

# SACH

South Asian Composite Heritage

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## Religious Intolerance: Threat to South Asian Composite Heritage

Religious intolerance is a rising global concern and South Asia is no exception. The tension between the freedom to spread one's beliefs and the freedom of others to not be coerced is at the heart of an alarming majoritarian trend in South Asia. Over the last decade, governments across the South Asia region have taken legal measures such as prohibiting religious conversions and often the motivation behind these laws, though not officially stated as such, is to protect the dominant religious tradition from a perceived threat from minority religious groups. Particularly disconcerting is the heightened use of state-sanctioned harassment and torture to control the religious beliefs of individuals. Religious minorities in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Afghanistan are specifically targeted for their beliefs and the discrimination and persecution they suffer greatly compromises their freedom of religion. It is evident that the condition of religious minorities in South Asia is grim. In the Indian state of Jharkhand, Tabrez Ansari, a Muslim boy was lynched to death on June 17, 2019 after being forced to chant Jai Sri Ram and Jai Hanuman in Seraikela-Kharsawan district of Jharkhand. He died on June 22, 2019.

In Pakistan the Blasphemy Law contributes to legitimizing religious intolerance. Asia Bibi, a hapless Christian woman was accused of blasphemy following an argument with her co-workers. She was sentenced to death by a local court in Pakistani province of Punjab. She had spent more than eight years in solitary confinement before being acquitted by the Supreme Court in October 2018. In Sri Lanka on 21 April 2019 more than 350 people including over 45 children were killed and 500 others injured in seven synchronised bombs detonated by suicide bombers while they were attending Easter Mass in capital, Colombo, and other towns. The suicide bombers in the attacks were Sri Lankan citizens associated with National Thowheed Jamaath (NTJ), a local militant Islamist group with suspected foreign ties. In Bangladesh, independent bloggers who have spoken out for LGBT rights and for preserving the secular fabric of the nation have been killed with frightening frequency. The situation in Nepal is also not promising. In 2019 the Rastriya Prajatantra Party, a Hindu confessional party has launched a campaign to re-establish the Hindu theocratic state. Research reports on freedom of religion from 2017 and 2018 have indicated that levels of social hostilities towards religious minorities in Nepal rose from moderate levels in 2014 to high levels in 2015 and 2016.

Ironically in South Asia region, the community which is a minority in one country becomes the persecuting majority in another. This is despite the fact that South Asia has historically been known for its plurality—of languages, religions, and cultures which is also an integral part of South Asian Composite heritage. South Asian Composite heritage as an analytical tool helps in understanding and analysing religious freedom and rights of religious minorities living in this region with a regional perspective. The analytical tool works beyond the borders of languages, races and religions and therefore an understanding of the multiple social and cultural identities and assimilation of communities at the regional level is crucial for the peaceful existence of both the dominant and the less dominant religious communities across South Asia region.

## Two Poems from I Am a Rohingya

*I Am a Rohingya, edited by Byrne and Doja, is a poetic response from those who have survived. It is a book that seeks both to celebrate and to document the powerful new voices of Rohingya poetry – voices that are direct, activist, and toughened by what they have had to suffer.*

### Someone I'm Afraid Of

ZAKI OVAIS

I'm a hungry star in the sky,  
covered by jealous clouds.  
I'm a goldfish plant in the garden,  
shaded from daylight.  
I'm a fly in the kitchen, buzzing  
on the boundary of a blind wall.  
I'm a chicken under mother's wing,  
confined to the narrows of a wattle.  
I'm a dove on the street of Yangon,  
jailed in the cage of inhumanity.  
I'm the water flowing in Mayu river,  
missing my partner — Air.  
I'm a human in the universe,  
denied the most basic rights.  
I'm someone I'm afraid of.

### Broken Mirror

RO MEHROOZ

I wake up to the speaking mirror.  
To the tragedy, the scare  
of the hitting bullet.  
I couldn't dare to look at the mirror  
To look at my back  
I felt a bullet was flying to hit to my head  
I ducked down and ran.  
The bullet smashes the mirror,  
shards scatter over the floor.  
(Breathe – )  
Today, I see the mirror  
In the taxi window,  
In the barber's shop.

Courtesy : Poetry Daily

# The Parrot's Tale

By RABINDRA NATH TAGORE, INDIA

ONCE there was a bird. It was an utterly foolish bird. It sang songs, but did not read the scriptures. It flew, it jumped, but did not have the faintest sense of etiquette.

The King said, "Such birds! They are of no use at all. They only eat the fruits in the orchards and the royal fruit-market runs a deficit."

He called the minister, and commanded, "Educate it."

The King's nephew was given the responsibility of educating the bird.

The scholars held long discussions, the subject being — "What is the reason behind the foolishness of this creature?"

The conclusion was: much learning could not be stored in the tiny nest that the bird could make with just chips and twigs. So, first of all, it was necessary to build a good cage for it.

The scholars got amply rewarded and went home merrily.

The goldsmith started building the cage. The cage turned out to be so exquisite that everyone under the sun rushed to see it. Some said, "Education indeed!" Others said, "Education or no education, at least the bird has got the cage! What a lucky bird!"

The goldsmith got a bagful of rewards. He set out for home cheerfully.

The pundit came to teach the bird. He took a pinch of snuff and said, "A few books won't do."

The nephew summoned the scribes. They copied from the books and copied from those copies and made an enormous mound of such things. Whoever saw it, said, "Bravo! Learning is going to overflow!"

The scribes got cartfuls of rewards. At

once they rushed home. None of their descendants faced any poverty ever since.

The nephew was always busy, doing endless number of things regarding the surveillance of the precious cage. Repairs were quite frequent. Apart from that, there was the washing and the cleaning and the polishing of the cage. Everyone admitted, "Sure signs of improvement."

Many people were employed and to supervise them, many more people were employed. Each of them got a handful of coins every month and filled their chests with them.

They, their brothers, sisters and cousins began to live in great luxury and happiness.

The world lacks many things; only fault-finders are there in plenty. They said, "There are improvements of the cage all right, but nobody cares for the bird."

The words reached the King's ears. He called the nephew and said, "What's this I hear, dear nephew?"

The nephew said, "Your Majesty! If you want to know the truth then call the goldsmith, send for the pundits and the scribes, summon the repairmen and their supervisors. The fault-finders cannot make both ends meet and talk nonsense."

The situation became crystal-clear to the King, and a gold necklace adorned the nephew's neck.

The King wished to see for himself the lightening speed at which education was proceeding. So one day he came to the education center with his entire entourage of friends, companions and courtiers.

As soon as he reached the entrance, there arose a chorus of bells and drums and harps and flutes and lyres and lutes and cellos and

violins and cymbals and mandolins and trombones and bassoons and harpsichords and clavichords. The pundits swung their pig-tails and started chanting hymns at the top of their voices. The repairmen and the laborers and the goldsmith and the scribes and the supervisors and the cousins greeted the King with a huge uproar.

The Nephew said, "Your Majesty! What do you think?"

The King said, "Amazing! This is a non-trivial amount of sound!"

The Nephew said, "It's not just the sound Your Majesty, there is also a non-trivial amount of money behind it."

The King was extremely pleased. He started back. He came out of the front door and was about to ride his elephant, when a fault-finder, who had been hiding in a bush, yelled, "Your Majesty! Have you looked at the bird?"

The King was startled. He said, "Oh! I forgot. I didn't see the bird after all."

He went in once again and told the pundit, "I want to see your method of educating the bird."

And he saw it. Very pleasing indeed. The method was so overwhelming compared to the bird that one could hardly notice the bird. It seemed it was rather irrelevant to look at the bird. The King understood that the arrangements were faultless. There was no corn in the cage, no water either. Only heaps of pages had been torn out from heaps of books; and with the tip of a pen, those pages were being stuffed into the bird's mouth. There was no room in the mouth for the bird to squeeze out a cry, let alone a tune. It was really a terribly pleasing sight.

This time, before mounting the elephant, the King ordered the ear-pulling expert to pull the fault-finder's ears severely.

In a rather respectable and predictable way, the bird became half-dead as the days passed. The guardians understood that the situation was hopeful. But still — as its bad habits were — the bird looked at the morning sun and flapped its wings in a very objectionable manner. Some days it was even found to make an attempt to break the rods

of the cage with its sickly beak.

The administrator said, "What audacity!"

Immediately, the blacksmith came to the education department with bellows and fire and hammer and chisels. His hits were absolutely spectacular! An iron chain was manufactured and the wings of the bird were cut off.

The King's relatives shook their heads gravely and said, "In this land, you see, the birds are not only stupid, but ungrateful as well."

Then the pundits came with a pen in one hand and a spear in another and did something which one could really call education.

The blacksmith became very well-to-do. His wife got gold ornaments. The administrator gained a title from the King for his alertness.

The bird died — no one knew when. The infamous fault-finder spread the news, "The bird has died."

The King called the nephew and asked, "Dear nephew, what is this that I hear?"

The nephew said, "Your Majesty, the bird's education is now complete."

The King asked, "Does it still jump?"

The nephew said, "God forbid."

"Does it still fly?"

"No."

"Does it sing any more?"

"No."

"Does it scream if it doesn't get food?"

"No."

The King said, "Bring the bird in. I would like to see it."

The bird was brought in. With it came the administrator, the guards, the horsemen. The King felt the bird. It didn't open its mouth and didn't utter a word. Only the pages of books, stuffed inside its stomach, raised a ruffling sound.

Outside, where the gentle south wind and the blossoming woods were heralding spring, the young green leaves filled the sky with a deep and heavy sigh.

*Translate from Bangali Original By Palash Baran Pal*

*Courtesy : Parabaas.com*

# Towards Harmony Between Community

By C.T.KURIEN, INDIA

A community is a group of individuals. If we want to understand the significance of community, we must recognize that these individuals who constitute community are basically very unlike one another. In other words, one must accept that a community of individuals is basically one of diversity. I think it is tremendously important to understand that the underlying element of community is diversity. Take an individual – the individual is an entity with different attributes- physical features, mental capacities, aesthetic sensibilities, religious or spiritual aspirations and all that. And the community consists of individuals like this who themselves are a set of attributes, who are, in one sense, the personification of diversity.

There is a second aspect of community that I would like to touch upon, again from a common-sense point of view. You will notice that as an individual I belong to different communities. My family is something of a community- a very important community for me. The apartment complex where I live, that is a community also, although it is a different kind of community. The professional associations to which I belong – these are communities too – and the religious group of which I am a member, if I am a member, that is a community also. That is, if diversity is an important aspect of community, a second important aspect of community is multiplicity, variety of communities. We must recognize the existence of diverse communities within a society, a country or whatever it may be.

Therefore, in real life we are surrounded by, we are members of, a multiplicity of communities, each one consisting of different kinds of individual members. Strange as it may appear, it is because of their diversities that individuals seek communities and create communities. For it is only in a community that an individual has a sense of belonging, a sense of identity, a sense of recognition.

Therefore, although a community consists of diverse individuals, these diverse individuals will themselves strive to achieve some kind of commonality within the community or for the community of which they are members. A community, if one may put it that way, is reconciled diversity, and this reconciliation of diversity may come by recalling traditions of the past, by subscribing to a common objective, but also through a series of practical arrangements, some mundane, some very obvious but some not very obvious. One of these arrangements may be called authority. Authority has meaning or effect only to the extent that those over whom it is exercised accept it as authority. Indeed you accept authority because you know others will also accept that authority. So there are many ways in which the diversity within the community gets reconciled. This is a very tenuous way of existence. There will always be tension between the members who constitute the community, the individuals who constitute the community, and the community itself. Hence, I think it is important to think of community as a vibrant fluid entity-organization, association or

whatever it may be.

Let me now turn to a third dimension of community, which arises from diversity and multiplicity. If there are multiple communities, these communities will overlap also. Look at it from your own perspective. If you are a member of a large number of communities, there will be some overlapping among these communities of which you are a member. It is in the very nature of social relationships that while these relationships may be mediated through communities, the communities overlap. Hence, overlapping is a third feature of communities. Associated with this overlapping is what students of society would describe as boundary. Any community has a boundary, which sets itself as distinct from others or other communities. If there is overlapping, this boundary is bound to be porous and yet one of the features that we see in life is the tendency for the boundary to become rigid. A boundary, any boundary at all, will separate those inside it from those who are outside it. We may refer to it as “us” versus “them” or “us” versus “others”. That is fine. But, when the boundary becomes hardened, the others become almost enemies. We become suspicious of them. We then begin to hate them. In this sense, communal harmony and communal discord are separated only by a mathematical line. As long as the boundary is porous, you can work towards communal harmony. If the boundary is made rigid, one can be sure that it is the beginning of communal discord.

Religion has certain positive attributes that can contribute towards communal harmony. Let me mention a few - I imagine that all religions fundamentally and basically will accept the equality of all human beings. This is a strong point that religion can emphasize on the search for communal harmony. Religions also speak about the need for transcendence, transcending all narrow boundaries, narrow loyalties, and rising above all of these. This is another positive factor that religion can contribute. But religion can also become a corrupting factor in the search for

communal harmony. How does this happen?

Consider first the accent on equality. While religions, in principle, or in the abstract, affirm the equality of all human beings, in practice, they set different standards. Most religions effectively give a lower status to women than to men, surprisingly in the very core of their activities, religious duties such as priesthood. Theological justifications have been put forward for claiming that human beings with certain skin complexions are superior to all others. Some religious doctrines consider people doing manual labour inferior to those who claim to work with their brains. According to certain religious considerations, people who by accident of their birth belonging to some geographical territories are more privileged than others. And most religions consider the adherents of their faith more equal than others! In practice, therefore, religions tend to betray the commitment to equality of all human beings that they claim in principle.

Secondly, while religions can contribute to the transcendence of boundaries, there is a tendency to say that that transcendence is not of this world, but of the world to come. Here on earth there are boundaries and tensions, but in the world beyond they would be overcome. In other words, religions spiritualize the concept of transcendence taking it away from the earthly realities, tensions and problems.

There is a third and, possibly, bigger distortion that religions bring about in matters related to community relationships. In one of his writings on the subject the theologian Wesley Ariarajah refers to religious traditions as “an intellectual dogmatic deposit that has become part of the understanding of life and reality”. This dogmatic deposit consists of converting all earthly realities into religious categories. Totally overlooking all other dimensions of human life, religions tend to reduce human beings into one-dimensional religious entities such as Christians, Hindus,

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# How The Nationalism of India's Anti-Colonial Struggle Differs From Hindutva And Why it Matters Today

By PRABHAT PATNAIK, INDIA



**THE** concept of nationalism that informed India's anti-colonial struggle was a unique and unprecedented idea. There were at least three ways in which it was the very opposite of the concept of nationalism developed in Europe in the wake of the Westphalian peace treaties in the 17th century. First, it did not have an 'enemy within' but rather encompassed all the citizens within a certain territory. Second, it did not have any plans of becoming imperialist in the sense of annexing or acquiring control over other territories. And third, it did not place the 'nation' above the 'people'; 'national' development consisted of

the promotion of the welfare of the people.

Europe itself was to keep shedding its baggage of post-Westphalian nationalism as it moved towards a welfare State in the post-second world war period, but it was also simultaneously moving beyond 'nationalism' towards a supra-national arrangement that would culminate in the European Union. The idea of an inclusive, people-centric, non-imperialist *nationalism* was a novel one; to have developed it by the beginning of the 1930s (since it was already enshrined in the 1931 Karachi Congress resolution) does credit to India's anti-colonial struggle. This concept is

still not understood by progressive European intellectuals for whom 'nationalism' remains one homogeneous category, identical to its post-Westphalian form, and hence a dirty word. The *Hindutva* 'nationalism' that has reared its head of late is a throwback to the post-Westphalian concept. And since it is being revived in contemporary times with the massive backing of corporate capital in order to ensure that the crisis arising from the working of neoliberal capitalism does not lead to any attempt to transcend it, it is better described as chauvinism, and a form of fascism it constitutes a betrayal of the nationalism of the anti-colonial struggle.

The real question is: why did the anti-colonial 'national' project get derailed, in the sense that instead of politics remaining within the parameters of that nationalism, we have a supplanting of that nationalism by an alternative concept of 'nationalism' — the *Hindutva* 'nationalism'? Some would argue that anti-colonial nationalism did not have a cultural correlate. While *Hindutva* takes off from quotidian religious practices to which the majority of the population, belonging to all castes, relates, the secular, inclusive nationalism of the anti-colonial struggle has no such religious-cultural practices to build on. Keeping alive the distinction between a domain of 'citizenship' where everybody participates irrespective of religion and a domain of private religious life where one may be a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian is not always easy. Sooner or later, the latter encroaches upon the former, especially when a determined bid is made for such encroachment within the majority religious community with the help of enormous amounts of corporate money.

I am not talking here about the recent election results. These results require additional explanation. They arose, in my view, from the fact that a *concept* of Narendra Modi, not the flesh and blood person but a mythical figure, a strong man, a messiah, was successfully marketed to the electorate, among whom the need for such a person had been created already through the systematic

promotion of a politics of hatred and insecurity: 'the world is out to get you and only a strong man can protect you'. No matter what Modi did, he got kudos for it. People saw in him what they wanted to see. If there were *no* terrorist incidents, then that was attributed to the fact that Modi was at the helm which frightened the enemies into inaction. If there *were* terrorist incidents, then that was seen as a reason, all the more, for keeping Modi in power. In short, the Modi dispensation manufactured a Modi myth; it created a demand for this myth among the electorate, and marketed Modi the *person* as the embodiment of that *myth*.

Rather I am talking about the phenomenon underlying all this. Even if Modi had lost the elections, the power of *Hindutva* would have remained. And the question is: why has *Hindutva* supplanted anti-colonial nationalism, and how can the latter be revived? I believe that the 'cultural' explanation will not do, for it does not explain why all these years the appeal of *Hindutva* had been so limited. Why has it suddenly become such a powerful force?

Implicit in anti-colonial nationalism was the promise of an egalitarian order, not just socially but also economically. Capitalist development would undermine this promise; but even as late as 1982-83, according to the estimates of Thomas Piketty and Lucas Chancel who looked at income tax data for India, the share of the top 1 per cent of the population in the total national income was just 6.2 per cent. Neoliberal capitalism, however, changed all this: in 2013-14, the share of the top 1 per cent had increased to 21.7 per cent, the highest figure it has ever reached since income tax was introduced in India in 1922.

Even this dramatic increase in inequality was, for a while, ignored because of the propaganda that with the gross domestic product rising at an unprecedented rate, there would be some 'trickle down', or at least some redistribution through fiscal means so that everyone would share the prosperity. Increasingly, however, that promise has been



belied. Unemployment is at a 45-year high, and the real per capita income of the agricultural sector as a whole has barely risen in the Modi years above what it had been in 2013-14; within this sector, the real per capita income of the peasants and agricultural labourers must have declined. This situation, in turn, must have affected the entire working population, including those in the cities.

Neoliberal capitalism, in other words, made a mockery of the promise of anti-colonial nationalism. The collapse of the spirit of anti-colonial nationalism expressed itself for a while in identity politics, with various groups and castes jockeying to improve their economic position within the overall neoliberal order. But when even the scope for such improvement got exhausted, a 'cultural nationalism' based on *Hindutva* was promoted, which changed the discourse altogether, from the issue of material improvement to one of pride in being a *Hindu*, a religion apparently besieged from all sides, which its mythified leader is trying to protect. No doubt this *Hindutva* nationalism too will run out of

steam in time; but it may be too late by then to save the Republic.

*Hindutva* 'nationalism', therefore, has to be decisively defeated before it is too late, and the grand project of anti-imperialist nationalism resurrected. For this, an alternative economic agenda has to be followed that once more puts an egalitarian order at the top. This agenda, for instance, can provide every citizen with a set of fundamental economic rights to food, employment, education, healthcare and a living pension, irrespective of religion, caste, gender, and ethnicity. Being a citizen of India can then be a matter of pride for *every citizen* because it gives one an opportunity to develop one's full potential.

This would require withdrawing from the current full-blooded pursuit of neoliberalism. India should not have gone in for it at the very outset. It must pull back now to resume the journey of genuine nationalism and improvement for all that the anti-colonial struggle had charted for the country.

*Courtesy : The Telegraph*

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## Towards Harmony

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Muslims and so on. And ignoring the many non-religious experiential shared spaces of these human beings, religions tend to separate them into clear-cut communities which can be only hostile towards one another. Sometimes, it may be, as a temporary expedient for easy identification, but when religious authorities give a label, whatever may be the purpose behind it, it sticks – communal boundaries become hardened on the basis of these alleged religious differences and tensions, and hatred begins to emerge.

It is because of these subtle and blatant distortions, which are all too common in our midst, that a proper understanding of community is a prerequisite to promote communal harmony. Let us accept diversity

as the basic ingredient of community and so celebrate diversity. Let us, at the same time, strive to reconcile our diversities. Let us hold on to equality as the prime means to that reconciliation and justice as the binding thread. Let us recognize that each one of us belongs to a plurality of communities and while being loyal to our legitimate communities, let us strive to transcend them without absolutising any. And, while we continue to dialogue our differences - for we are different – let us explore, expand and strengthen the shared spaces that unite us. Thus may we experience the blessedness that comes when brothers and sisters dwell together in unity.

*Courtesy : Meeting Rivers: Reflections on Culture, Religion and Economy by Siddhartha*

# Cultural Interactions Likely to Promote Religious Tolerance



**PROMOTING** religious tolerance and respecting one's faith, race, and color will pave the ground for peaceful coexistence and uphold the spirit of brotherhood. In a community, all individuals are supposed to be able to exercise their rights and freedoms regardless of their religious, ethnic, and racial background.

On the other hand, discrimination on the basis of one's caste, color, or creed and lack of religious tolerance will trigger hate, violence and conflict. It is said that cultural exchanges will create room for tolerance and patience. For example, the ancient Silk Road, which provided a platform for cultural exchanges, played an

essential role in promoting religious tolerance. The Silk Road traders carried their religion and faith with them and constructed religious edifices wherever they traveled, which cemented commercial ties and promoted mutual understanding and mutual trust. The diffusion of culture, including literary, science, medicine, and tradition also played a key role the development of Asian region. After all, Islam and Buddhism were also spread in China and Malaysia and Indonesia by the Silk Road merchants.

Dance and music were also carried through the Silk Road from one location to another. "Musical traditions are

portable, but they are also durable, and stubbornly take root in the lands where they were born. One of the most powerfully surviving features of the old Silk Road today is the variety of music performed, on instruments old and new, indigenous and imported, everywhere from the shores of the Mediterranean to the shores of the Pacific."

The Silk Roads were a "complex network of trade routes" that gave people the chance to exchange goods and culture. That is, cross-cultural contacts allowed individuals and peoples to adapt to the cultural values of one another. Meanwhile, the Silk Road traders tried to learn the language of one another for not only trading goods and but also exchanging ideas.

As the "center of the Asian crossroads", Afghanistan played a highly significant role in the history of the Silk Road. The Buddhist shrines and Buddha statues, found in Afghanistan, suggest that Afghanistan was a peaceful country, where caravans and Buddha monks could exercise their faith and religions without obstacles.

Meanwhile, Islamic Sufis could exercise and carried their faith in different parts of the world. The full diversity of Muslim traditions, schools of thought, and civilizing influences flourished along the Silk Road. Thus, the Silk Road not only enriched the merchants, who carried and exchanged goods, but the people of countries and cultures all across Eurasia.

With this in mind, regional states in general and Afghanistan in particular need to promote cultural exchanges through enhancing trade and transit. If nations have more cultural interactions and people-to-people contacts, their horizons will be broadened and they will learn to be tolerant towards one another and respect the cultural values of one another. The

Silk Road was termed the "Road of Dialogue" in the UNESCO Plan to promote trade and dialogue.

Currently, the bulk of the challenges in Afghanistan, including the violence and conflict, are believed to stem from lack of religious tolerance.

Afghanistan, which has been the hotbed of tolerance, knowledge, and science, is harmed by radicalism and destroyed by violence.

If the Afghan government upholds trade routes and networks, the culture of dialogue will also be promoted, which will necessarily lead to peace and stability. Afghanistan needs to open wider to the outside world, similar to that of China, and pave the ground for further interactions and exchanges.

Cultural exchange is not necessarily the only way for promoting religious tolerance. Afghans have to promote their knowledge and social and human rights awareness. Moreover, they should promote their legal awareness and try to practice legal principles in their individual and collective life. Constitutionally, all Afghan citizens are equal in rights and dignity regardless of their racial and sexual backgrounds and no one should be discriminated. Thus, providing equal opportunities for Afghan citizens to learn knowledge and get education will lead to de-radicalization in the country.

To promote religious tolerance and eliminate discrimination on the basis of one's faith, race, or sex, cultural interactions have to be upheld, the cultural of dialogue should be established, and there will be equal opportunities for all individuals to have access to education. So, the government has to pay especial heed to the aforementioned issues to mitigate the ongoing violence and conflict.

*Courtesy : Outlook Afghanistan*

# Anand Patwardhan's 'Reason' Is Both Uncomfortable and Reassuring

By SHAH ALAM KHAN, INDIA



IT was a dreary weekend afternoon when I went to watch the screening of Anand Patwardhan's four-hour-long documentary; Reason (Vivek in Hindi). The expectation from Patwardhan's movies is always that facts will be narrated in a way that finally meanders into hope. His depictions – whether in Ram ke Naam or War and Peace – are rooted in reality and people-centric, challenging common social beliefs and consumerist ideas that have come to plague us.

Reason defied my expectations.

It isn't just an Anand Patwardhan film. It is a lesson in the blood-laden contemporary history of India's majoritarian metamorphosis. The film is etched with the filmmakers' signature poignancy and hope, and is also soul-stirring experience which revolved around the process of manufacturing a Hindu rashtra. Some of the facts which unfold are not just baffling, but outright dangerous. To be honest, Reason does not feel like a documentary– it is more like a book, a classic which needs to be read in one sitting.



The documentary, which has eight chapters, opens with the life (and death) of Narendra Dabholkar and Govind Pansare, both of whom were murdered for promoting rationality, equality and justice. In its essence, Reason is a tribute to their martyrdom. In depicting the struggles of the two rationalists, the documentary captures the spirit of resistance. It reveals how the Sanatan Sanstha, the Goa-based organisation which allegedly planned both murders, injects hatred into the veins of India's secular being.

While revealing the Sanstha's true nature, Patwardhan himself becomes a voice of courage. In one scene, during a Sanatan Sanstha press conference, the organisation's spokesperson confronts Patwardhan about organising protests after M.M. Kalburgi's murder. The filmmaker, who is shooting the press conference, raises his head from behind the camera and gives an angry rebuttal. Imagine – a rebuttal to the spokesperson of an organisation which posts crossedout photographs of people who are mysteriously killed. What can be more courageous, in times like these?

The documentary then drifts into Dalit resistance to the rising brutalities against them. It begins tracing this resistance from the response to the public thrashing of Dalit cow skimmers in Una. It shows how a mass Dalit movement is brewing in the country, with the rise of Dalit leaders such as Jignesh Mevani, who takes a mass oath at a rally, asking the crowd to repeat after him that they will refuse to lift cow carcasses in the future.

For me, that was a moment of hope in the documentary. Patwardhan's capability to stun with short words is visible throughout the film. In one shot, he calls Chanakya a 'Machiavellian Brahmin'. I am yet to find a better adjective to After a powerful indictment of the oppressors of

Dalits, the documentary goes on to students' resistance to majoritarian politics. The events at the Jawaharlal Nehru University are shown in detail. Rohith Vemula's suicide at the University of Hyderabad and the narration of his suicide note, which has now become a thorn in the consciousness of some of us, is one of the most hopeful moments of the film. Vemula's poignant words and Patwardhan's magical voice make for a healing concoction of sorts.

The film is not without its moments of humour. The chest-thumping primetime news anchor we all know so well is seen shouting at JNU student leader Umar Khalid. It appears that the anchor's voice is drowned in his own noise. The uncomfortable silence and mumbling of the ABVP leader when asked to name at least five leaders from the BJP who had gone to jail during the freedom struggle is not only humorous, but also revealing.

The documentary finally gets to Dadri, Mohammad Akhlaq's village where a frenzied mob of cow vigilantes killed him on suspicion of possessing cow meat. Patwardhan shows both the victims and the perpetrators. The most moving moment is when Akhlaq's son, Mohammad Siraj, who is in the Indian Air Force, tells the filmmaker, "There is no country like India. I am lucky to be born here."

All in all, Reason is like the sun in your eyes – uncomfortable, but reassuring that the sun still exists. It is a documentary we all need to urgently see, because it sharpens our arguments against the forces that are hell bent to create irreparable fissures in India's social landscape. Reason can be the only argument against magic, irrationality, hopelessness and obscurantism.

*Courtesy : The Wire*



# Nepal's Christians Need New Laws as Cults Wreak Havoc

By PRAKASH KHADKA, NEPAL



A pastor accused of evangelizing in Sarlahi, a remote province in southern Nepal, was beaten by an angry mob on March 24 as religious minorities in the country face escalating levels of persecution.

Meanwhile, the organizer of a retreat held in Kathmandu Valley from April 11-13 had to change the venue at the last minute due to threats from Hindu extremists. Another prayer service scheduled for April 13-14 at the Jesuit-run St. Xavier school in Patan, Nepal's third-biggest city, also changed venue after Hindu delegations reported the school was acting as a venue for proselytizing.

Proselytizing and religious conversion are still legally prohibited in Nepal, which began admitting foreign missionaries in the early 1950s but remains heavily committed to ensuring there are no threats to Hindus. Calls to dilute or scrap the law have been surfacing for years.

Hindus represent 80 percent of the population. Buddhists make up 11 percent, Muslims 4 percent, and Christians a meager 1-2 percent.

The incident at the school in Patan struck me as particularly discriminatory as, according to my knowledge, its grounds have been used

by people of all castes and creeds for a full spectrum of public functions.

The situation deteriorated over Easter as the repercussions of the suicide bombings at several churches and luxury hotels in Sri Lanka some 2,300 kilometers away were quickly felt in Nepal.

In fact, a peaceful “resurrection rally” that had been organized nationwide on Easter Sunday was cut short after just an hour as news of the tragedy became known.

The aim of the rally was to allow people to express their happiness through music despite the difficulties they had faced in recent weeks.

Yet their difficulties didn’t end there.

On April 23, Pastor Dilliram Paudel, secretary general of the Nepal Christian Society (NCS), was arrested with four other Christians while they were eating breakfast at a hotel in Dang district in western Nepal.

The group, including an Indian and one American lady, had been invited by local churches to speak to a group of pastors that Tuesday.

However the invitation was of little consequence to local security forces: They were apprehended without any warrants issued, accused of forcing people to convert to Christianity, and forced to remain in police custody for about a week.

The American was sent to immigration police in Kathmandu to be deported, but was saved by the lobbying efforts of Church leaders and set free the following day. The rest of the group was finally released at 5:20 p.m. (local time) on April 29.

#### **TOTAL RECALL**

Such incidents remind me of the shocking scenes I witnessed in Kathmandu 15 years ago when religious intolerance spiked in the wake of the slaughter of 12 Nepali migrant workers in Iraq by Muslim terrorists. It was unnerving to watch the aggressive nature of mobs in the capital as they wasted no time in attacking mosques, Muslim-run offices, and individual Muslims — all beyond the control of state security forces.

However, it was much appreciated when

a group of religious leaders from different faiths marched together for peace in a bid to calm the crowds.

After all, there was no possible way that Nepali Muslims, whose families have been living here for the last five centuries, could have any connection to the killings in Iraq. Later, I was saddened to see more attacks on Nepal’s Christians, such as a priest being shot, a pastor being beaten, churches bombed, and several arson attacks. Such incidents are sadly still rife.

The situation should have changed with the advent of a new government, new laws, and a restructuring of various state mechanisms, but such dreams remain “pie in the sky” for the religious minorities in the country.

#### **RIISING RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM**

A growing feeling of religious nationalism has taken root in our communist-led, secular nation, with those who target Christians and champion Hinduism increasingly regarded as “true Nepalis.”

Numerous videos have gone viral on social media condemning Christianity and calling on the public to support attacks on churches.

Some groups even took to the streets to counter the peaceful Christian rally last week that was organized to pressure the government to free Dilliram and other Christian believers from detention.

Such activities, despite going against the grain of Nepal’s new constitution, can be seen as a threat to true Hinduism, which is supposed to pave the way to truth and justice based on peace and love.

Moreover, religion should never be interpreted in a way that causes one group of people to instigate violence against another.

#### **QUASI-CULTS OF CHRIST**

It is not mainstream Nepali Christians who are “antagonizing” the situation, but rather a series of cults that have sprung up featuring their own doctrinal teachings and leaders who claim to be reincarnations of Christ.

They are especially active on the ground

in Nepal, which has stoked fears of religious conversion and proselytizing. These cults are infamous in Nepal for making their followers make mandatory offerings of 10 percent of their salaries. They also ask their followers to sell off their ancestral property to help fill their coffers.

In a more “quirky” (scary) aside, some request that men get sterilized while women abort fetuses, based on their belief that the “end of the world is nigh.”

Given the existence of such groups, it is easy to see where the fears of the government and general public come from, as they see some foreign missionaries abusing their business visas to spread false (or real) gospels.

This gives religious extremists and nationalists an opportunity to organize act against the entire Christian community in Nepal.

Mainstream Christian churches have issued several press releases clarifying they have no ties with such cults, but their words have mostly fallen on deaf ears as the frequency of misbehavior by said cults is so high.

### CHRISTIANS COUNTER

On April 24, the Nepal Christian Society, one of the biggest umbrella bodies of churches in Nepal, issued another statement expressing concern over the situation.

It was supported by dozens of Christian federations and district committees, some of which have met with government offices, human rights commissions, and other civil society organizations.

It stated awareness of certain aggressive activities being undertaken against religious minorities, especially Christians, on a national level. It also drew attention to how the government was feigning ignorance of the situation. Christian communities are deeply saddened by what they consider to be the unfair imprisonment of individuals, possibly in a bid to curtail their religious beliefs.

Society has called on the government, various stakeholders, civil society organizations, and individual to act.

The act of criminalizing the religious and cultural activities of minority religions reflects

how Christianity is still viewed by much of the public as a “foreign” religion.

But to ensure Nepal’s reputation is not stained on a global level, it should respect its international commitments by ensuring people have the freedom to adopt, observance, and practice the belief or religion of their choosing.

This may require amendments to the charter and a redefinition of certain criminal acts. The definition of secularism on the first page of the constitution is the first target of many seeking such progressive change.

In fact, the first clause of Article 26 states as a constitutionally enshrined right that people can profess, practice and protect the religion of their conviction.

This is in line with the spirit of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. However, the third clause of that article seems to contradict the first one as it bans conversion.

Either amending or removing articles 156 to 159 from the 2017 Criminal Code would be a good start, as they have the potential to spark conflict between religious communities.

Moreover, those articles go against the word and spirit of the international human rights instruments Nepal is a party to.

In Nepal, multicultural groups have been coexisting for centuries; no law should disturb such harmony.

The country lacks equal provisions to register and regulate religious properties, which further compromises the freedom of religious communities.

As a result, for any religious institutions registered under the Association Registration Act (1977), a new law needs to be formulated and monitored so they can conduct their religious activities without any hindrance.

This includes the management of funeral sites at a local level for all religious groups, according to their cultures and values.

Christians and other minorities should also have their festivals respected as public holidays, especially Christmas and Easter, as is the case for Hindus.

*Courtesy : UCA News.Com*



# Why Sri Lanka Named its First-Ever Satellite After Ravana

By SRUTHISAGAR YAMUNAN, INDIA



ON June 19, Sri Lanka successfully put its first satellite into orbit. This was a landmark moment for the small island country that spent nearly four decades focused on a civil war between the Sri Lankan state and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

But the satellite embodied not just the fulfillment of a technological aspiration – its name revealed a cultural ambition.

Sri Lanka chose to call the satellite Raavana 1 after the mythical king Ravana of the Ramayana. Most Indians are used to the mainstream reading of the Sanskrit epic, which paints Ravana as the evil king of Sri Lanka who was killed in battle with divine incarnate

Ram. But as scholars like AK Ramanujan have pointed out, there are hundreds of versions of the Ramayana within India, some substantially different from the Sanskrit version attributed to Valmiki.

“The number of Ramayanas and the range of their influence in South and Southeast Asia over the past 2,500 years or more is astonishing,” Ramanujan said, citing at least 22 languages, including Sinhala, in which the epic has been retold.

Despite this, conservative Sinhala-Buddhists, who form the majority in Sri Lanka, have for long been uncomfortable with Ravana’s portrayal in the epic. Given the

conflation of modern-day Sri Lanka with the theatre of war represented in the Ramayana, a section of the community, which has tried to create a glorious past of valour for itself, would rather recast Ravana as a Sinhalese king of great ideals and values. In this account, Ravana was defeated only because his scheming brother Vibhishana helped the Indian king Ram.

These attempts to remould Ravana as a national hero gained momentum with the landing of the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka in the 1980s, which was seen by some as interference by India in the country's internal strife. Now, with Sri Lanka naming its first satellite after Ravana, the mythical king's transformation into a political symbol is complete.

#### **SIHALA-BUDDHISTS AND RAVANA**

For centuries, the Mahavamsa, a Pali language epic written by Buddhist monks in Anuradhapura in the 5th Century, remained the undisputed cultural foundation of Sri Lanka. The historical epic tells the story of Prince Vijaya arriving from Kalinga in India and establishing his rule on the island, followed by many generations of kings.

This epic dominated the cultural narrative of the Sinhalese people until a split emerged in the 20th century. A section of the community opposed the Indian origin story of the Sinhalese people and located their beginnings within Sri Lanka.

Such an imagination became even more critical after the Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic conflict intensified in the 1940s, with the Sinhalese wanting to establish themselves as the original inhabitants of the island.

It is with the emergence of such nativity narratives that historians feel the character of Ravana came to the centrestage of Sinhala popular discourses.

One of the leaders of this so-called cultural renaissance movement was Kumaratunga Munidasa, who formed the literary organisation Hela Havula in 1941. The goal of the organisation was to purify Sinhala language of external influences. This organisation would play a pivotal role in the reimagination of the Ravana myth through members like Arisen

Ahubudu, who in the 1980s leveraged works such as Ravana-Valiya to locate Ravana as a Sinhala hero.

According to Nirmal Ranjith Dewasiri, a senior lecturer of history at the University of Colombo, there has always been an anti-Indian strain within a section of Sinhala-Buddhists. The reconstruction of the Ravana myth fits into this framework of antagonism towards India and its perceived cultural hegemony.

This anti-India feeling strengthened with the Indian involvement in the Sri Lankan Tamils problem and its measures to find a settlement to the strife. The tipping point came when the Indian Peace Keeping Force landed in Sri Lanka in 1987, which was seen by certain Sinhala-Buddhists as a continuation of the ancient Indian urge to violate Sinhalese territory. One of Mahavamsa's famous stories is the battle of Vijithapura, in which the Sri Lankan king Dutthagamani defeated the South Indian king Ellalan.

#### **'MONKEY ARMY'**

"When the Indian Peace Keeping Force operated in Sri Lanka, the Janata Vimukthi Peramuna stuck posters calling them monkey army," Dewasiri said. The Janata Vimukthi Peramuna is an ultra-Left party that orchestrated an insurgency in 1987 using the Sinhalese sentiments against the IPKF. Its reference to the monkey army was a throwback to the Ramayana – in the epic, Ram had defeated Ravana with the help of a monkey army led by Sugriva.

But Nandaka Maduranga Kalugampitiya lecturer at the University of Peradeniya, questioned this glorification of Ravana as a Sinhalese icon in an essay in 2015.

"The association of Rāvanā with Sinhala Buddhism is problematic for the simple reason that Rāvanā predates both Buddhism and the Sinhala ethnicity as we know them today," he wrote. "Prince Vijaya who arrived in what is today known as Sri Lanka with a group of companions in the sixth century BC is widely seen as the founder of the Sinhala ethnic identity."

Kalugampitiya continued: "Although this particular understanding of the origin of the Sinhala ethnic identity has been challenged



and attempts have been made to place this point of origin centuries, if not millennia, back in time, in a context where the authority of the Mahāvamsa largely remains unchallenged, especially in the eyes of the mainstream elements of the Sinhala community, the argument that Vijaya was the founder of the Sinhala identity continues to remain valid.”

In post-war Sri Lanka, after the LTTE was defeated in 2009, the triumphalism has added to the Ravana myth. Deborah De Koning of the Tilburg University called this “Ravanisation”, a form of cultural revitalisation, which portrays him as the most famous king, not just of Lanka, but of an ancient and indigenous civilisation.

“The imagination of a glorious past and, more specifically, the revitalisation of Ravana finds its expression in multiple ways among Sinhalese Buddhists such as the publication of popular books and articles, the production of TV and radio programs, songs and Ravana statues, and the promotion of Angampora,” she wrote in an essay. The Angampora is a traditional Sri Lankan martial art.

Dewasiri said that the figure of Ravana has gained more prominence in popular Sinhalese culture rather than in academic circles and among historians for the simple reason that much of the claims made in the Ramayana have hardly any real backing in empirical evidence. “There is a fundamental dispute among historians on whether the Lanka of Ramayana is indeed the Sri Lanka of today.”

Despite such doubts, many locations in Sri Lanka are popularly identified, even by the government, as those mentioned in the Ramayana.

### **SINHALA, RAVANA AND INDIA**

Perhaps the biggest irony is that Ravana has held the same appeal for two political forces which are otherwise opposed to each other: the Dravidian movement of Tamil Nadu and the Sinhala-Buddhists of Sri Lanka.

In Tamil Nadu, stalwarts like former Tamil Nadu chief minister CN Annadurai portrayed Ravana as a Dravidian king wronged at the hands of his Aryan counterpart. It was effectively used to build

the discourse of the Aryan invasion theory in the state.

It is here that the Sinhala-Buddhists and the Dravidian movement of Tamil Nadu, now separated by the sea and politics, meet, in that both see Ram as a force of cultural hegemony. There are many positive references to Ravana in the Sri Lankan Tamils literature as well.

Dewasiri argues that the lack of historical evidence for the Ramayana means that it is open to varied interpretation under different contexts. Sections of Tamils and Sinhala-Buddhists laying claim over the same symbol points to the very nature of a myth as amenable to different readings.

Could the naming of a satellite after Ravana be considered an attempt to antagonise India?

For many Hindus, and particularly the Bharatiya Janata Party, which leads the government of India, Ram is a revered divine figure. It is around the icon of Ram that Hindutva as an ideology transformed into a formidable political force, culminating in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992. Ram has been at the foundation of the BJP’s rise to power in India and the party has in the past reacted sharply to attempts at delegitimising Ram in any manner.

However, India and Sri Lanka have a deep cultural, economic and geographical connection that has gone beyond ideologies of political parties. Governments in both countries have, barring a few incidents, tried to keep political differences away when it comes to diplomacy. Ravana is unlikely shake this relationship.

Dewasiri said that there was indeed a symbolic value to the naming of the satellite given how Ravana has emerged as a significant figure in the Sri Lankan popular imagination. But there could be other benign reasons as well. “The reign of Ravana, with elements like Pushpaka Vimana, is imagined to be a technologically advanced era,” he said. It is this context that may have led Sri Lanka to name its satellite after the mythical king.

*Courtesy : Scroll.in*

# The Psyche and Phantasy

By **CHRISTOPHER CAUDWELL**

*...Continued from previous issue*



**THIS** development of art and science is not the merely contemplative discovery of static realities, it is part of men's active relation with Nature. The phantasy of art, by the constant changes in organisation which it produces in man's ego,

makes man conscious of the necessity of his instincts and therefore free. This is not an absolute freedom but relative to the means of change – the complex, rich, social ego against which man presses his own blind ego in the embrace of art. This social ego is in turn built up not of ideal stuff but of the real concrete emotions and aspirations that a man experiences from living in a real, concrete society.

This is revealed, for example, in the nature of the material of literary art – words; the very words that are tools to man in his associated operations, however ordinary; the language of court, camp and kitchen.

Science and art are the frontiers of phantasy. They embody the most abstract, the most general, the most essential laws of concrete feeling and perception. They are "pure" and for that reason they have separated out from each other. They are concerned with the new, with just those general items of social experience which negate the already existing common ego and

common perceptual world, and therefore demand the extension of both ego and world (new art works, new hypotheses) to include them. This is the way practice unites with theory, because men's practical experience contradicts the already given consciousness of men and demands its modification. To those who think mechanically it seems as if science and art are not interpenetrated with living experience but are opposed to it, because they are the fruit of its contradiction.

Science and art are artificially separated from life when they are visualised as ideological spheres. As practice, as felt and known experience, they are at every step derived from the struggle of man with Nature.

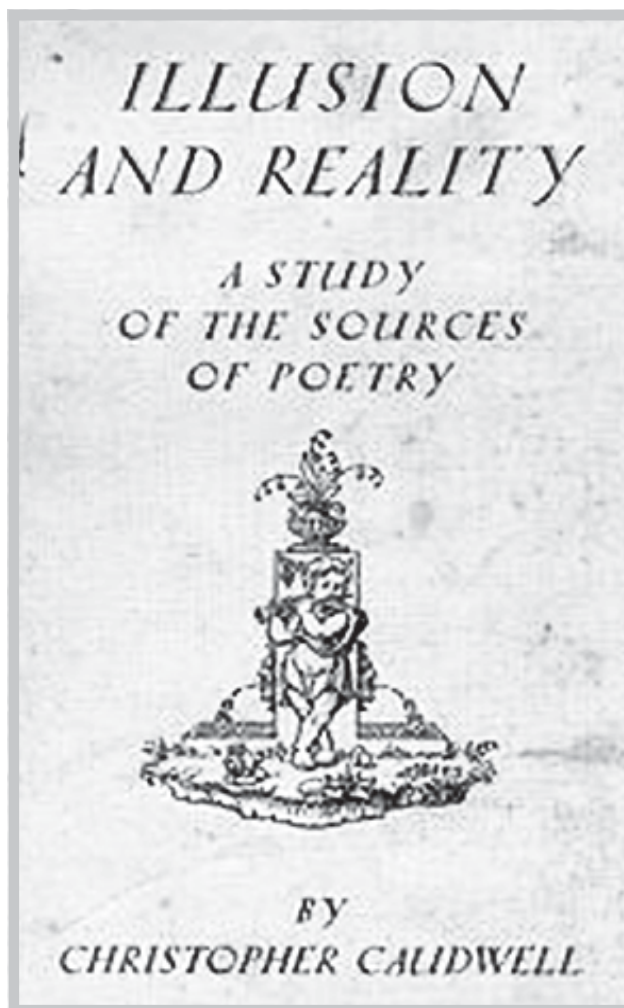
The world of phantasy which arises as the "guardian" of slumber because in it man rests from the active struggle with Nature, and in accordance with his desires rearranges in his body the traces of his struggle, taking the symbol for the fact – this world, by being introjected into the social world of waking reality, is forced to split and on the one hand increasingly to reflect the necessity of external reality, on the other hand to take the imprints of men's hearts. Thus men are affected by each other's emotional experiences and experiences of reality. Men make each other what they are.

The artist and the scientist participate in that manufacture. They are men who acquire a special experience of life – affective with the artist, perceptual with the scientist

– which negates the common ego or the common social world, and therefore requires a refashioning of these worlds to include the new experience. Just as the producer of material goods for society brings them to the common market, so the artist or scientist brings his special experience to the ideological market in a fashioned form.

The order that products should have the stamp of social products, of commodities, they must have been endowed with shape which gives them a social use-value. They must have been fashioned by labour to be denizens of the world of social utility. In the same way the artist or the scientist must give his experience a social significance; it must be included in the ideological world of society. It is precisely this fashioning which constitutes the labour of art or science, and which entitles the artist or the scientist to regard himself as a producer.

Jung contrasted phantasy, or free association, with “directed thinking” – thinking which is forced to follow a “rational” path, a path conforming with our conscious knowledge of reality. This conscious knowledge, as we have already seen, is derived from the common perceptual world. Hence directed thinking is scientific thinking; by directed thinking we fashion our experience of external reality into a social product.



To Jung’s conception of directed thinking we wish to add that of “directed feeling.” This is what we do whenever we direct our feelings along lines intended to conform with what we think right, with our “true” self, with the valid or the beautiful, with what we feel is the better part of us, with the ideal each has in his breast. Just as directed thinking is controlled by the reason and acknowledges the social criterion of truth, so directed feeling is controlled by the heart and acknowledges the social criterion of beauty or goodness.

It is the crime of class religion to have separated goodness from beauty and the conscience from the heart. Religion arises as mythology, as early poetry in which science and art are still mingled, for collective phantasy is still no more than collective dream. Man has not fully separated himself from the environment, is not yet conscious of the contradiction between the ego and the environment, and, because he is not conscious, is the slave of that contradiction, blindly tossed hither and thither by his feelings and events. But when science and art separate out, religion no longer plays a useful rôle. It attempts to combine both; therefore it distorts the truth of science and fetters the plasticity of art.

We saw that in the realm of science

phantasy gained penetrative power, gained the ability to reflect more accurately the environment, because it replaced the real concrete ego with a mock ego or scaffolding whose flexibility enabled the mould of phantasy to adhere closely to the environment. But religion still mixes the subjective with the objective. It announces as truths what man hopes to be true. Its views of reality are distorted by man's affective drives. It takes poetic illusions, valued and considered true for their subjective content, and demands that men give them the status of statements symbolic of external reality. But since man's practical experience proves or disproves the truth of scientific hypotheses, religion can only protect its illusions from exposure by making them symbolical of another world than the material world – the kingdom of heaven, the "next world." Obviously this is a degeneration from primitive religion which stated its tenets scientifically, referring them to the visible material world, as in the performance of miracles, the moving of material mountains and so forth, and whose errors therefore, being accessible to practice, could by their self-exposure give rise to science.

But class religion, by carefully protecting its symbolical statements from material test, confines them to a kingdom of heaven which is either invisibly present behind the real world, or in more sophisticated forms is simply "in men's hearts," i.e. in after all subjective. In that case religion's truths are simply symbolical of feeling-tone, and religion thus reduces itself to art, with this difference, that the very method of its generation, gives it a dogmatic and amateurish stiffness which is opposed to the flexibility and technical richness of conscious art – conscious of its rôle, of its materials, of its problems, of its technique and of its traditions.

Thus like all survivals which have had their functions taken over by other organs, modern religion exhibits the stigmata of

degeneracy. And as we have previously shown, its whole theological structure betrays the reasons that have kept it alive, the same reasons that have kept alive the monarchy, the aristocracy, feudal privilege and similar non-functional relics – the special conditions and ossifications of a class society protecting obsolete privileges.

The confusion of religion – a confusion between subject and object – reflects a society which has itself become confused by a divorce between the active relation of subject and object which alone procures the separation of each by a mutually reflexive movement. In a society where consciousness (the subject) has become separated from the environment (the object) because the thinking class has become separated from the working class, there is not possible that constant correction of men's ideological image of reality by practice which secures the health and movement of science. Science, which adheres closely to reality by active experiment in its particular spheres, cannot be integrated into the universal "philosophy" of a class, but decomposes into a chaos of highly specialised, mutually contradictory sciences whose separation impoverishes thought. Even a scientist has as a rule an unscientific world-view. It is therefore possible for a subjectively distorted picture of reality to arise and be, because of this cleavage, immune from correction by action. The slaves may know blindly they are not free and God is not good – but how are their masters to share their experiences? And in the same way the growth of another world, not this material world but painted in glowing affective colours, is generated by the misery of the material world endured by the suffering class, for which they are compensated by future delights. Hence arises the inverted world of religion, inverted because the world of society is inverted. These two factors combine to maintain religion at a time when the development of science and art have replaced it by keener tools – by the conscious illusion of art, by



the impersonal truth of science, and the richer concrete living these two make possible.

Thus phantasy develops as the inseparable accompaniment of action, which creates it and which it in turn anticipates and calls into being in a richer form. And practice, enriched, corrects phantasy's anticipation and makes possible a new level of achievement. Thus phantasy adapts man in two ways – his instincts to the ego of society, and his perception to the perception of society. This adaptation ennobles and heightens and makes free the dumb brute of the genotype, because the ego of society and the perception of society is infinitely more penetrating and rich and complex than that of the unaided individual, just as man in association is more powerful against Nature than solitary man.

All thought, all feeling, reflects in some measure the categories of science or art. Science and art are generated in our daily existence. Scientific systems and art works are merely the highest forms of organisation, the essence of this daily concrete life.

Science and art become practical, they enter into concrete real life, directly we knock away the mock world from any artistic construction and substitute a real world, or knock away the mock world from an artistic construction and substitute a real world, or knock away the mock impersonal ego from any scientific construction and substitute a real human being. In the first case we give a "unattached" human desire a real materialisation; in the second we give a part of reality the shape of an answer to human desire. Thus, in entering into real concrete life, artist and scientific constructions become, as it were, blended or "impure," special instead of general, concrete instead of abstract, and the language we use to make this possible belongs to the realm of persuasion – the ordinary language of daily life removed from the pure and "impractical" worlds of science and art. We must not regret this forced

descent. Science and art were made for man, not man for science and art. But there is more to it than that. Science and art were made from man, not man from science and art. This issuing of science and art into real "impure" life-experience is what corrects, refines and develops them, so that they return to their heavens wiser, richer, still more abstract and pure as a result of their incarnation in life. And though so ethereal now, science and art in their infancy were as concrete as concrete living.

This phantasy, generated by association for economic production, is communicated by material symbols – gestures, sounds, drawings, touches. Because of the nature of man's senses, sound which no longer made all men concerned at the same time with the environment, again restored advantages to sight and the sounds became visual symbols – writing. Language developed as the favoured tool for the communication of phantasy, superior to diagrams or "picture writing." Ignorance of this concrete function of language and concentration on its anal aspects make many philosophers approach language in a strangely patronising way.

They find it "imperfect," deviating from the ideal language, and illogical – rather as a biologist might study species and reproach them for their departure from some ideal animal. Such philosophers think consciousness is contemplation – a limpid image of reality. In the same way they think language exists to be a passive photograph of the universe. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is entirely based on this assumption. This is the error of philistines who imagine that a painting must be exactly like the scene it portrays. They do not see that it is a silly task to make an exact copy of something we already have, and that the reaction of language and thought to reality is not a passive reflection but an active and tendentious reaction, and that it is this activity and tendentiousness which enables a mere reaction to become conscious and know. The mirror reflects accurately: it does



not know. Each particle of the Universe reflects the rest of the Universe, but knowledge is only given to human beings as a result of an active and social relation to the rest of reality. Knowledge is an economic product.

Russell phrases the Wittgenstein conception thus: "The essential business of a language is to assert or deny facts." But this is not a business at all. Facts assert or deny themselves: that is, they either exist or do not. A man sees them in external reality or does not. He remains dumb. The business of language, as an extension of life, is to decide what facts are worth asserting or denying: what facts exist for men and what do not. It is the business of language to be the best possible tool for siting facts in an ordered world-view, which can select or condense or classify them hierarchically; and into such a worldview the subject must enter. Society must appear twice, as ego and world, and in both cases dragging its material history after it. Russell's view of language is like that of the gushing lady who said to Carlyle, "I accept the Universe." But man does not accept the Universe, for the Universe does not accept him. He must change it under penalty of extinction. And he can only change it in association; therefore language reflects the relations of men as feeling men and perceiving men in association for economic production.

This historical function of language explains why existing languages are so far from the "perfect" language postulated by Wittgenstein. Such a perfect language would be perfectly useless. It would be a picture of

the world, standing in the same relation to external reality as a mirror-image to the thing mirrored. But then it would be an inferior thing to the thing imaged, and would be a useless construct. It would have no hidden power over the world or the subject. It is precisely because language expresses feeling, is a judging as well as a picturing of parts of reality, that it is valuable. Language expresses not merely what reality is (what reality is stares man in the face) it expresses also what can be done with reality – its inner hidden laws, and what man wants to do with it – his own unconscious necessities. Language is a tool to express what reality is in relation to man – not abstract man but concrete human beings.

Is it not plain that the error of the philosophers regarding language springs from the same source as religion – the cleavage of the subject from the object in a class society? Then thought comes to seem merely contemplation and is cut off from the very activity which creates, develops and corrects it. Language, and the phantasy which has generated it, and the conscious psyche which is their offspring, and the man whose struggle with Nature in association has created all three, are bound together with a relation which Marx was the first to express in those hastily-scribbled eleven Theses on Feuerbach that marked the beginning of a new era in human thought: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it"

*to be continued...*

*Courtesy : Illusion and Reality*

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