CHAPTER - I
INTRODUCTION

'Man's ultimate goal in life is spiritual awakening' - Berdyaev

Existentialism is a philosophical movement which in a sense, refuses to be defined. It is rather a way or style of philosophizing which has become highly influential in the thought of this century. "Of all the developments in contemporary thought, Existentialism is undoubtedly the best publicized, the most controversial and yet still the least understood".¹

Over the centuries, the "individual" has been pushed to the background by systems of thought, historical events and technological forces. The major systems of philosophy paid little attention to the uniquely personal, concern of the individual. It may be said that contemporary existentialism arose as a protest against this situation. At first, it appeared

as a philosophical fad whose practitioners expounded their thoughts in cafes far removed from university scenes. Moreover, it was a post-war phenomenon. In a sense, Existentialism is neither a system nor a school nor even a creed. There is no particular set of tenets to be propounded or endorsed, and that, in spite of the prominence of individuals like Sartre and Heidegger. Sartre did much to carry the philosophy to the masses. He gained inspiration mainly from the German philosopher Heidegger, who himself was a student of the German phenomenologist, Husserl.

Existentialists think that life cannot be known completely by reason. According to Kierkegaard, the task of philosophy is the realization of life and such life is not a totality independent of the life of an individual. Realization of existence is the highest goal of life. To the existentialists, the existence of the individual is the highest truth; to them, existence is more important than essence.

Berdyaev has been acknowledged as a Spiritual philosopher who advocates the personalistic existential
philosophy. This differs much from the theistic existentialism of Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Sartre and others. Berdyaev suggests that he was an existentialist even before he came to know of Kierkegaard's writings. He writes: "Neither Kierkegaard, whom I did not read, not until late in life, and whose morbid exaltation of sin is profoundly uncongenial to me, nor Heidegger, nor even Jaspers, had any particular influence in my thought". Berdyaev's existentialism therefore, has to be looked at from the special perspective provided by his writings. His philosophy, which can be described as a commentary on the life of Man is intended for all, since every one at some stage or other is concerned with this central existential problem.

Berdyaev's views are based on experience. Philosophy, to him, is really a function of life. He observes: "I have been nourished in my philosophical thinking above all by the experience of life, and I regarded

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philosophy as a function of life or rather as a kind of symbols of spiritual experience, of a lonely pilgrimage of spirit". 3

Berdyaev claims that his philosophy is "born of spiritual experience, rather than deducted from ascertained and assured premises". 4 The universality of his philosophy is plainly reflected here. Besides, his basic approach to problems is that of a mystic. To him, what is important is the "inner life", the spiritual life of man who must remain a free and creative being, a being determined from within, not an individualist but a communal being, independent of exterior social determinism". 5

Berdyaev does not belong to a particular school of philosophy. In his personalistic philosophy, he has highlighted the problem of the spirit and the

3 Ibid., p. 104
4 Ibid., p. 302
5 Towards a New Epoch. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1949) p. 46
spiritual life. He has also elaborated in detail the nature of personality, stressed the dual nature of personality—natural and spiritual. These are really significant and worthwhile because the problem which, above all, confronts us today is the problem of the spirit and the spiritual life.

Berdyaev realized the importance of society and believed that society is essential for the individual to enter into rich and varied relations with others. He considers Spiritual awakening as the ultimate goal in man's life. But it is only in and through society that this is realized. The relation between the individual and society is not external, but organic. "Sociologically the individual and society are correlative; the individual cannot be conceived apart from society, and society pre-supposes the existence of individuals".6

6 The Destiny of Man. (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937) p. 252
Berdyaev was not anti-social but non-social. The individual, he says, tries to transcend society; while remaining in it, he is free and creative. Though man is intimately related to the society, he cannot identify himself with the society. "It is perhaps in this transcendence of society that Berdyaev's claim to his being non-social has to be understood".7

Berdyaev is deeply concerned with the problem of life. But he has a special interpretation of it. He says, "My love for life was a love for the meaning of life, and my love for the world was a love for the world that had denied its worldly fashion. I am not so presumptuous as to claim that I was above the temptations of "life": I was, indeed, as much their victim as anybody else. But I was never tempted to provide them with moral sanctions or to justify them spiritually. The problem of the "flesh" was never a

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7 R. Balasubramanian, Personalistic Existentialism of Berdyaev. (Madras: Centre of Advanced study in philosophy, University of Madras, 1970) p. 11
particular concern of mine ...... the problem which
preoccupied me above every other was that of
freedom". Berdyaev regarded his philosophy as
'existential' because he gave prime importance to the
knowing-existing subject over the object. He over
looked the knowledge of objects.

A detailed study of this philosophy of Berdyaev
will serve a definite purpose, in the sense that it can
throw light on the various pressing problems of social
and political nature. The problems highlighted by
Berdyaev kindle our thought and imagination. For
instance, according to Berdyaev, "Revolutions are the
destiny, the inevitable doom of nations and it is
impossible to take a superficial view of them,
explaining them by external, political and economic
causes as both the revolutionaries and the counter
revolutionaries generally do. A revolution is a

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8 Nicolas Berdyaev, Dream and Reality. (London:
Geoffrey Bles, 1950) p. 24
spiritual phenomenon, though it may and usually does deny the reality of the spirit". 9

It can be seen that the Romanticism that is reflected in this theory clearly demonstrates the primacy of the subject over the object - the essential nature of the existential philosophy. But, then, Berdyaev cannot be represented as a 'romantic' in the traditional sense of the term.

An analysis of his philosophy will reveal that three major factors influenced Berdyaev. The first is the Russian Socialism and Marxism. The second is the cultural renaissance that took place towards the close of the 19th century in Russia. Marxism presented a new significance and perspective to Berdyaev in the sense that he could find a new conception of man. The cultural renaissance of Russia influenced him to a very great extent. It was of a religious nature. The new meanings which Berdyaev gave to art, freedom, etc., clearly prove that he was under the spell of that

9  -  -  -  .  The Destiny of Man.  (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1937) p. 263
influence. The third source of influence on him was the 19th century Russian religious philosophy. The central concept of this religious thinking was the divine aspect present in man. "God-manhood embodies the unity and interaction of two natures, divine and human, which are one but unconfused. Man is not subsumed in God, but is made divine and his humanity endures in eternal life".10

The religious, social, and political thinking of Berdyaev has great relevance in the modern world. His concepts "spirit is freedom", "Man is rooted in spirit", etc. can kindle the thoughts of the modern man. They can make man channalise his energy and interest, to a great extent, in the spiritual plane. Berdyaev's religious thinking is deep-rooted and based on an act of faith. An analysis of personalistic existentialism seems to strengthen the concept already established by Berdyaev that man is essentially, inherently, spirit. The inspiration comes to the modern man, who feels himself to be a stranger to

himself, to his own family, even, in the midst of all social relations.

Berdyaev's thinking, characterised by fundamental insight, can enable modern man to develop firm conviction that moral values are really useful, and that they get meaning and significance only because they can be applicable to man who is endowed with logical reflection. Berdyaev's thought reflects the spirit of a free religious philosophy. In his philosophy, Berdyaev points out from first to last that it is personality that matters.

In this study Chapter II is devoted to the analysis of the concept of personality. Berdyaev attempts to give a new interpretation of personality. The fundamental problem, Berdyaev feels, is the problem of man, who possesses a dual nature—the natural and the spiritual. Berdyaev shows that the same individual is both natural and spiritual. We can see that man possesses the ability to transcend the world. To Berdyaev, man is primarily personality-spirit, and spirit is freedom. In this chapter, an analysis is
also made to show how 'personality' in Berdyaev's perspective is different from 'Individual' - who is a constituent of society. Personality is an ideal to be realized by man. It is also pointed out that Berdyaev's personalistic existentialism really offers a solution to the problem of freedom versus necessity, which again arises out of the dual nature of man. Man's relationship to the society is also considered for analysis to show that man is an integral part of the society.

Again, the relation between God, man and the world is also discussed, since man is picturised by Berdyaev as a uniting link between the phenomenon and the noumenon. In this context, an analysis is made to make it clear that man and God are both independent, but also inter-dependent. And man has a natural divinity present within. Man is both finite and infinite is also established in this context. Potential freedom is inherent in man and man is the image of God.
An examination is made to show how transcendence takes place, in two different directions—Objectification and the path of self-transcendence, which are explained in detail. Man in a state of objectification is subjected to the social laws, dogmas, culture, civilization etc. Self-transcendence is, a process which takes place within man—a self-awareness. Freedom from the world of necessity is possible in this state. How freedom and slavery are really contradictory is also taken for analysis. Personality has its source in the realm of freedom is also taken for consideration.

A detailed account of Integral man is also provided, with a view to clarifying that philosophy alone helps to understand the real nature of man. In this context, the significance of philosophy as a creative act becomes clear and this also is discussed showing how man, out of his creative talent, shapes the Universe. Along with these, a detailed account of the personal character of philosophy and how Berdyaev
relates spiritual life and repentance is given. With a view to bringing out the significance of mystic experience in man, a brief description is given to show the nature of a mystic man.

In Chapter - III 'Concept of Man' as dealt with the three existentialist thinkers Kierkegaard, Heidegger and Sartre is taken up for discussion, since these concepts have a relevance in understanding Berdiaev's philosophy. An attempt has been made to explain precisely why Kierkegaard feels the urgent need to take an analysis of man - his 'moral self' - in his theory. Human subjectivity is also considered in this context to emphasise that it is the criterion by which the existence of the individual has to be determined. The concepts of both personal truth and universal truth are also analysed in brief.

Kierkegaard's account of the various stages of life has also been taken into consideration - the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious, as these clearly mark the development of man. The importance of
self realisation is also pointed out. To Kierkegaard, self-realisation is purely subjective. Man, in isolation alone, becomes conscious as to who he really is. Why Kierkegaard insists on the importance of man to be a single person is analysed in brief to show that his account of the single person only points out the importance of the individual against mass society. Why he felt the need to have a heart which is pure and noble to have a concern of God is also made clear.

There is a unique sense in which the term 'man' is used by Heidegger. 'Man', to Heidegger, is being-in-the world, who lives with other people. The use of the word 'Dasein' by Heidegger signifies the human being in the world. Man is by nature in quest of 'Being'. Heidegger and Sartre point out the reciprocal relation between self and the world. An analysis is also made to show that the world is really a system of significance. When Heidegger speaks of man as being-in-the world, it only points out that man is open to Being, which is innately present in him. Heidegger's standpoint as to why man alone is an
existent being and why other objects merely 'are' is also dealt with. Man is the being who stands out to Being. He is in search of Being is also taken into consideration. The authentic and the inauthentic aspect of man are also considered. The analysis of the concept of Being in the world which yields the three components, namely the world, the being who is in the world and the relation of being-in-itself are also examined. How Heidegger employs the method of existential Phenomenology to arrive at the meaning of Being and Existence is also analysed. The relation between man and the world is explained to make clear that man is always in the world. The world, to Heidegger is a field of significance is also examined subsequently. The different functions of man in the world are taken for analysis and his relation with other man in society is also dealt with.

Heidegger establishes the fact that the essence of 'Dasein' is its 'existence'. His endeavour to revive the problem of being is taken up for analysis. Since Being is expressed through thinking, importance of
thinking is analysed in brief. How the problem of the
meaning of Being is really a classical problem, is
examined. The three structures of the existence of man
namely, existence, care and fallenness are described.
Further it is also examined how Heidegger's position
though appears to be a nihilistic one, is not really
so.

The difference between Being-towards others and
being-towards things is also examined in brief. An
attempt is made to analyse the subjective nature of man
as presented by Sartre. Importance of existence as
against essence is emphasised. How Sartre is a dualist
from the ontological point of view is examined briefly.
In this context an analysis of Being-in-itself and
being-for-itself is made. The importance of negation
is pointed out and how it is necessary to understand
the phenomenon is shown subsequently. How man is the
origin of nothingness is also pointed out. Why Sartre
is always pessimistic about human relationship is also
identified.
Chapter IV deals with Berdyaev's account of freedom. A descriptive analysis is made to show that man has an urge to realise a higher principle, freedom. Here a special mention is made of man's capacity for self-transcendence. The different directions in which transcendence takes place have also been identified. A novel interpretation is given by Berdyaev by introducing objectification as an existential problem. The different levels at which objectification operate are also examined in this chapter.

Berdyaev's account of freedom reveals the truth of the divine image in man. The different meanings of freedom are explained to make it clear that freedom and creativity are inseparably related. Real freedom is nothing but spiritual freedom which is present in the transcendental man. Berdyaev points out that freedom versus necessity is really an existential problem which becomes conspicuous owing to the dual nature of man. While making an attempt to solve this problem, the other theories take into account only the natural

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aspect. In Berdyaev's opinion, Personalistic Existentialism alone offers a meaningful and clear solution to this problem because, it takes into consideration the spiritual aspect also.

How this spiritual freedom is not the same as free will is also pointed out subsequently. Berdyaev's theory of how truth gives us the highest kind of freedom is also explained in brief. Berdyaev's analysis indicates that man, isolated from God and the spiritual world, loses his independence and his spiritual individuality. The spirit of creativeness in man has an important place in Berdyaev's theory. How it enables man to bring forth some thing fresh and original which never existed is also dealt with.

Art and freedom are also related; art is nothing but freedom. In this context the new interpretation given to the origin of the world by Berdyaev that the world is a divine-human work—is also dealt with.

Along with this, an account of Time as it is examined by Berdyaev is provided briefly since he stresses the improtance of the mystic—a creator
par-excellence, who has attained freedom, lives in existential time. Time, for Berdyaev is a kind of existence. He mentions three types of time—Cosmic, historical and existential. Man lives in these three dimensions of time.

In Chapter V, an account of freedom as presented in the philosophy of Kierkegaard Heidegger and Sartre is given. How the real problems man confront in real concrete situations are solved by choice is briefly dealt with. Kierkegaard's reference to freedom in relation to the development of self is also examined.

How freedom can be thought of only with reference to man's inner relationship to God's individuality is analysed in brief. Subsequently an attempt is made to establish that man is a mixture of both finite and infinite. The unique sense in which the 'concept of despair' is attributed to all men is also another point of analysis in this context.
Kierkegaard's analysis of the concepts of 'consciousness', 'self', 'freedom', 'choice', 'subjective truth', etc., is critically examined in detail here. We note that, according to Kierkegaard, the power to realise one's authentic self is the definition of 'freedom'. And authenticity of human existence is the goal of human life. Again, Kierkegaard says that the spirit is freedom. It expresses itself in the dialectic relation of necessity and possibility. It is ultimately the spirit that realizes itself as the freedom to relate necessity and possibility.

Kierkegaard says that the character of this self-relating act which is called freedom gives rise to the existential concreteness of the existing individual. Such a character can be comprehended really through an examination of the categories of possibility and necessity.

To Heidegger, freedom is not the random ability to do as we please; to go this way or that way in our choice. Freedom is a participation—a disclosure of what is as such.
Heidegger holds the view that man who is confronting the harsh realities of life faces so many problems and he alone is capable of solving them. He strongly emphasises that it is freedom that characterises man's life. He gives importance to 'freedom toward death' and says that it alone can enable man to have an authentic life. The fact that man has an existential 'place' is what makes him a real man. The 'place' is the dimension of man's ontological and existential uniqueness, and it is what really conditions his existential activity—the substantial ground of his Being. Heidegger makes an analysis of the creative ability of man, and how the intensity of subjectivity is revealed through his creative encounter with life-situations. Heidegger views that the creativity of man can be destroyed by his own creation. He points out that man is free with regard to Being, as he stands beyond himself in his relation to Being; the freedom of man consists in his awareness of the above fact.

Heidegger in his theory points out the existence of man in an existential situation and believes that
man can utilise the possibilities to make the best out of such a situation to have an understanding of himself. The individual's relation to the world, to Heidegger, is an active participation. In the Heideggerian perspective, what is called transcendence is really Being-in-the world; it is really freedom.

An account is also given of the relation of Being, truth and freedom, justifying that the essence of truth is freedom. Truth is really the disclosure of Being. Truth is the same as human freedom. A clarification of the Heideggerian analysis of the term "letting-be" is also given to show that the term possesses a positive meaning and not a negative one. Heidegger has clearly indicated the truth that freedom is a participation in the revelation of what-is-as such. An attempt is made to discuss intellectual truth to show that freedom is really the revelation of truth.

How Sartre presented the subjective nature of existentialist thought is also taken into consideration. To Sartre, man is free, and apart from man's existence, there is nothingness. How freedom is
a necessary condition for action is also discussed. Along with that, the constructive and creative nature of man is emphasised, to compare this aspect with the views of Berdyaev, who also highlights the importance of the creative aspect of man, while bringing out the significance of freedom. The account of freedom and responsibility shows that man's responsibility is not confined to himself but he is equally responsible for all men. This relates to one's own concepts of anguish and bad faith. Sartre's position on this is examined.

It is also shown that freedom is always in a situation and it is freedom which gives significance to the situation. According to Sartre, man finds an important place in the world in the sense that man introduces value in the world. Like Berdyaev, Sartre also points out the significance of ethics in the life of man. In his "Existentialism and Humanism", he emphasises that man is responsible for the whole mankind. Man is not only for himself. Sartre asserts that others are necessary for man's own existence and self-knowledge. This fact of knowing others through
one's own existence is called by Sartre intersubjectivity. The Heideggerian concept of man points to the fact that man is primarily a social being, and cannot formulate an image of himself. Man's consciousness of himself develops in the context of mutual recognition in a community. Kierkegaard, on the other hand speaks of man in a very special sense. Man is a human being in the sense that he is an actual existent whose life presents more exciting moments than the life of a biological organism which continues to spend its life in a mechanical manner. It is the existence of an individual being who wishes to realize the uniqueness of his existence through his freedom, despair and commitment.

In Chapter VI the most revolutionary event in the history of the world, the problem of alienation as identified by Berdyaev is taken into consideration. An attempt is made to show that solitude is one form of alienation. The nature of the problem of solitude is explained in detail and is shown that solitude is an existential problem as it marks an important turning point in a man's life. The various means by which
solitude can be overcome are also analysed in detail.

In Chapter VII, which is the concluding Chapter, the main points covered in the previous six chapters are indicated. An analysis of the nature of personality in the personalistic existentialism of Berdyaev clearly points out that personality is the supreme ideal to be attained by man. The world is created, but not finished. It is finished by man. Man is both human and divine. It is also shown how personalistic existentialism of Berdyaev offers a distinctive solution to the problem of freedom. The account of man given by Kierkegaard, Heidegger, and Sartre reveals that while Kierkegaard gives prime importance to the ethical self of man, Heidegger shows that Dasein-man as a unitary principle determines the world and Sartre emphasises the subjective nature of man.

Regarding the concept of freedom, real freedom to Berdyaev is nothing other than spiritual freedom. Both Berdyaev and Kierkegaard agree that man is rooted in spirit and spirit is freedom. According to
Heidegger man's freedom consists in standing beyond himself. Sartre's position is that freedom is a necessary condition of man's action. Man is condemned to be free. Berdyaev's special emphasis on solitude that it marks a remarkable stage in man's spiritual growth is a unique contribution. Solitude to a very great extent helps man to realise his personality. Along with the other aspects of his philosophy, this throws light on the various pressing problems of social and political nature.