

THE ECLIPSE OF CONSCIENCE

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I have been, for long, vitally interested in the study as to what is right and what is wrong. I have been following this up with great enthusiasm and conviction and faith.

The earliest stage of this conscience was the science of inward values which was secret in the heart of every human individual, to which he could turn in moments of personal distress or cosmic distress. It was the voice of God because it came with an imperativeness and with a necessity to obey it, at the cost of one's life itself! For the value of the voice of God was paramount over every practical, economic, or karmic conception. So we have that ideal of a conscience.

For a long time in the hearts of men this was there, and the mystics spoke about it with great conviction that was a personal realisation, a personal attunement with God; and that voice was heard!

But later on it was found that some people began to

Speak the language of the conscience, but actually it was the language of their own conceptions. Some people, by cogitating or thinking over-much on an idea, or what they deemed to be right, began to assert that it was the voice of God that was speaking. So in this particular sphere the voice of God became very feeble and was substituted by the ideational hallucinations of individual men, albeit pious and religious. Later on it was found that this belief in the voice of God, as conscience, is sheer nonsense. Many people thought that the voice of God was merely an excuse for perpetrating some evil deeds. That is, they lost the conception that the voice of God would always speak the voice of truth, of chastity, of non-violence; All those virtues which we honour as the greatest and highest qualities of a spiritual man.

When power came to play its part, and when the religious man felt that power was much more important than virtue, the voice of conscience was just eclipsed and substituted by the voice of the wishes of a dictator or a tyrant or a religious, exalted personage. Therefore they had to have a series of conventions of dharma, or law, which were intended to curb as much the tyrant as the ordinary people. It was equality in the eyes of the law that dharma inculcated, to secure the freedom of every individual from the oppression of every other individual, however high or however low. So, there was this dharm-

shastra, the birth of the dharma-shastra. Conscience was expected to speak dharma, but if it did not speak the language of dharma, it was not conscience, it was not the voice of God!

That is how they began to regulate conscience. As you know that famous passage “conscience makes cowards of us all”, which Shakespeare has used in one of his plays. Conscience was later on merely thought of as some thing that prevents us from doing evil, not doing the good. And so it seems evil doing is good, according to the ideas of power-politics people. Conscience was suppressed, and everybody who spoke about conscience was laughed at. So, as recently as a few weeks ago, when a person said “my conscience is very clear”, on a particular matter, some of us thought why not place the conscience on the table for vivisection, that is it has to oblige the law of my rationality. It cannot be considered to be a private matter, which has absolutely no check, and so it has to be proved that it is rational. Conscience, then, must be rational. Reason, then, became more important than an inward voice. So reason, specially as we have learnt to know about it in the recent philosophic age as the age of reason, we find that reason is anything that can be proved by means of our perceptions that are our ordinary experience, and not that which transcends them. Unfortunately our whole conduct and our loss of virtue

are matters not for reason to select out of our experiences, or experiences of conduct. As you all know that the age of reason claimed that conscience must be the language of reason, and this reason must be something that produces social harmony, and makes a savage society into a civilised or cultured society.

John Locke, and afterwards Rousseau, tried to show that the terms of the social contract, which he said makes for political society, are based on reason, not upon revelation. So revelation went out of the picture and conscience also went out of the picture. And as Hegel later on proved to our conviction, the institutions of mankind are mere objectified reason to which we can refer, rather than subjective reason, which reasons towards certain conclusions. So to obey the society and the state, even if it be a police state, that is correct. Obedience is rational, disobedience is irrational. And the rational is the real, rather than the real is rational! These are basic concepts, which he gave to us, which reduce conscience to a farce. That is, conscience was thoroughly disintegrated.

All psychologists know we have a small, funny adage in Woodworths Psychology at the beginning which is studied elementarily, that psychology firstly had a soul, it

was considered to be the science of the soul. It lost its soul and got a mind, and psychology was called the science of the mind. Then it lost its mind and has some behaviour of a kind. We all study some physiological behaviour and call it psychology. Even so, conscience previously was the voice of God; then it became the maxims of reason; and finally it has become nothing but the Vox Populi, the voice of the people is the voice of God.

The denigration, if I may say so, of conscience, is complete to day. And the voice of the people, whether it is rational or irrational, is the voice of God. That is the later development, which we have got. Parliamentary government is based upon that which is rational, and emerges out of the contradictions of society and of debate. But actually we find that it is not rationality which is now prevalent but a clash of irrationalities trying to get into a compromise which is called a medley of conduct. Therefore, we are undecided as to what is the measure, what is the point of reference by which we can act in this world. Is there any fulcrum on which you can base your whole behaviour? We are a disintegrated people; disintegrated in the soul, disintegrated in the mind, disintegrated in the body. And if now you see no firm conduct, and religions merely pamper to these dilations of what I call reason, and instinct, and popular

will, one can hardly do justice to the individual character of the human being whose sorrows are never attended to by anybody. In trying to bring happiness, we produce unhappiness. In producing more and more, we produce scarcity more and more, scarcity which ought not to be there logically, mathematically, unfortunately is there. Everybody knows it.

We know the words of God, but unfortunately God does not speak to us. We know the laws, but the laws do not speak to our heart. What has happened to us? Please ask! Why is it our problem, because it is our normal problem. I have seen that it was my problem; and what is my problem is your problem as well. Taken individually it is the individual that is in difficulties today. Has he something to live by? Some voice, some truth, some rationality, that is not the rationality of the objective society and the social society, but of yourself. Is there a voice which asks you for your Higher evolution, and gives you guidance for your own growth in the dimensions of a vertical being, rather than in the dimensions of a horizontal being. We are all becoming corpulent with the additional tissues of the world and of society. Everybody is corpulent. Who is straight, shooting like a rocket to the heavens of the divine? Well, anyway, who can get into one's self? So this was my problem, and, I believe, in a subtle sense, of every one of

you. That is why the eclipse of conscience today is complete. Nobody wants to refer to it. It has gone out of fashion. And so when Mahatma Gandhi spoke about an inner voice to which he hearkened during his fasts, everybody laughed at him, these rationalists, these liberalists, and so many people who are politicians and statesmen, all laughed at him. Philosophers too! And I believe even religious people said that, because religious people have felt that all that the conscience has spoken is already in the srutis and scriptures written down for everybody to read – the revelations of other people. But has anybody seen that it solves any problem within me, or within you? I do not want to say they spoke falsehood. They spoke what they knew to be right, and it may be right for us also. But has it also the sanction of your own inner being, your acceptance, your conviction? So that is where I found we have to rehabilitate conscience. How to hear the voice again? Gandhi asked that. How many have been devout disciples of Gandhi, and have been able to hear that voice except in snatches, and perhaps not with that universality, with that dimension, with which he did? So we are asked to read his books instead! When can you grow? When you have seen the inner light awakened, to see, to hear and to follow. Now that is where I found if there is some trick or technique by which that inner awakening can be made, and the conscience can once again come into its own as an inner voice in each one of

you, that will be your formulation of your ethical life on the basis of your own experience. Not denying the experience of others, but by gathering the higher rationality and a higher illumination and power which can be helping us to move a more harmonious society than we have been having.

Conscience has been hailed to be a discordant note in a political society. Conscience is the only note that can bring us together in a spiritual society. That is why if even politics is to be purified, this conscience has to come into its own. That is a truth, which Gandhiji fully realised and affirmed. Nobody emphasised it so greatly as he in his own political life, and in his own religious one.

But the danger has been, as we know, the pre-occupation with politics too early. Before it has become illumined in the hearts of every being, people were gathered and carried away by what is called the glamour of a conscience of one man rather than the conscience of every man clamoring for its own, harmonious formulation in the whole.

Now you ask me whether I do believe that these

consciences will not collide with each other and cast shadows on each other. No! If they are taken up to the highest point to which our own srutis have gone, it is possible to have it. So how to hear the sruti is the problem. How each one of us is to become a mantradrishtha, how to see the mantra which each one of those people saw? What is a mantra? The technical meaning of the word mantra, is, that by thought to cross over. It is that process by which you cross over all the limitations of an individuality, and separatism, and disharmony by getting at that thought which makes for liberation of your Self. If the Veda has been considered to be a doctrine of liberation and not merely a doctrine of rites and rituals, it is there that we get these things. And any scripture that has gone up to that point, when it has been capable, by means of the highest thought, to liberate us and take us beyond it, that would be a scripture and a revelation.

On the contrary everybody is given mantras but the mantras belong to a lower order. So what is that mantra which we can, and which we are, to get? As this system of Sahaj Marg fully puts it, the original manas or thought which is first born of the first mind of God is that which is capable of being the force by which a transcendence of being is possible. And that force which is qualified by this rhythm, or by its vibration, can not only control your entire being but re-organize you and prepare you to hear

that higher voice of the divine. Therefore this thought, the supreme first mind of God, or manas, is now being introduced into the abhyasi as the force by which he can be regulated and taken higher and higher to a point of a direct audition of the divine. He becomes, then, an embodiment and personality of the divine, in so far as he only listens to that voice as the voice that is within him, and yet transcendently capable of applying to everybody; and which he can also make clear to everyone as a liberating influence in human life.

So, this is the value of the mantra. It is something, which is heard. And you know, of course, many people will find that what is heard is what is heard from the teacher! And how? Of course by means of bhashyas and all that! That is why we are called again. Sruti has come to be a question of a mere repetition and recitation of scriptures. Or, rather, learning the scripture orally from the master, and in repeating it again, and transmitting it that way. We are grateful to these people who preserved the scripture, transmitted in that manner, heard from the master, learnt by the pupil, and once again taught not by books, but by recitation. Well they have done that. It has been how we have preserved not only our literature but every other literature as well. May be that these people did not know how to print books, or may be they had no writing material or something like that, and that is why they did

all that but we don't believe so. We believe that the highest spiritual truths must be got in a personal way from the Master who knows not merely the word-meaning of it but also the force by which it can begin to transform your life.

When we have so many scriptures in this world, what is our problem? Our problem is, how we can, directly, without the aid of language, go to thought itself. Because language is merely a vehicle of that thought. And languages can be many, but the thought is one. And this thought, given by the supreme Master, by God himself, to us, can produce that possibility of an entire revelation of a sruti in your conscience. And your conscience therefore becomes awakened to a new dimension of being which is beyond all that we know about society or politics, race or colour, or any other thing. It is truly universal in that sense, and truly liberating. The literal meaning of the word Mantra, really shows us the genesis of the idea of a super-conscious mind filling in the supreme thought into you and working your transformation.

This is the system, without all those things which take several years just to learn even the text of it, and where the only earnestness is to learn the letter and the sound of

it but not the force by which it comes to transform and lead you to liberation. Shri Ram Chandraji, my beloved Master, has shown that this process of a higher vibration, which may be accompanied sometimes by sound though not always – it comes as a vibration and it is translated into sound very much like, I think, your receivers converting the vibrations into sound – if that possibility occurs, then a man becomes a super-auditional man, a vedic seer, a Rishi. Or he may become one who merely sees—a mantra drishta, he may not hear, he may see the mantra. That is another possibility. He sees the darshan, I mean this higher truth, and it comes to him in that form. So some cases we have, I think due to suggestion and other things. Some people have created imageries of this vision and given them forms. But really if you go backward you can dissolve them into their original components of waves and vibrations. It is a more primary fact in higher reality. So if you look into this aspect of the mantra-drishti and mantra-sruti, you find that the consciousness grows into these dimensions under the guidance of the Master of this system. It is very easy, for the obvious reason that what is introduced into you is a living breath, which the Upanishad puts very neatly

“Keneshitam patati preshitam manaha Kena prana prathama praiti yuktaha. Keneshitam vachamimam vadanti Chakshu, srotram, ka u devo yunakti”

What is that force by which I see, I hear, I speak, I mind?

Srotrasya srotram manaso manoyad Vacho ha vacham sa
u Pranasya Pranaha, Chakshusaschakshur atimuchya
dheerah Pretya asmallokad amrita bhavanti.

That is how the Kena upanishad puts it. That is why what is designated as the Pranasya Pranaha, the breath of breath, is also chakshu of chakshuhu is also the srotra of the srotra, and the vak of vak. So it is that force which we call the Pranasya Pranaha, the supreme force which we call the Manas which later on became degraded into reason and all that. This is the original concept of it, and it is, by the great Lalaji, mentioned as component Atman, Brah-man—‘Man’ is used there as designating the supreme first mind of God. He has written it in his studies on Vedic knowledge which was published in the “Sahaj Marg” in Hindi and Urdu, I believe. Now that is the position. If you take that point you will find that this concept of mind being capable of being seen at that level, heard at that level, lived by at that level, that is actively, dynamically participated in; that is lived, and spoken of at that level, indescribable though to us. It is at that level described in a different way as amenable to that consciousness, and in tune with THAT consciousness,

with its own vocabulary or dictionary, if I may so put it, which they call the nirguna of the higher order, or the nirukta; and all vyakarana, the grammar of experience, everything is there at that level.

But since we are today looking for what is called postvedic grammar and dictions and all that, we do not know anything about this sruti. There is a distortion. If you can once again recover that consciousness, that Conscience as I may put it, which is verified within by each one of the mantra-drishatas and the great mantrikas, we have the recovery of conscience practically made by every one of us. The recovery of conscience, then, in this sense of a word of the voice of God within us, of the Ultimate within us, is an absolute necessity. And it is not beyond our reach, nor should we think it is a desperate point that we can never get at that kind of consciousness, that we cannot become rishis, that we cannot become 'kavis'. One man asked me 'If those people have failed, what can I do?' Where they have failed, these have been stepping stones for us to go beyond. Their failures are our successes, or preparations for our successes.

That is why our past is merely something on which we build our future! Don't think it is something to be destroyed by us! Even if they are rubble, you can yet

build on that. By what? By the discovery of the inner consciousness which is a living force, a creative and dynamic force.

This same mantra was, at one stage, called the tantra. There is no mantra without a tantra. Here, again, if I want to go back to the meaning, what is that Tam which I have to realise as the Ultimate? That is That! Tat tvamasi – what is THAT? Realise That and take it back, and by that you cross over. Here again my Master has given the meaning of the Ultimate as Tam. The name of it is Tam – THAT. You cannot express it in any other languages. You cannot call it aham, you cannot call it tvam. It is THAT. That—if you cannot get THAT, and that is the Pranasya Prana which he offers in his Pranahuti, into every one of you, then that little flame, that little light, that little word, gets projected into you and speaks from within you. Then this God is reborn in the souls of men and conscience has a real light which will be enduring, which will be unflinching. Then you have a fearlessness, which is beyond all compare.

It is one of the great attributes of man that he is always in fear. It is the great attribute of a God that he is fearless. The Divine gives fearlessness, as Rama in the Ramayana said,

“Abhayam sarvabhutebhyo dadami, etat vratam mama”

I can say that abhaya is something which I give – fearlessness – not merely security from suffering. I give you fearlessness from every element – sarvabhutebhyo— from every element, and from every creature in the universe, gods and men, plants and vipers. If one can give you that, he who can give you that must be a God, is it not? That is how we designated Rama. ‘Abhayam sarvabhutebhyo dadami etat vratam mama’, now he who can give that, as Plato said, walk with him unto death, unto eternity. Such a one is amongst us today. I humbly submit that here is a Personality who can give that living force into you to awaken the mantra in you, and the tantra in you. And all that you are needed to do is to surrender to that force by which your whole life may be not merely re-illuminated, but also guided in the most highly ethical sense of the term.

When Frank Buchanan, in his Moral Rearmament movement, tried to say that our society and the universal society can only be brought into a moral position by involving the divine or God every day, (by which alone you can live) he was uttering a truth of very great significance for most people, who had forgotten how to

rely on God. They had relied on the scriptures and on this and that. He quietly said, sit in prayer every morning and ask of God what I shall do, note it down and do it without any question. That was an appeal to conscience, if I may put it to you. That was an inkling but how far does it go? If morality is merely social amelioration and acts of kindness, I have nothing to say against it. It is very good. We can do MORE than that, when we awaken the conscience a little more, not merely by habit of practising in the morning, but by a living transcendence over the conditions in which we live; by bringing in the highest force possible, the same revelatory force by which a Mohammed saw, a Moses saw, and our Vedic seers saw, the great Zarathustra saw, or a Confucius saw, all that we go beyond. Because there is one common factor, unless you yield yourself to the divine, the divine does not mould itself into your pattern. So is this consciousness, if you can only submit yourself to this great experiment in divine living. Conscience can once again come to its pristine, real meaning and not be what it is today, a laughing stock of everybody.