

Everybody wants Freedom, Nobody wants Responsibility

By Belai Zelleke1

I am reminded of Diogenes, a beautiful Greek Philosopher, mystic- and a mystic of a rare quality. He was a contemporary of Aristotle and he was against Aristotle.

Aristotle defined man as an animal without feathers who walks on two legs. What did Diogenes do? He caught a peacock, he took out all the feathers and he sent the peacock to Aristotle with the message: "Please receive the gift of a human being."

Diogenes used to live naked because, he said, "**Man is born naked, and he becomes weaker because he is protected by clothes.**" All around the world no animal has clothes except a few dogs in England. Dogs have clothes because a naked dog is un-Christian. You will be surprised to learn that in Victorian England even chair legs were covered with clothes, because they are legs and it is not gentlemanly to look at naked legs.

Diogenes lived naked. He was a strong, young, and beautiful man. Four people who were hijacking people and selling them as slaves in the market thought to catch Diogenes.

Diogenes heard what there were saying about him. He said, "Don't be worried. Come here! You need not worry that I will kill you, I never kill anything. And you need not worry that I will fight, resist you. You want to sell me as a slave? Embarrassed, afraid, those four people said, "That`s what we were thinking. We are poor... if you are willing?"

He said, "Of course I am. If I help you in your poverty in some way, it is beautiful."

So they brought out chains. He said, "Throw them in the river; you need not chain me. I will walk ahead of you. I don't believe in escaping from anything. In fact I am getting excited about the idea of being sold.

Those four people become a little more afraid: this man is not only strong and beautiful, he seems to be mad also; he could be dangerous. But now there was no way for them to escape. He said "If you try to escape, you will be risking your own life. Just follow me, all four of you. Put me on the pedestal in the market." Unwillingly they followed him. They wanted to take him, but he went ahead of them! You see the point ? Even in such a situation, he was taking the responsibility on himself. He was a free man even in such a situation, where people were conspiring and trying to sell him in the marketplace, which is the ugliest thing that can happen to a man--to be sold like a commodity.

They put him to the auction before the auctioneer. Before the auctioneer said anything, Diogenes declared, "**Listen, people! Here is a master to be sold to any slave, because these four people need money. So start the auction; but remember, you are purchasing a master.**"

A king purchased him. Of course, he could do it-- more and more money he offered at the auction. Many people were interested but finally a sum, larger than any that had ever been heard

of before, was given to those four people. Diogenes said to them, "**Are you happy now and I will go with this slave.**"

On the way to the palace as they were riding in the chariot, the king said to Diogenes, "**Are you crazy or something? You think yourself a master ? I am a king, and you think me a slave?**"

Diogenes said, "I am not crazy, but you are. I can prove it to you right now." At the back of the chariot was the queen. Diogenes said, "**Your queen is already interested in me, she is finished with you. It is dangerous to purchase a master.**"

The King was shocked. Of course, he was nothing in comparison to Diogenes. He took out his sword and asked his queen, "What he is saying it is true? If you say the truth, your life will be saved--that is my promise. But if you say an untruth, and I find it out later on, I will be heading you."

The queen said, " It is true. Before him, you are nothing." The king stopped the chariot and told Diogenes, "Get out of the chariot. I set you free; I don't want to take such risks in my palace."

Diogenes Said, "**Thank you. I am a man who cannot be made a slave, for the simple reason that every responsibility I take on myself. "**

"Take responsibility! And then even in utter poverty, suffering, imprisoned in a jail, you will remain completely a master of yourself."