

Freedom I lost...while Unrestrained!



As I crossed 40, suddenly physical health began to be a concern...the regular blood tests, visits to the doctors, chronic illnesses, aches and pains! And as I connect the dots, I see a clear connection between my unrestraints back then and the repercussions I suffer today!

A Healthy life-style was never my priority! Though write-ups emphasized it, media advertised it; but I thought, sicknesses take toll only over others...I was immune and beyond the reach! I enjoyed absolute freedom; freedom of food, freedom of movement, freedom of posture, freedom of time...and so on! Little did I know that **unrestrained life I indulged in, would itself become a huge restraint on my freedom** pretty soon!

‘Restraint’ is not a popular word. Its not embraced or desired like the word ‘Freedom’. Restraint calls for discipline and self-control, which sounds rather un-fun. **We have parades and fireworks to celebrate our Independence, not Restraints!** A judicial system can guarantee freedom, but cannot grant self-control. One got to build it through hard-earned practice. But, as I grow, I realize, I can never be truly free if my freedom does not involve restraint. Restraint is the wind under the wings of freedom, helping us to fly with purpose, versus being blown willy-nilly.

We live in a society that worships the instant gratification of desires, that exhorts freedom and that rebels against restraints. We are trained to be ambitious and passionate in pursuit of the things we desire to have. Not getting what we want is painful - that’s quite easy to relate to. Getting what we don’t want can also be painful. **But as we walk a little further on the road to our evolution, even getting what we want is painful!** This is the beginning of the path of awakening. When we realize that getting what we want in the material world is unsatisfactory too, that’s when we begin to mature.

As a literature student, in college, I came across Ayn Rand’s novel ‘Anthem’. Rand’s stories, and ‘Anthem’ most significantly, are tales of individuals finding themselves, their freedom and their worth. She was a superb writer and I instantly fell in love with her writings. She writes, “*At first, man was enslaved by the gods. But he broke their chains. Then he was enslaved by the kings. But he broke their chains. He was enslaved by his birth, by his kin, by his race. But he broke their chains. He declared to all his brothers that a man has rights which neither God nor king nor other men can take away from him, no matter what their number, for his is the right of man, and there is no right on earth above this right. And he stood on the threshold of freedom for which the blood of the centuries behind him had been spilled.*”

Sadly, it took a long time for me to discover the Holy Bible and realize that Rand’s version of freedom was an ugly parody of God’s creation. Rand’s freedom did not begin with God but was instead opposed by the gods. In Rand’s view, humans began as slaves and by their own will pursued and achieved freedom. But, in truth, we began as creatures blessed with freedom who by our own will pursued and produced slavery. There has never been a freer creature than Adam in the Garden, just as there is no greater slave than man who now lives in the bondage of sin. **Rand sees freedom as rebellion against the heavens; while the Gospel sees freedom as surrendering our rebellion and submission to God.**

Friends, True freedom is not the unrestrained ability to do anything the heart imagines, but rather the bridled empowerment to do something beneficial; beneficial to self and to others; in the long run. We are less free when we defy the good and the God; we remain shackled to addictions, desires, consequences and death. **But with God and with goodness, we find that we are restrained, yes, but the yoke is easy and the burden light.**

As we celebrate the 77th Independence Day on 15th August 2024, let’s realize that Freedom comes down to restraint and submission and let’s take time to elevate restraint as the mature and responsible way to exercise and enjoy lasting freedom. **Independence Day Wishes!**

“But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.” (Romans 6:17-19)

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