

Religious Toleration.

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"Theism is the easiest of all religions to get, but the most difficult to keep. Individuals have kept it, but nations never." In these words an eminent writer evaluates theism, the religion preached by all men of God known otherwise as World Saviours or Divine Descents, who figure as landmarks in the religious history of mankind. If we examine the historical or traditional accounts of the several peoples of the world living in different countries and climes, we will be naturally led to conclude that theistic disposition in the shape of faith in God is ingrained in the very constitution of the human soul and that it is not an artificial product or concomitant of material civilization. Even the primitive hill-tribes that live on raw-flesh and prowl about like beasts in jungles are seen and known to fall prostrate before the grandiose and awe-inspiring shapes of the sun and moon, the stupendous galaxy of stars, sky-scraping mountains, gigantic trees, mighty and majestic rivers and other imposing natural phenomena and

worship them with the utmost reverence by reason of their simple, implicit and unsophisticated faith in their all-bountiful nature as rulers of their destinies. Whence then has come the faith and what is this significant of? Although the fallen soul is hopelessly enmeshed in the beginningless nescience of action, that belief in God or a Higher Being of power which is inherent in him by his very constitution is sure to assert or manifest itself in some shape or other as long as the sentient nature of his spiritual state stands undisturbed and uncovered.

When the primitive man has crossed the stage of wild-life and become gradually civilized and cultured having secured efficiency in the various sciences and arts, it is possible that his simple and unmixed faith in God is considerably shaken or jeopardized owing to perverse logic resulting from ill-conceived non-spiritualistic training. His pervertedly enlightened mind naturally favours now reasonings akin to atheism of the Epicurean, Hedonistic or Chārvāka type or nihilism or non-differentiated

*Faith in
God and its
vicissitudes.*

monism which promulgate final extinction or neuterization as means for redemption of Jiva-self. These empiric reasonings clearly point out an unhealthy or abnormal condition of the sentient activity of the spirit in man. In between the initial savage-life and the life of pure and loving Devotion which is the acme of human endeavours are necessarily found three intermediary and progressive stages of theistic evolution known as unmixed moral life, theistic moral life and neophyte-devotional life. It is exactly during these stages that many persons are obsessed with the pernicious ideas relating to what are known as atheism, henotheism, pantheism and what not of the kind which are mainly the illegitimate offsprings of Godless empiricism, and which violently, and in some cases, effectively, disturb and weaken their faith in God, thus impeding their spiritual progress on the natural lines of theistic thought. It is however unfair to say that every person is infected with such geocentric ideas during the aforesaid three stages of his mental evolution. But when once this strange malady takes hold of their minds, their spiritual progress is arrested, as they now rest content with what little they achieved upto that particular stage when infection ensued and do not bestir themselves for climbing up higher to taste the sweets of progressive theistic life. When the uncultured primitive races of the forest once get civilized and urbane, they very soon work up by dint of their moral strength and cultural development an organized and corporate life by the establishment of

natural caste-divisions and orders of life which progressively and naturally help them for the development of unalloyed devotional life of the shape of selfless and loving service to the Godhead. This we should remember is the natural spiritual evolution of mankind. It is only when the human mind loses power of resistance through bad logic and atheistic training and contracts a malady of the type mentioned above that the spiritual life of a Jiva becomes hopelessly artificial and unprogressive.

Natural differences are seen and noticed in the mental constitution and disposition of mankind commensurate with the lack of similitude in the prevailing conditions of the countries or continents wherein it lives and moves with a claim of heritage which cannot be focussed by time. But although the predominant nature of man is the same everywhere being essentially theistic, his secondary nature is undoubtedly manifold and diverse being world-minded and ratiocinative. The former is naturally uniform throughout the world wherever humanity exists; but the latter gives rise to diversity and differences both in the physical and mental outfit of a human being. It is for this reason that we find it so hard to find even two persons in this vast creation who bear the closest semblance to each other in the matter of their secondary nature. When we actually see in this world so much divergence both in the physical and mental equipment of even two twins born of the same

*Man's
predominant
and secondary
natures.*

parents, it is sheer madness to expect identity of any kind in respect of persons born in different climes and countries of this wide world.

Consistent with the differences that are naturally observed in the matter of water, air, hills, woodlands, foodstuffs and wearing apparel of a particular country are found differences in the inhabitants thereof in stature, colour, deportment, and general habits of life. Even mental dispositions vary in different countries. Although faith in God which forms as it were the substratum of these dispositions is essentially one, even that faith takes different shapes and is differently manifested by reason of man's secondary nature which is many-branched and diverse-shaped. So it is that when the people of a particular country get over the stage of primeval unregulated life and attain progressively the stages of cultured, ethical, moral and devotional life, they develop differences in their language, dress, food and ways of thinking and even in the methods of worshipping the Overlord of creation.

From an impartial point of view, it may safely be conceded that these seeming differences in the modes of God-worship count little and are absolutely innocuous. When the whole of mankind is agreed in respect of its theistic predisposition, the benefit obtained by its correct and healthy exercise by whatever person or nation it may be is always complete and faultless. That is why Śrī

Chaitanya Mahāprabhu, the master-mind in the line of Devotion, is perfectly right when he issued the following edict to his followers:—
“Worship the Godhead, who is a Spiritual Person. But do not mock at the religious beliefs or modes of worship of others, who are equally eligible for the service of the Supreme Lord.” The Bible also commands us in the same strain. It says that the Kingdom of the world is the Lord's and He is the Governor among nations for whose salvation and redemption He came down and is with them. He will do all His pleasure. None therefore can question the propriety of His teaching and the consequent apparent differences in the tenets of the scriptures which record His deeds and precepts. The revelation of no country or nation can therefore claim superiority over that of any other in spite of these seeming differences, and there will be no meaning if the votary of one religion tries to mock at the religious belief and methods of worship of another. It simply betrays hollowness or even perversity of the spiritual knowledge of the reviler. It should also be borne in mind that “all the ends of the world remember and turn unto the Lord and all the kindreds of nations worship Him.” Their worship is, of course, as required by or laid down in, the scripture of the nation to which they belong. Let it also be noted what the poet says of the different scriptures of the world—

Consistent with the mental predilections of the spiritual aspirant and the form, system and procedure of worship adopted by him, we find the votary of one country worshipping God from a fixed and comfortable seat undergoing the tedious processes of breath-control and mental appropriation of the several parts of the body to the tutelary deities presiding over them. In another country, we find him sing the glory of God five times a day kneeling or prostrating in the direction of the ancient Temple of Salvation intended for his pilgrimage. In some other country, we see him kneeling on the floor of a chapel or a dwelling-house and praying to God with folded hands in a tone indicative of extreme supplication or abject surrender. We also find similar differences in their conduct and conception of cleanliness, and the nature of offerings made and the raiment worn during the time of worship and prayer. If we could watch but once the system and procedure of worship as obtained in other religions, we can see so clearly the marked differences in the details of their service paraphernalia. Let us now deal with the fourth.

In every religion of the world, differences are noticed both in the conception of the Object of adoration and the processes leading to its attainment. The practicant who is a lover of God and in whose breast always surges the ever-flowing tide of

Forms, system and procedure of Worship.

Object of Worship.

Devotion readily inaugurates the Lord's prototype both in his self and mind, and in the universe also, and worships Him from all those planes with the full knowledge of the identity of the Lord with His symbolic counterpart. But the spiritual aspirant who lacks in the serving mood and is disinclined to accept spiritual form to the Godhead embarks on meditation on a particular concept of Īswara although even this is a thought-form located in the region of the heart and as such is reckoned as one among the eight-fold nature of symbolism enunciated by Lord Kṛṣṇa which helps the Jiva to reach Him.

Coming next to the fifth and the last item, we find the Absolute served under different appellations in the different countries of the world consistent with the diversity of languages prevalent in those countries. For the same reason their religions also are named differently, and even in them, the phraseology and the peculiar terms and expressions employed during the time of worship are likewise different and varying.

Agreeably to the fivefold difference noted above, all the theistic religions of the world maintain their distinctive positions and live through eternity for the spiritual benefit of their votaries. While no objection need be seen for these natural and seeming differences, it would be passing strange and absolutely unfair if these religions resort to mental deprecation or vilification, one claiming superiority over the other. If it ever happens that we

Names and Phraseology.

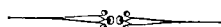
Correct Religious attitude.

are to visit a place of worship of persons subscribing to a different creed, especially during the prayer-time of its votaries, we should not fail to remember that our own Object of adoration is worshipped or glorified there in a different form and manner to suit their own conceptions of God-worship. It would also be more fitting and beneficial if we could actually feel in the following strain:—"It is true that I am not competent to identify myself with the system of worship or prayer adopted and practised by my brothers of this religion on account of my own differently developed practice of a lifetime in this direction. But I must admit that I am more and more drawn towards my own practice of prayer by watching the transparent sincerity and guilelessness with which these brothers of mine are conducting their own prayers now. Besides, I cannot afford to forget that there is only one God and one Lord of creation for all. I therefore offer my prostrated salutations to this very Object of worship which

I see installed and glorified by my brothers in this house of God. I would even pray to Him, who is none but my own Lord who had assumed this different form for the sake of my brothers, to bless me with an ever-increasing love and reverence for my own beloved Object of adoration as conceived by my religion."

It would therefore be the height of folly or impudence on our part to assume airs of superiority and evince indifference or contempt for the different forms of worship and prayer of other religions, much less to resort to blasphemous talk, proselytization or even persecution on that account. Those who do so are men of perverse knowledge who are deplete of wisdom and understanding. Nothing is gained by promoting needless controversies and getting abusive and supercilious in matters concerning one common God. But surely all would be lost as by doing so they miss the very function of their soul.

*Evils of
blasphemy
and
proselytization.*



"Every man and every atom is in his or its right place, at the right time, doing his or its work perfectly."

"When things are at their worst, the deliverance of God is at hand. When all may seem to be lost, the Gates of Deliverance are about to open."

"If we fill our mind with thoughts which are Divine, then our life will partake of the nature of the Divine—it will be filled with love and peace. Also there will radiate from us a spiritual power that will help and bless others, directly, and also help and bless the world, indirectly."

—*Science of Thought Review.*

