



FREEDOM OF THE SPIRIT

All major social, political, economic and cultural events and upheavals that have been witnessed in recent history have had 'freedom' as their underlying theme – woven into the very fabric that buttressed them. And at the heart of all human endeavour is the striving for freedom of the spirit. The urge to be free is just too tempting to resist.

I, for one, have succumbed to this urge. As an aspiring lawyer fresh out of law school, I had a clear-cut choice – to either get a job in a law firm somewhere drawing a decent fixed salary but at the cost of not being able to do things my way, or to practice independently in the Court, sacrificing the security of a fixed salary and other associated perks of a job, but giving free reign to my ambition.

For me however, it wasn't really a choice, and I started practicing independently. At the cost of sounding too idealistic, I daresay that notwithstanding the success or lack of it that may eventually accompany this decision of mine, I have stoked my hunger to be free, to be independent. I am free to be a success; I am free to be a failure; I am free to be chained; I am free to be restricted. I am essentially free to be free.

The Cambridge School was responsible in no small measure for inculcating such a thought process in me. Never do I remember being told that a particular thing was not possible, or that a certain method of approaching a problem was incorrect. We were made to think for ourselves, and to appreciate that real knowledge was not to be gained from the pedantic study of a textbook, but rather from realizing that we were all free human beings, with spirits and minds of our own, and that *our* way was in most cases the *only* way. Mere rationality could never override such thought.



However, as highly exalted a concept that 'Freedom' is in the modern context of things, it is regularly twisted and re-twisted to suit the ends and the means of every mission. Even going back to such seminal historical milestones such as the Renaissance, the Cold War, and more recently India's struggle for 'freedom' from British rule, the inherent ambiguity of the term cannot be overlooked.

We have to ask ourselves, freedom *from* what? And freedom to *do* what? Does the term connote merely the freedom to choose between alternatives? Or does it imply independence to undertake ANY course of action conceivable, without any limitations whatsoever? Or maybe the freedom to act subject to conditions imposed by society?

These questions elude proper answer, and in my humble opinion, should NOT be answered. 'Freedom' as a concept should be free unconditionally and left to itself – as vague, undetermined and equivocal as it may be. Because that is the essence of it.

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