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Jawaharlal's Excursions into Religion

Don't Look up to God, Even if He Exists !

In his latest voluminous book *The Discovery of India*, covering over 700 pages, written during his last term of incarceration in the fort of Ahmadnagar, as a sequel to the ill-fated "Quit India" resolution of the Congress on August 8, 1942, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru rambles over a vast field, touching upon any and every subject that comes his way.

The book purports to be a recapitulation from the author's angle of vision, of the whole story of Indian history, from the earliest times right up to the latest political developments, but it may more appropriately be described as a projection of the author's own mental attitudes cast on the screen of Indian history. And a man of very wide and varied interests as Jawaharlal is, there is hardly any topic, from archaeology, astronomy, history, to music, painting, khartak dance and high flights into realms of philosophy, metaphysics and religion, which he does not dabble in. It is this last-mentioned aspect of his mental outlook however which should be of interest to the reader of this paper and we would briefly review this phase of the Pandit's moods. Since the idea is to give the reader an insight into how the mind of this great Indian leader works on the plane of religion, no apology is needed for the lengthy reproduction of relevant passages from this latest writing of his.

Something of Magic

Under the caption, 'Life's Philosophy', he writes:—

"Religion, as I saw it practised and accepted even by thinking men, whether it was Hinduism or Islam or Buddhism or Christianity, did not attract me. It seemed to be closely associated with superstitious practices and dogmatic beliefs and behind it lay a method of approach to life's problems which was certainly not that of science. There was an element of magic about it, an uncritical credulousness, a reliance on the supernatural."

This is thus the first, the superficial impression, as it seems, which religion left on Jawaharlal's mind. On second thought, however, he feels that religion is after all not so altogether a useless thing

he took it to be and this is how he gives vent to this mood :

"Yet it was obvious that religion had supplied some deeply felt inner need of human nature and that the vast majority of people all over the world could not do without some form of religious belief. It had produced some fine types of men and women, as well as bigoted, narrow-minded, cruel tyrants. It had given a set of values to human life and though some of these values had no application to-day or were even harmful, others were still the foundation of morality and ethics."

It never struck Panditji that like everything else, religion as well was put by man to good or bad use. Why did it not strike him that the "bigoted, narrow-minded, cruel tyrants" represent an abuse of religion or, more correctly, they are the product of false religion? If, for instance, his own caste-men, the Brahmins, perpetuated the most inhuman iniquities on fellowmen of the lower caste in the name of religion, it certainly could not be the teaching of the great Rishis who were torch-bearers of all that is good and noble. It takes no great imagination to sift this alloy that has got mixed up with religion from religion in its purity which has always produced, in the words of the Pandit, "some fine types of men and women". Even science of which he professes to be a votary is not an unmixed blessing. If it has given us stupendous power over nature, if it has added to the comfort of life and relieved much of its pain, it has at the same time, through the perversion of man, been converted into the most diabolical force for human destruction known to history. If for that reason we can not denounce science as such, it is a highly unscientific attitude to condemn religion wholesale because it has, in unworthy hands, become an instrument of evil.

The Invisible World

But Jawaharlal is a man of changing moods. Seized by a wave of a higher mood he can quite see that after all it is not so easy to escape the call of religion, that science is at best a very-imperfect expla-

nation of existence, that at every step in our life everyone of us is beset with problems which are beyond the scope of scientific explanation and which border on the uncharted regions which are the domain of religion. He goes on to say :—

"In a wider sense of the word, religion dealt with the uncharted regions of human experience, uncharted, that is, by the scientific positive knowledge of the day Life does not consist entirely of what we see and hear and feel, the visible world which is undergoing change in time and space. It is continually touching an invisible world of other and possibly more stable or equally changable elements and no thinking person can ignore this invisible world."

It would appear from this that with growing years Panditji is awakening to the fact that matter is not all in all, that the higher and more stable values of life are non-material. The day is not far-off when men of his scientific attitude of mind will go a step further and see that even what they call the "visible" world is so deeply and inextricably rooted into the world "invisible". The tremendous "invisible" mystery with which even a common microscopic atom is wrapped up is the latest revelation in this direction. The demarcation between the visible and the invisible worlds is a creation of blind materialistic science which is already fast disappearing. Religion is a synthesis of both.

Mysticism

Touching upon inward spiritual experience, Jawaharlal's mind again betrays that double-mindedness-realisation of the irresistible force of this experience, on the one hand, and suspicion of its correctness on the other. He observes :

"There have been great mystics, attractive figures, who can not easily be disposed of as self-deluded fools. Yet mysticism (in the narrow sense of the word) irritates me ; it appears to be vague and soft and flabby, not a rigorous discipline of the mind but a surrender of mental faculties and a living in a sea of emotional experience. The experience may occasionally lead to some insight into inner and less obvious processes, but it is also likely to lead to self-delusion."

Here one may excuse Panditji. The type of mystic experience that has come his

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The Light

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THE SIKH MORCHA

With all his laudable traits of bravery, fighting mettle and sportsmanship, the Sikh is also notorious for a particular weakness, some sort of a kink in his mental texture which makes him every now and then lapse into the odd, the eccentric, even the ridiculous and do the wrong thing at the wrong time. It was this streak in his mental makeup that caught the eye of that great British Statesman and Premier, the late Mr. Ramsay MacDonald who described the Sikhs as "those delightful people." It is the same fit of perversion that is to-day making the Sikh talk of starting a *morcha* as a protest against the Cabinet Mission proposals.

Morcha, against whom, for what? He does not know. He does not care to know. All he wants is he must have a *Morcha*—for the mere fun of it. The idea of a *Morcha*, it would seem, has caught his fancy and got on his head. It is just that. Nothing more—no legitimate grievance, no legitimate cause!

The Muslim League demanded separation. So Khalsaji has got the belated brain wave: "Why not I?" The Muslim League held a Convention. The Khalsaji has followed suit. The League Legislators took a pledge. Khalsaji also went through that farce. It is the League, the Musalman, it seems, that is getting on his nerves. And while he is going through all these antics in imitation of the League, he does not pause to ponder, cool-headedness never being his strong point, what was it that lent force to the League demand which an impartial and keen-sighted team like the Cabinet Mission could not but feel and acknowledge.

Khalsaji does not bother much about facts, about right and wrong, about reason and unreason. He must have his way. He does not care to see that the Muslim case stands on hard facts, that his own hue and cry is all fake.

What is the basic fact of the Muslim demand? The basic fact which a man who runs may see is that Hindus and Muslims are two separate, distinct, even hostile people. And no canon of democracy would force the yoke of a hostile Hindu majority on the Muslims. Two nations have but one

just corollary—two separate sovereign states. That is why a man of Mr. Jinnah's keen political perception and fairness of judgment and a life-long patriotic record has been forced to the conclusion that Pakistan is the only solution of the Indian tangle which is just to all sections of the people, bringing freedom to Hindus as well as Muslims and the other minorities. It was, in fact, a great concession that he made in the interest of a solution, in agreeing, against his own better judgment, to what is much less than Pakistan.

Khalsaji is certainly in one of his wrong moods once more in kicking up a belated row on the eve of the much eagerly-awaited solution of the Indian problem—and just for nothing or for a "reason" that is not there, which is fact, is a political fake, pure and simple.

Can Khalsaji honestly deny that the Hindus and the Sikhs are to all intents and purposes, one and the same people? Let this one point be referred to any impartial tribunal and if it is established that there is any genuine hostility between the Sikhs and the Hindus, any genuine clash between their interests, the Sikh case for separation will have some sense. But the fact is there is not a semblance of real hostility between them. They are one and the same people. Their interests, political, economical and cultural are identical.

Where, then, in the name of common sense, is the Sikh case? When devising an all-India solution the Sikhs have to go in the same boat with the Hindus, just as the Shia Muslims whose number goes up to crores have to go with the Sunni Muslims. It is no use fooling the world that they are a small minority of four millions, thrown at the mercy of the Muslim majority in Group B. They are part and parcel of the Hindu community which has got an upper-hand deal, on the whole, in the all-India solution as chalked out by the Cabiner Mission.

The very proposal that the Sikhs have advanced, preposterous as it is on the face of it, clinches the issue once for all that the Sikhs and Hindus are one body-politic. They want a redistribution of the Punjab in such a way as to give a representation of 60 per cent. to the Hindus and Sikhs combined as against 40 per cent. of Muslims. To say nothing of this Sikh way of doing things in reducing a majority of 58 per cent. to a minority of 40 per cent., the point that takes the very bottom out of their stand is that they, on their own confession, put them-

selves into the same body-politic with the Hindus. And it is but natural that they should. They are one. The fact that the Mahasabhas all over India are bucking up the Sikh *Morcha* uproar and aligning their forces behind them puts a seal of confirmation on that fact.

The Musalmans want no injustice to any section of the people. They want to live on the best of good-neighbourly relations with the Hindus and the Sikhs and all other communities. They want nothing but fair-play. All they want is that fair-play should not be denied to them. A United India is no fair-play, so far as they are concerned. It means slavery sure and certain—perhaps slavery with a vengeance. Live and let live—that is what the Muslims want. It is no use fanning communal passions, especially when freedom is almost within our grasp.

Sikh position is certainly in no real and genuine danger under the Cabinet Mission Grouping Scheme. This is the hard fact of the situation. Sikh brethren should not blink this obvious fact. They have always been in the van of freedom struggle. They must not now allow their passions to get the better of their judgment and put up unwarranted obstruction in the way of freedom. In this critical moment of India's history they must set their eyes on this larger interest of the country. If there were an iota of reality in their grievance or fairness in their demand, the Qaid-i-Azam would have been the first to stand up for them. But there is no point in this storm in the tea cup they have raised. They are certainly not playing the game.

JAWAHARLAL'S EXCURSIONS

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way is just an amateurish excursion into the realm of the spirit. The prophetic spiritual experience known as revelation is free from all the pitfalls that beset the path of a common mystic. It is something far above and beyond the cloudy regions of doubt and suspicion. It is as compelling in conviction as any sense-perception in the material world.

Future Life

Metaphysical theories also come in for comment. For a time they fascinate Panditji's mind, but, he tells us, "I have never felt at ease there and escaped from their spell with a feeling of relief." "Essentially", he goes on to say, "I am interested in this world, in this life, not in some other world or a future life. Whether there is such a thing as a soul or whether there is survival after death or not, I do not know; and important as these questions are, they do not trouble me in the least."

That Pandit Jawaharlal should be interested in this world is all very well. No true religion would teach renunciation.

of this world. According to Islam this world is the tillage where we sow and grow the crop of the life hereafter. A man who leads a blind life in this world, we are taught, shall be blind in the life to come. The material out of which life after death is woven, is fashioned in this very world, out of our daily deeds, great or small, seen or unseen. Upon this material shall depend whether in the world to come we shall have a good and happy life or otherwise. In concentrating upon the life of this world, therefore, Pandit Jawaharlal is fulfilling the essential purpose of true religion—provided of course, that concentration is meant to make this life better and nobler. If we take care of this life, the next life will take care of itself. So far Jawaharlal is on sound ground. His attitude is in accord with true religion. But he loses sight of the other side of the picture when he says he does not see any need for faith in another world after death. The philosophy that this world is all in all puts premium on self-seeking, greed, lust, repression and exploitation of fellow-men. This is exactly what is at the bottom of the decay and disintegration of the Western materialistic civilization, where, thanks to this very philosophy of life, the rule is: Everybody for himself and the devil take the hindmost. Religion which inculcates faith in continuity of life after death and for the matter of that a sense of personal responsibility for all that we do in this life is alone capable of putting a brake on this downward drift of present-day civilization. Faith in life after death is, therefore, the cornerstone, without which the structure of society is bound to collapse; as the Western civilization is just now about to under our own eyes. Mere ethics and humanism or socialism can not fill this vacuum.

The Unknown Mystery

And yet Panditji can not shake himself entirely free of what constitutes the basic urge of religion. He confesses:

"Often as I look at this world, I have a sense of mysteries, of unknown depths. The urge to understand it, in so far as I can, comes to me; to be in tune with it and to experience it in its fullness. What the mysterious is I do not know. I do not call it God because God has come to mean much that I do not believe in. I find myself incapable of thinking of a deity or of any unknown supreme power in anthropomorphic terms and the fact that many people think so is continually a source of surprise to me. Any idea of a personal God seems very odd to me."

To this we may only say: What is in a name? Whether Panditji calls it God or by any other name, say, Ultimate Reality or the Unseen Supreme All-controlling Power, The Creative Energy or any other scientific term that he may choose, the consciousness in the depths of his mind that there is a mighty mysterious something pervading the whole universe is basically a religious urge. When informed and enlightened through the light of revelation this very urge becomes faith in God.

Panditji need not fight shy of the word God. It is the content that matters. Islam gives us that content of the conception

of God-head. True, it is not given to man to comprehend the nature of God. But we can certainly find out the ways according to which He runs this machinery of universe. The scientist calls them the laws of nature. To the man of religion they are known as attributes of God. These attributes are countless. But the Quran gives us the basic ones upon which revolves the working of nature, especially the well-being of man. These are: Creator, Sustainer, Evolver, Beneficent, Merciful, All-controlling Master. Besides these, of course, the Quran gives about 90 more which delineate God's personality in finer shades.

The word "personality" need not irritate Pandit Jawaharlal. It is in no anthropomorphic sense that we talk of God as a person. As human beings, with human limitations, we cannot help talking in human terms. If we speak of God as all-seeing, it does not mean that He has a pair of eyes like ourselves. Similarly He is all-hearing, all-knowing without the human organs necessary for these functions. God, therefore, so far as His nature is concerned is certainly nothing like a magnified man or a mighty monarch sitting on a throne, notwithstanding this kind of symbolism in which religion has perforce to depict Him. The Quran is emphatic on this point. "There is nought" it says, "that is like Him". He is beyond comprehension. His ways, His laws, His attributes, of course, we can know and that is what we are really concerned with. If Panditji is really, the votary of the scientific method and scientific approach to the question of God he must not dismiss the quest as a vain pursuit, simply because the religious contacts he has formed have given him a false impression. As a seeker after truth it is his duty to give a close and critical consideration to the question as approached by Islam—a truly scientific approach. It will certainly do him good. He will find that God is something more than a mere conjecture. His mental landscape, now overhung with clouds of "I do not know", will be lit with the sun-ray of Reality.

Religion Imprisons Truth

Under the heading, "Religion, Philosophy and Science", Pandit Jawaharlal returns to this topic and this survey of his religious moods will be incomplete unless we take into consideration these anaps from his mental picture.

In these murings his main grouse against religion is that it blocks the way to progress, to change, to free unfettered onward march—to revolution. This is done in two ways, he tells us—by the petrification of religious truth into a set of dogmas and by reliance on the supernatural which, in the same proportion, enervates our will-to-action, killing all push, go and drive in us which are the secret of all progress. Says he:

"Religions have helped greatly in the development of humanity. They have laid down values and standards and have pointed out principles for the guidance of human life. But with all the good they have done, they have also tried to imprison truth in set forms and dogmas and encouraged ceremonies and practices which soon lose all their original meaning and become mere routine."

Here again Panditji confuses the abuse of religion by man with the religious truth itself. Panditji will nowhere find stronger denunciation of this tendency than in the Quran. Priests who are erudite in scriptural lore but are devoid of the urge-to-life which is the essence of religion are likened to asses carrying loads of books on their backs. The Jewish scribes are notorious for reducing religion to rigid formalities devoid of all spirit. The Quran speaks of them as mere mimicking "apes". Even the daily *salat* (prayer) which is so important in Islam is denounced when it is shorn of the spirit underlying it. If people in their stupidity have missed the true urge of religion, it is no argument against religious truth as such, any more than abuse of a scientific truth should justify a wholesale denunciation of science.

Blocks Change and Progress

Panditji proceeds towards his second count against religion:

"While impressing upon man the awe and mystery of the unknown that surrounds him on all sides, they have discouraged him from trying to understand not only the unknown but what might come in the way of social effort. Instead of encouraging curiosity and thought, they have preached a philosophy of submission to nature, to the established church, to the prevailing social order and to everything that is. The belief in a supernatural agency which ordains everything has led to a certain irresponsibility on the social plane and emotion and sentimentality have taken the place of reasoned thought and inquiry. Religion, though it has undoubtedly brought comfort to innumerable human beings and stabilized society by its values, has checked the tendency to change and progress inherent in human society."

How imaginary all this criticism sounds when viewed against the background of the rise of Islam which was an avalanche of revolutionary force that swept everything before it, overthrowing the established order root and branch and supplanting it by a new one! The debut of Islam on the screen of history marks the greatest revolt against most deep-rooted conventions of human society. It released man from every form of mental bondage, made him stand on his own legs with his head erect, look nature in the face and not only understand but also subjugate its hidden forces. If Pandit Jawaharlal should choose to shut eyes against this, he will shutting eyes against the hard facts of history and his claim to scientific attitude of mind will not be worth much. Almost every page of the Quran is an exhortation to man to open his eyes to the beauty, the grandeur and the majesty of nature around him and ponder over the same. To say nothing of submission to an "established church" in Islam there is no Church. It has abolished priest-craft lock, stock and barrel.

Islam is the greatest revolutionary force known to history. It has undoubtedly fallen victim to the same evils which Pandit Jawaharlal complains of—rigidity, stagnation, inertia, and all that sets vitality. It is however already on its legs, once

more. Not only on its legs, it is already on the march. Is not the Pakistan struggle of the Indian Muslims who till the other day were a mere scattered rabble, without a vision of their destiny or a will to achieve it—is not this drama enacted under Panditji's own eyes and within a couple of years, evidence enough that mighty revolutionary forces still lie dormant within the bosom of Islam and only await the right touch to be released and change the entire face of things? And, by the way, is it not rather strange that this great apostle of revolution as Pandit Jawaharlal aspires to be, should look askance at this wonderful drama of Pakistan unfold itself and that he should stand for the established social order of a united India?

Don't Rely on God

One point more and we shall have done with this brief review of Pandit Jawaharlal's changing religious moods. While winding up, after comparing the relative good and bad points, both of religion and science, Panditji would have the rising generation to look up to science rather than religion for its deliverance and advancement. He says:

"Even if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him—so Voltaire said. Perhaps that is true and indeed the mind of man has always been trying to fashion some such mental image or conception which grew with the mind's growth. But there is something also in the reverse proposition: even if God exists, it may be desirable not to look up to Him or rely upon Him. Too much dependence on supernatural factors may lead, and has often led, to a loss of self-reliance in man, to a blunting of his capacity and creative ability.....

"It is with the temper and approach of science, allied to philosophy and with reverence for all that lies beyond that we must face life."

Obviously Pandit Jawaharlal cannot reconcile faith in God with a life of action, a life of struggle and progress. Faith in God to him means cessation of action. No view of true religion could be more mistaken. A religion which dulls the edge of action, of creative energy is the kind of false religion with which Panditji has been all along obsessed. Faith lends a fillip to man's creative faculties, a spur to a life of restless activity. While faith goads us on to struggle, faith alone can sustain us in the difficulties that beset all great adventures of man. It is his faith in India's great future that has made Pandit Jawaharlal the force that he is. It is his faith in Pakistan that has enabled the Qaid-i-Azam work the miracle of Pakistan. Faith in God, truly understood, is the mightiest possible force—mightier than the atom energy of the scientist. It is this beneficent force that the world needs to heal the many wounds that science has inflicted and yet threatens to inflict on humanity. The future of humanity lies in religion—religion, not in the sense of negation of action and of scientific advance but as an ally of, a spur to and a corrective to the achievements of science.

Late Mr. F. K. Khan Durrani

It is with profound sorrow that we record the unexpected death of Mr. F. K. Khan Durrani, the well-known writer and journalist.

Mr. Durrani displayed unusual literary gifts and wielded a powerful pen while yet a student of the Lahore Islamia College. With lapse of years his writings grew in force and lucidity till he became one of the few brilliant writers of India who could be counted on fingers. For clear-headedness and fearlessness of conviction, Mr. Durrani had few equals.

Mr. Durrani started his career as a missionary of Islam in America. After working at Chicago for a number of years, the scene of his missionary labours shifted to Berlin where also he spent a number of years and acquired mastery of the German language. His contact with German thought and genius seems to have left a mark on his mind, as was evident from the critical and dauntless trend of his writings of that period.

Since the rise of the Pakistan Movement Mr. Durrani threw himself heart and soul into the struggle. His book, *The Meaning of Pakistan* is perhaps the best exposition of the Muslim ideal of Pakistan. He was a great admirer of the Qaid-i-Azam and his sound leadership.

The death of a clear-headed writer like Mr. Durrani at this critical hour in the destiny of Muslim India is undoubtedly a great national loss. There is another aspect of it which makes his death something of a national tragedy. He gave his all to his people, the great Muslim nation. But what he got in return for this was so shabby that he could not even keep body and soul together. His death was precipitated by the heavy financial worries which always weighed on his mind. It is the saddest commentary on the rank ingratitude among Muslims towards worker in the cause of the *Millat*.

Mr. Durrani leaves behind a boy and a girl, both grown up, by his English wife who also passed away a short time ago. Our deepest sympathies go out to the bereaved family. May God grant peace to his restless soul.

tivation of personality; regulation of the family; the governing or the state; and the equalization of the whole world.

Confucius attached great importance to educational and intellectual culture and thought; social duty was the quintessence of ethics. The moral ideal of Confucianism is the harmonious development of the human personality. According to Confucianism the cardinal virtues are Wisdom, Humaneness, Courage, Righteousness, Propriety, and Faintfulness.

According to Confucianism, society was divided into five relations: ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, elder brother and younger brother, friend and friend. The fundamental theory underlying these relations was that of Reciprocity.

It was explained: "Between father and son there should be affection; between sovereign and minister, righteousness; between husband and wife, attention to their separate functions; between elder brother and younger brother, a proper order; and between friend and friend, fidelity."

—*Essence of Religions*.

CONFUCIANISM

Confucianism has the largest following among the three religions prevailing in China. It has over 250 million adherents.

The Confucian Religion was founded by Confucius, who lived from 551-479 B. C. He was a great Chinese Master, whose teachings have deeply influenced the people of China, Korea and Japan for many centuries. He was left a poor orphan at an early age and acquired a liberal education by strenuous endeavour. He said: "At fifteen, my mind was bent on learning." He was a well educated prophet, a rare phenomenon indeed. He studied history and poetry and could sing and play the lute. He wandered through the warring feudal kingdoms of China as a poor preacher and taught more than three thousand disciples. He also accepted the office of the Minister of Justice in the state of Lu, and proved to be an ideal administrator during three years. He practically abolished crime in the state. He edited the ancient literature of China and also wrote a historical treatise. He was married and had a son and two daughters. He is revered by millions in Eastern Asia as a wise Teacher. His life teaches us a lesson of the highest Idealism, self-sacrifice, freedom from avarice, simplicity of life, earnest self-culture, active altruism and unfaltering faith in the triumph of Good.

Confucianism has taught the existence of a Supreme Ruler (Ti) and also divine supervision over the world (Heaven (Tien)). Worship of the Supreme Ruler continued until it was abolished by the Republican Government in 1915.

In the sixth century before the birth of Christ the condition of China was very degraded. Many nations were quarrelling with each other. During this period Confucius wrote his great classic, "The Spring and Autumn," dealing with international problems, codifying international laws, and promoting permanent international peace. The following principles given in this book are most suitable as a foundation for lasting peace:—

(1) Heaven is the lord of the universe and loves all creatures.

(2) Universal love of mankind, irrespective of racial differences.

(3) The distinction between the civilized countries and barbarian states is not on the basis of racial differences, nor of geographical situations, but on the basis of possessing propriety and justice.

(4) Reciprocity is the fundamental principle for international relation. That is: "What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others".

(5) Truthfulness is the real binding force of international relations. Without truthfulness the world will go asunder.

(6) War cannot be justified, because all nations standing on an equal footing have no right to make war against each other.

(7) There are divisions of territories, but not of people, as all people belong to one family.

(8) The whole world is a great unity, disregarding national strength and geographical advantages of location.

Another great classic written by Confucius, known as "The Great Learning," includes chapters: investigation of things; the extension of knowledge; sincerity of thought; composing of the mind; cul-