups and thus gains at last release from all institutional set-ups. But this just misses some of the most important criticisms we have made in this paper. The development of freedom or awareness of society in the larger spheres of man's experience does not by itself entail the necessity of the freedom for all as a condition prerequisite to one's real freedom. Nor is the concept of equality in a better position.

Equality means equal freedom and certainly cannot be made to serve that cynical manifestation of it in our serfdom. If it were so, the whole conception of life would be one degree of misery and degrees of bondage, and paradoxically the state of complete bondage and misery would be one of most perfect happiness: not to think is again an asset for the most perfectly bonded entity. Neither self-consciousness nor consciousness of others and for others would be available. The statement of some logicians that the ultimate state of liberation is almost indistinct from that of the stone (*pasanatulya mukti*) would get its sanction.

The route to self-realization; as it has been pointed earlier is not so much of two pronged nature, as one of inter-twining nature. There is a truth in the view that the individual's insight it is that should govern him towards the goal of his own being inevitably; but it may not entail that it is necessarily linked up with the growth of those other than himself. He cannot stay back his impetus there it is irresistible, his pace of movement is incapable of being found that irresistibly others around him move forward with him, try to keep pace with him, and find a thrill and joy in accompanying him. As the *Kenopanisad* seers says *sa eva vedabhihainam sarvani bhutani samvanchanti*: He discovers the secret of the fascination of the all to be the very secret of the his power to lead and hasten others on the path. It is the one Being in all that is manifest in his work for the Divine, his *kainkarya*, his *semusi-bhakti*, his total or integral surrender in and through action or worship.

Sarvamukti becomes atleast within his life time a possibility, and it does happen in the *repective* planes of each soul. But it is not in the same sense or of the same kind of transcendence. There is a school of religion which holds that there is qualitative difference in the experience of *ananda* in the released state. That surely is impossible to concede at the final level of *sarvamukti*, but it becomes intelligible when we consider the planal differences which, whilst promising liberation to the lower, stand as impediments and bonds to the soul seeking to transcend that level. There is therefore every reason to think that *sarvamukti* is really a valuable concept and a regulative concept also. It shows that the liberation of one individual in one plane entails not merely a like possibility to others on that plane of existence but also to those below who feel the flow of a liberating idea, consciously or unconsciously, more often the latter than the former. Therefore it was stated that the liberation achieved by one person is participated in by every order of creation. The poets alone have taken cognizance of this fact of response from all order of creation. They had also posited that the bondage and suffering of one individual is felt as the bondage and misery of all too. This deep abiding layer of being, which is the unity of all, is stirred therefore by certain fundamental upheavals in the life of the individual, and more truly of the Mahatma.

The secret fulfillment that all the have felt when Śrī Ramakrishna began his mission on this plane of being, even as when whole mankind rose up to this pay homage to the Sacrifice of Mahatma Gandhi (even as in the centuries past it had risen to do so under similar circumstances) is a constant enough phenomenon. The two significant event of this century show that mankind is increasingly responsive to the call of the *sarvamukti* ideal. This surely is not secularism, but the basic impulse underlying it.