

Social Awareness and Freedom

Whoever does not miss freedom is usually unaware of the meaning of freedom and the role it could play in his or her life; and therefore, is unable to make others aware of its existence and meaning. In traditional societies, where women are controlled and often oppressed by men, a woman cannot explain the importance of freedom to her children and help them grow up as free people. As a consequence, children are brought up as members of a group led by a man who represents a higher traditional or political or religious authority; and therefore are made to accept being dependent on others and having no voice in running their life affairs. In such societies, the individual is denied the right to be free, and authority confiscates all the freedom available within the society to which he belongs. People are treated as slaves responsible for whatever authority asks so them, while they have no right to hold authority accountable for whatever it does and does not do. Freedom, as a consequence, becomes an asset that rulers own and grant a small portion of it to people they trust to serve them well.

Freedom may change its face or form or how it expresses itself in society; it, however, remains the most important agent of progress. Regardless of the form of freedom, it remains a human right, a moral value, and a requirement for causing change and making progress. Freedom is not the spirit of history only, as Hegel the German philosopher once claimed; it is the spirit of humanity; no human being is complete without freedom. However, man's longing for freedom and struggle to attain it does not happen except when he feels that his freedom is compromised or confiscated; and that can happen only when people become aware of the role freedom plays in sustaining their humanity and enriching their lives. Cultures whose core is religious and others that are based on ideological philosophies such as nationalism and communism are usually less aware of the importance of freedom and the role it can play in the life of people. Therefore, freedom and the longing for it remain a cultural issue, dictating that traditional cultures be transformed to become more able to recognize that people have rights and obligations that are equal, which requires the restructuring of the traditional relationships that tie the ruler with the ruled.

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