

Religion or Ecstasy?

Over sixty years ago when I was a school student I had heard people quoting a definition of religion (as practiced by the masses) "Religion is the opium of the people". Religion was used in the feudal societies an instrument of the exploiters to put the exploited to sleep, to give them an inner laziness.

Now in the new millennium religion has become the 'ecstasy of the people' that results in a frenzy that often leads to mass murder, genocide and suicide - some call it martyrdom, in the hope of a direct access to the seventh heaven!

Those who believe in protecting faiths, that God Himself cannot protect, believe in destroying other faiths and cultures in the hope of reviving some fossil forms of it, and those who are ready to kill children, women, old men, and unarmed people, and be killed, in the hope of getting the pleasures of heavens are under some kind of delusion. No God, if there is a god, can be so as to need some crazy people blasting and burning innocent people alive - be they Jews or Hindus or Muslims or Christians or Sikhs or whatever. Such people cannot possibly know what true religion or faith means; they have no idea of God or godliness. They are frenzied, insane people.

Social or political reform cannot come through such actions. It is shameful if it is done under the guise of actions sanctioned by some holy books. Books are written by humans in a specific time and a specific place under specific social conditions.

Even if one believes that the people who dictated them were really honest messiahs, the written forms had naturally undergone changes. Moreover what social and moral practices that were recommended for a specific time and society cannot be applied at all times, to all societies. Of course, if one recognises

the fundamental values perhaps there would not be a problem for

different cultures to co-exist and for us to derive codes of conduct for the times we live in.

A learned friend of mine, Muslim, tells me that even Prophet Muhammad gave up the idea of 'hoors' in 'jannat' for martyrs in his latter teaching; he changed it to say that both men and women martyrs would go to heaven. This is only to establish the aforesaid point that versions/parts of the same text/book written at a different time can have relevant changes made even by the same 'speaker' or writer. So why be 'lakeer ke fakeer'? Why be so orthodox and out of date that religion fanaticism harms humanity rather than helps it?

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धर्म जनता के लिये अफीम है
किसी ने कहा था कभी /
आज है धर्म एक्स्टेसी
मारने मरने का उफान है
धर्मान्धता है जुनून है
अल्लाहो अकबर
जो बोले से निहाल
हरहर महादेव
हैलेलूया /

पढता है यहूदी अपना तोरा
ईसाई अपनी बाइबल
मुसलमान पढता है कुरआन
टिकाये कंधों पर राघ्नफल
सहारा लिये तोप का
मासूमों को मारने से पहले
करता है इबादत
अलग अलग जबानों में
खुदा गौड भगवान के नाम पर
कभी किसी पैगम्बर के पयाम पर /
हुए होंगे गाँधी किंग मन्डेला कभी
हुए होंगे कभी बुद्ध महावीर ईसा
अब तो करते है कल्ल इन्सानों का
मजहबों के नाम कुछ काफिर हैवान
ले ले कर जुदा जुदा खुदाओं के नाम /
इश्वर अल्ला किसके नाम?
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Aussie-Hindi Bhai-Bhai

Aussies have suddenly found love - for India. When China was invading some of the South Asian nations, including Tibet, the soldiers across the borders were trained to shout on the megaphones, "Hindi-Chini bhai-bhai": 'the Chinese and Indians are brothers'. (So do not fight, just surrender - wasn't that the message?)

Now, like love at first sight, Australia has noticed India! So the Australian P.M. must go to India. Why? Because, above all, India is a growing economic power, a potential market. And, also, we share a common heritage, the British culture of democracy.

And look, India is the world's largest democracy, didn't you know, Mr. Howard! And we have to patch up now - Australia had "tried to keep India out of the Asia-Pacific Economic co-operation group of nations" remember?.

Further, "Diplomacy also dictates that we become better friends." Why? As a counter to "Chinese power". Look the Americas are doing it too!

And Indians have Bollywood and Bangalore and now Hyderabad too! And not to forget we have something in common, Cricket!

So we are bhai-bhai aren't we?

I am sure neither the editors of Australian newspapers nor the Australian government, in the august human forms of John Howard and Alexander Downer, nor - who is the Minister for Culture? - nor is he/she aware of any cultural (or using a fashionable word, multi-cultural) heritage that can provide any worthwhile insights to this new nation, namely Australia, which is trying to become modernised and multi-cultural. Is it true that one has to have culture before becoming multi-cultural?

But what Australian leaders do know that there is Bombay for Bollywood and business, and Bangalore and

Hyderabad for IT, and that's all they need to know because that's where Money is! And some trained manpower too, but no India-trained doctors please - we had one "Dr Death" already!

As long ago as 1970s the USA made a secret alliance with communist China, because there was the huge market, and because the USSR had to be contained. The fact that there was no democracy, and that human rights were violated, did not bother the USA very much because Mammon rules the lives of the human race on this earth; we do not know about the Kingdom of Heaven. And they did alright, didn't they?

So let's follow the USA. No, no, not blindly - we know it's for all the right reasons.

So Mr John Howard, went to India. That he followed George Bush is a sheer coincidence. That he was firm on the nuclear non-proliferation issue shows how independent Australia is! For the time being anyway.

Hindi-Aussie bhai-bhai!

Prem Mathur

The Two Cultures

What is common and contradictory between the two cultures – Indian and Australian?

How have we adapted ourselves culturally in Australia?

What can the Indian and Australian can learn from each other?

What are your views? Please send your responses to

gemmathur@hotmail.com.

आतों आतों में

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*छडे लफ्फाज
और आत आत में घात।*

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*कातिल वो हमें कहते हैं
वो जो दिन रात
आतों आतों में
नश्वर हमें चुभोते हैं ।*

प्रेम माथुर 2006