

EDITORIAL

MAN makes tools and uses them according to his requirements, and in this, he is said to be superior to the lower animals. But we are afraid that this boasted superiority has been too exaggerated. Surely man is clever enough to create any tools he needs; necessity being the mother of invention, he always seems to know how to get on in any circumstances. But how is it that he was not made still cleverer to be always master of the tools he creates? Let him create if need be, but why does he allow himself to become a slave to his creations—often an abject, miserable, helpless slave? And the worst thing is that he is not aware of the fact, his sense of superiority has blinded him to see it.

We created a state, and in order to protect it we have armed ourselves to the teeth. Having nothing to do, we turn the arms meant to be defensive into offensive use, and let the wanton destruction of lives and properties go on without restraint. When we are taxed more than we can bear on account of warlike preparations of all kinds, we have conferences, leagues of nations, etc. But will they work all right, seeing that we are slaves of our own tools, material as well as ideal?

Environment is more or less our own creation. Statesmen and economists and social reformers are all concentrating their efforts on the improvement of our surroundings so that poverty be done away with; for poverty is largely responsible for all the shortcomings of the present form of society. The market is flooded with all kinds of schemes of reformation or reconstruction. As far as they are discussed on paper, they all seem plausible enough. But we are such slaves to what we

already have, and we dare not adopt one of those plausible schemes and start out on the way of reconstructing a happier mode of living. If we were more "primitive" and not so highly "cultured," any plan for reconstruction would have worked felicitously.

We have made so many machines to save labour, to produce things cheaper and to make living easier and more comfortable. But the day is come when the machines are driving us instead of our driving them. The machine saves labour too much and produces more than we require; we cannot afford to keep it idle, but what shall we do with surplus products? They must be sold somewhere, we must find a market, a profitable market of course. But if that market is already occupied or about to be occupied by another nation, we must try by all means, fair or foul, to oust that nation from the market; for the machine cannot remain idle, it keeps on producing. Thus modern industrialism is enslaving us on all sides; we even wage war under its imperial command.

We wanted religion, and we have one, in fact, several. But institutions have grown around it, and it is almost impossible nowadays for a religion to move as it will. All the fine ideas and loving thoughts are buried under the institutions we have created. Christianity preaches equality before God, glory in heaven and peace on earth, and Buddhism does about the same, though more intellectually I suppose. But they are powerless before racial prejudice, national bias, or personal greed. Not only that, each religion thinks that she holds the monopoly of the truth in her hands, and those who do not wish to buy it through her are branded as heathen or idol-worshippers.

Man is great no doubt, he creates machines, institutions, and ideas, and in turn he becomes chained to them, he is in their clutches. Religion tries to get him free, but even she

is entangled in the meshes woven by her own hands. Nevertheless, religion is our last hope and refuge. We are what we are, but at the same time we know what we ought to be and what we ought to do. As long as we are capable of this, there is still something to take hold of, and this will be, must be our final salvation.

When the Buddha first proclaimed his Good Law, he enjoined the monks just to keep one garment and one bowl, and not to pass two nights at one place. The idea was to be free, not to be fettered by anything external; for however good and desirable at the time, things external, even internal, are sure to interfere with one's freedom. Under modern conditions of living, however comfortable, how unfree, how encumbered we are! And we are trying harder yet to pile the burden over our heads and shoulders. This is perhaps inevitable, but at the same time let us never be slaves to things unessential to our spiritual welfare. Even in these days of steam, electricity, and machinery, let us not forget the principle of "one garment and one bowl," and we do not know how many worries, angers, selfishnesses, and even international frictions are avoided. Is not the same spirit also expressed in the following injunction?

"Freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither silver nor gold nor brass in your purses, neither scrip, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor staff; for the laborer is worthy of his hire."

The goal of Buddhism is no doubt to attain freedom, but we must remember that freedom has a double meaning, negative and positive. When the chain is broken one is free, released from the bondage, and this is negative. But we can be free even with the chain on when the thought of chain does not enter into our consciousness and ceases to influence other ideas in it. This I call the positive meaning of freedom. It is a release of course, but there is something more in it. For

instead of being merely released or delivered from the bondage of birth and death, one makes use of the bonds at one's will; this must be real freedom. The Bodhisattva knows well how to attain to Nirvana where the will to live no more asserts itself at the expense of his spirituality, but he keeps it back for a while, because there are yet many of his fellow-beings whose suffering he suffers as his own. He is willing to carry the yoke and work with and among his brethren. It is not that he is unable to shake off the yoke, which is indeed voluntarily assumed by him, out of his own free will. Where this free will is operative, there is freedom in its positive sense.

In one sense we are all determined. When I move this hand, the motion cannot escape the law of causation which is brought down at that moment on every muscle of mine which is directly and indirectly connected with it. While my motion is thus limited from the past and the present conditions, it will in turn determine the future. The chain of cause and effect leaves no room for the exercise of free will. But the citadel of this theory is not where the objective forces interplay, but it lies in one's inmost consciousness. When the feeling of limitation breaks up at a certain junction of one's spiritual development, one attains to the conviction that a man with all his physical and psychological weaknesses is perfectly free and unchecked in the assertion of his life-principle.

When Jōshu declares that "most people are enslaved by twelve hours of the day, but I am the master of the twelve hours," he asserts his freedom; while Zenye's assertion takes a form of paradox:

"Empty-handed I go, and lo, the spade's handle is in my hand!
I walk on foot and I am riding on the back of an ox;
Behold the man passing over the bridge,
And the bridge flows on while the water keeps still."

The Mahāyānist view of freedom is however quite slippery, and hard to climb; when one does not look ahead, one is sure to fall into an abyss where no escape is possible. But let the height be once securely gained, and the whole world awaits your command.