

Religion and Socialism.

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Among the various doctrines that are ruling the hearts of the people of the modern world, Socialism or rather Marxian Socialism occupies a very important position. A consideration of this doctrine in relation to religion will not be out of place, because it is going to affect the future of mankind to a very remarkable degree. It is all the more important because this doctrine is permeating our holy land, and taking a deep root in the minds of many educated people, so much so that many of our most eminent and respected leaders in their great zeal for accepting anything that is western, in its entirety, have accepted it as a panacea for all our ills, not realizing the reaction it is going to have on our culture, civilization and philosophy, which we have striven hard to preserve through ages of conflict and confusion. Let us, therefore, take a dispassionate view of its relation with religion, which is the very foundation on which our Indian life is based.

Modern Socialism has no place for religion. Its greatest exponent, Lenin, describes religion as the "Opium of the masses". Socialists think that the rich have exploited the masses and kept a hold on them through the agency of religion. The beautiful teaching of Christ: "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven" has been described by the socialists as a clever diplomatic device of the rich to keep the poor contented and in subjection, and thus help them to persist in their base exploitation. Religion has been proclaimed to be the main cause of poverty and a source of many other ills, and an important factor in dividing mankind and thus promoting bloody warfare among its various units. Museums have been built in Russia to impress upon

the lay people the futility of religion and belief in God. All this is done by the Socialist in the hope of establishing an international socialistic world-order based on purely secular foundations and in which every individual would become a sort of productive machine and would equally share his profits with all. Only in this the socialists think lies universal peace. Economic appeasement has been considered to be the aim of human life and when this is achieved, the socialist's philosophy ends.

I have endeavoured to describe very briefly the conflict between socialism and religion. I have done this purposely to show that precisely similar views are held by several of our national leaders who are guiding our future destinies. To confirm this one has simply to study their writings. A very strong and important class of people is thus growing in our country which is poisoning the people,—more specially students in schools and colleges—against religion; and unless we rise to the occasion, our Hindu culture based on spiritual foundations is in great danger in their hands. Already a majority of the Hindus show little interest in the higher philosophy of life preached by our holy scriptures and this propaganda in the name of national unity is going to take away the little interest which some of us have in our religion.

It would be out of place here to discuss the political and economic aspects of Socialism, with some of which every sane-minded person must agree. The question that faces us is whether religion is the cause of all poverty and misery in this world. Should it be abolished? Is it possible to establish a socialistic

world order on a spiritual basis? Can economic appeasement give satisfaction to the human soul? Should a materialistic theory of existence as expounded by scientists be accepted as the gospel truth and all scriptures of the world be burnt in a huge bon-fire? We will answer these questions one by one.

A mistake, or rather a blunder, which is very often committed by thinking people is to attribute an effect to a cause which has no connection with it. A similar blunder has been committed by socialists in ascribing to religion what never belongs to it. Just as people condemn science because it has produced instruments of destruction on an unparalleled scale, not knowing that it is not science, but their own selfish motive, their love for violence, and their deep desire to dominate over innocent people in order to suck blood out of them to appease their insatiable hunger, which is responsible for such huge armaments. Just as it is no fault of science but of the people who are exploiting it for their own selfish ends, similarly it is no fault of religion, but of the persons who are exploiting it, which is responsible for so many quarrels, and national, racial and communal animosities in the name of religion. It is high time people realized this truth, so that they may cease to look upon various problems confronting them through coloured spectacles and thus arrive at balanced, correct and sane conclusions. How can any sane person for a moment believe that religion, which aims at realizing unity in diversity by ridding oneself of all selfishness and egoism, can be the cause of misery, unhappiness and poverty in this world? It remains only for the unscrupulous and misdirected zeal of the socialist to collect all the evils of the world and proclaim it boldly that they are due to religion. To ascribe our political and economic backwardness

to our religion and spirituality is preposterous, when in reality it is due to quite different causes. The sooner such a belief is shaken, the better it is.

A little deep thinking by an impartial observer would convince us that it is not religion but irreligion which is responsible for our misery. Far from abolishing religion, its propagation on right lines is necessary to throw oil on the troubled waters in which mankind seems to be struggling to save itself from drowning. The sublime teachings of religion alone can check the uncivilized and brutal tendencies of modern people, who are running with 'earth-shaken tread into that frightful holocaust which will wreck our civilization'. The cry of the socialist against religion is, therefore, a false cry, and the sooner he abandons it the better for him.

Let us now deal with the next question as to whether it is ever possible to establish a socialistic world order on a materialistic basis. The very theory of the materialists which is summed up by such phrases as 'struggle for existence', 'survival of the fittest', etc. coupled with the human instinct of selfishness, unsublimated by religion, on the face of it shows beyond doubt that it can never lay the foundation of an international socialistic state based on justice, equality and universal brotherhood. The materialist may under the force of violence, exhibited in its most naked form in the "Red Terror" of Russia, submit under compulsion of circumstances to the doctrine of equality; but he can never realize it unless he becomes a votary of religion. It is not only when the refreshing breeze of religion cools down man's passions and the animal instincts of selfishness and acquisition are rooted out of the human mind that the real foundations of equality among human beings will be laid. The doctrine of survival of

the fittest will have to be replaced by the spiritual doctrine of sympathy for those who are less fortunately placed than we, before we can establish lasting peace in this world. The supreme doctrine which the Indians have preached from times immemorial, and which they have proved actually in their life of renunciation and service of humanity, namely, that 'My self is the self of all' stands unique in the world history and should serve as a torch-bearer to those who want to extricate mankind from the darkness of ignorance in order to show it the dawn of an era of justice, peace, prosperity and mutual love. Spirituality alone can, therefore, be the solid basis on which real quality and universal brotherhood can be founded.

With regard to economic appeasement being the be-all and end-all of life, there cannot be two opinions. All the philosophers of the world are one in proclaiming that you cannot hope to get eternal peace and satisfaction by clinging to changing things of this world. It is rather a process of dispossession rather than possession which roots out desire from the human mind, in order to make it a fit receptacle for harmony and unbounded happiness. Those who believe in "Eat, drink and be merry" are awakened from their long sleep when the hour of trial comes and the so-called joy to which they have tenaciously clung proves to be false and a source of pain and misery. Worldly pleasures tread on the heels of sorrow and *vice versa*, and kick human beings like a foot-ball in this game of life. Only those who rise above them by merging their consciousness in the Infinite are saved and shown the real home of happiness and bliss. The socialistic philosophy of life is, therefore,

absolutely barren and incomplete. Mere economic appeasement is a very low aim of life and will always fail to satisfy the human soul, which instinctively wishes to go beyond the senses and merges itself in the Infinite.

In conclusion, the materialistic theory of life is essentially incorrect and incomplete. Science may serve us in our worldly affairs, but it has failed so far and will always fail to explain the nature of the vital force which is pervading the whole animal and vegetable kingdoms. Science has described the unit of life as a cell, but it cannot say as to why and how it works. Again, it cannot explain why and how a single cell of microscopic dimensions should by process of division and differentiation change itself into a man. After all, what is the purpose of the vital force and who is the director who works with utmost precision in directing this force to convert a single cell into a man or a member of some other species. To say that such a power is inherent in the cell is to admit ignorance. The physiologist uses the term "vital activity" and the psychologist uses the term 'Unconscious' to hide his ignorance. The scientist has, therefore, no right to say that religion is false and all its theories based on actual experiments and exemplary lives of our R̥ṣis are useless. As far as the world is concerned, the scientist should have his say and we must submit to it; but with regard to the vital problem of life and its purpose we must rely upon our own inner being, our conscience, which is the fountain-head of religion. We, therefore, want a spiritual socialism based on truth and non-violence, and not the material socialism of Marx and Stalin full of hatred, blood and violence.
