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THE
Arya Samaj & Islam.

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THE ARYA SAMAJ
AND
ISLAM.

The Arya Samaj is not Islam and Islam is not the Arya Samaj; and yet there is much common between them.

The world had rolled on for millions of years before Islam came. Even Arabia had witnessed thousands of generations of men before Mohammad, the great prophet of Islam appeared there.

Were these long periods that preceded the descent of the Qoran on man, without any light? At least the votaries of Islam say so. They call the pre-Islamic times as Zamana-e-Jahiliat (زمانہ جاہلیتہ) or "the period of ignorance." But it is inconceivable that the Almighty Who is the Light of Lights, should leave the world for such long periods to roll on in darkness. Long before we were created, the earth was endowed

with two great lights the sun and the moon, the one round which our earth moved and the other which moved round our earth. Had there been no sun or no moon, our physical eyes would have been quite useless—nay, they might not have existed. What is true of the physical sun and the physical moon, is equally true of the spiritual luminaries. *The material world is but a counter part of the spiritual world.* Do you think that the God who could not tolerate that our physical eyes even for a moment might remain without the aid of the sun, should have desired that for millions of years millions of generations of men might come and go, be born and die, without any spiritual or moral light? What sort of men and women were they that walked in total spiritual or moral darkness? And what sort of God it was that could give them light but would not and did not? Why did he wait so long? Why did he allow millions of years *to pass, before he could shower the blessings of his light upon humanity?*

Islam cannot answer these questions, but the Arya Samaj can. The Arya Samaj is an organisation which is a little over half a century old.

But the principles that it inculcates are by no means new. It does not claim any originality. What it says is that from the very dawn of the Universe God has given to man-kind the light of his knowledge called the Vedic. The Vedic teachings have come down to our generation through many channels direct or indirect, visible or invisible, expressed or implied. Most often we are unable to trace the light we have, to its fountain-head; mostly we cannot. But we are never left without any light.

Swami Dayanand was the founder of the Arya Samaj; just as Mohammad was the founder of Islam. But while the latter claimed for himself the distinct position of the best of mankind, of the prophet of the Lord, of one whose like there never was and never shall be; the former put forth no such claims. He only meant to revive the old Vedic principles which had been forgotten for sometimes past. While Mohammad claimed to be a mediator between God and men, Swami Dayanand preached that man needed no mediator.

Where in lay the greatness of Mohammad?

Great certainly he was, as it was he, who controlled the uncivilized and warring Arabs and made them a once world-wide power. The tide of Islam was once so forceful that it swept away everything that came before it, east or west. It spread over the whole of Southern Europe, Northern Africa and a great portion of Asia. It invaded India too and kept it under its thralldom for several centuries. But the peculiarity of Indian culture made India too strong a nut to crack. It no doubt exploited much of India's weaknesses. But there are inherent forces in the Hindu Society and Hindu civilization that make it survive all storms and cataclysms. While Afghanistan, Persia, Arabia and Egypt are cent per cent Islamic, inspite of a thralldom ranging over ten long centuries, only one fourth of the Indians could embrace Islam. And now their chances of increase are growing less and less.

What made Islam successful in Arabia ? Three things ;—

- (i) the gross ignorance of the inhabitants of that great sandy peninsula.

(ii) the most dis-organised condition of the Arabian Society.

(iii) the extraordinary skill of Mohammad to influence and control the warring tribes.

Once successful in Arabia, the followers of Mohammad made their incursions into neighbouring countries and so forceful was the rush of the invaders and so dis-united were the invaded people that they readily succumbed to the Islamic influences.

But Islam was only partially successful in case of India. India was utterly *dis-united when Islamic invasions were made*. Though not physically much weaker and in certain cases decidedly stronger, the Indian rulers and the Indian people had lost that constitutional strength which alone could have withstood the Islamic tide. But India had one clear advantage. It was the high level of India's philosophy and morals, which notwithstanding the superficial weakness, could hold their own. It often occurs that a very highly civilized people contract certain weaknesses in a course of time and have *to sustain a defeat at the hands of*

a less civilized but physically strong enemy. The case was just the same with India. Its philosophy and religion, though very sublime, had lost the intrinsic strength. The priest-craft was too strong. Superstition, fetish worship and birth-vanity had eaten into the very vitals of the Indian civilization. The Mohamadans were a new religion. They were full of zeal. The Islamic caliphs thought it a boon to find that the Afghan invaders were anxious to lay hold on Indian's wealth and therefore in order to kill two birds with one stone, they conferred the honour of the protector of religion upon them. It was these "Protectors of Religion" like Mohammad-bin-Qasim and Mahmud of Ghazni who invaded India, razed Hindu temples to ground, took away Indian wealth and left Islam here, instead. The princes and people of India were so disunited and Hindu religion of those days was so farcically ceremonial that inspite of a continued struggle lasting for several centuries, the tide of Islamic in-roads could not be checked.

In this connection two things are worth noticing. First that Hinduism could not check

Islam. Second that Islam could not totally uproot Hinduism. Both the facts have an explanation, and it is in this that the relation of the Arya Samaj and Islam has to be discovered.

Islamic invasions to India were not the first of their kind. For several centuries before them the Greeks, the Huns and other foreigners had tried their strength with the Hindus. The Great Greek, Alexander of Macedon, had defeated the Hindu prince Porus, twelve or thirteen centuries before. The defeat was due to jealousy and disunion of the Hindu princes. But Hinduism itself was so compact that one conquest could not score much for the Greeks and the Hindu civilization recovered the lost ground in no time. The Huns came and settled in India, but they soon merged their identity into all-absorbing Hindu nationality. Hindu religion and Hindu philosophy, Hindu morals and Hindu sociology were so powerful factors that the foreigners had to bow their heads respectfully before them and came under their all-embracing influence.

This is the story of pre-Islamic periods. But by the time Islam arose, the Hindu society became disintegrated. Hindu religion became a monopoly of a selected few. The absorbing power of the Hindus became weak. There came to be chinks in the solid wall of the Hindu society. A great majority of the Hindus were deprived of several of their important rights. High castes and low castes were rent asunder from each other. The loosening of ties made the whole Hindu fabric weak. The Mohamedans had no such defects. They were more solid and therefore stronger. Their fraternity was more compact. And therefore when they invaded the Hindus the latter could not withstand the invasion successfully, and Islam entered into India any how.

But Islam too did not find the victory easy. Though physically and in some cases socially stronger, their morals and religion and philosophy were much weaker. It is why, though temporarily triumphant, they could not make a much headway in extinguishing Hinduism. Wherever and whenever Mohamedan princes became tolerant and forbearing, Hinduism began to influence

them. And whenever a Mohamadan prince became bigotted, the Hindu ideal of self-sacrifice created reaction and kept the flame of Hindu religion burning. It was the defective social customs of the Hindus that prevented Akbar the great and Dara from becoming open Hindus. But it was the intrinsic merits of Hindu religion that could not but attract reasonable and unbiggotted Mohomedans. Had there been no uncrossable gulf of customs, as there was none in the days of the Greeks and the Huns, there would have been left not a single Mohomedan in India and the Mohomedan conquerers who had come from Afghanistan, Persia, Arabia or Turkey, would have been undistinguishably mingled with the Hindus,

But such things were not destined to happen. And India is today what it is. There are Hindus with high morals and high philosophy, but with a host of fatal weaknesses. There are Mohomedans, with several social advantages, but deprived of innumerable spiritual boons. These two great communities could have come nearer as well as supplemented each other. But each of

them has its distinct mentality which keeps the gulf as wide as ever. Each thinks itself chosen of the gods, the noblest and the sublimest, and much taller than the other. The Hindus regard the Mohomedans as hopeless renegades, with no grain of virtue left in them and with only possibility of redemption through re-incarnation. The Mohomedans think the Hindus heathen or heretics only worth being converted to Islam sooner or later. The Arya Samaj stands in the middle and tries to cement the gulf.

First of all the Arya Samaj has brought about such changes in the Hindu society as have either partially or totally removed the disabilities of the Mohomedans. Formerly no Hindu allowed his sacred scriptures, especially the Vedas to be read by a non Hindu. The Arya Samaj freely teaches every holy book to all, Mohomedans or others. Secondly, no Mohomedan could on any condition embrace Hinduism. The Arya Samaj has altogether demolished the barrier and flung the door of Vedic faith open for all. Thirdly the Arya Samaj has proved beyond doubt that idolatory which Islam hated so much is not a Vedic

institution, but a superstition of late origin and therefore worthy of being discarded.

But to Islam also it has a message. It agrees with Islam that idolatory is bad. But it also emphasizes that Islam cannot shake off idolatory altogether as long as it holds the prophet as a mediator between God and man.

It is a question of academical interest as to what position "the prophet" occupies in Islam. The students of Holy Islamic scripture may differ on this point. Possibly Mohammad may not have liked to make his own self so prominent in matters of worship. Possibly it might have been his keen desire to see that none but God should be worshipped. But the fact remains that disciples and successors, like the disciples and successors of many other great men, threw God in the back ground and brought the prophet into prominence. If we study closely the history of the events that have followed the demise of the great prophet, up to this day, one thing will be quite clear, *i.e.*, the name and importance of the Prophet have out-eclipsed all considerations. The Kalima or the formulà of worship with differ-

ent other ceremonials that form the main factors of religion extols the prophet even above God. The Urdu verse often sung by Mohomedans :—

معتمد کی جلوہ نمائی نہ ہوتی
تو ہرگز خدا کی خدائی نہ ہوتی

'Had there been no glorification of Mohomed, the god-head of God could never have come into prominence' truly represents a typical Mohomadan mind. What Mohamed meant metaphysically or spiritually by the term 'prophet' is a question. But the present Islamic attitude about the prophet has reduced Islam to man-worship which is by no means better and in many respects, worse than idolatry. It must be remembered that man-worship is in the background of all idol-worship. Idolatry is always the result of man-worship. It is why inspite of a vigorous crusade against idolatry, Islam could not shake it off and it appeared again and again in ten thousand different forms of tomb-worship, black-stone-worship, paper-worship (Tazias) and so forth and so on. There is hardly anything more dangerous than man-worship in the realm of religion. It produces slave mentality and

fanaticism which are the most fatal enemies of true religion. However good, however grand a man may be, his good qualities soon sink into the background and his weaknesses become an object of worship by his followers. Nowhere is this truer than in the case of Islam. Mohomad was a great man, but after all, a man. He had his strong points, as well as weak. None is perfect but God, and as Mohammad was not God, he had imperfections. His good qualities can be discovered only by very intelligent persons, while his imperfections are imitated by the masses.

The founder of the Arya Samaj made safeguards against this trap. His nobility of purpose and purity of life made Swami Dayanand equally adorable by his followers. But the one point he emphasized was that he was as good a man as anybody else and therefore his saying should not be an object of blind faith. It is only through teachings like these that all worships other than the worship of God can be uprooted. Why does a man worship objects other than God? Human history and human psychology show that heroes become demi-gods and demi-gods gods in the

course of time. All the idols belonging to any mythology are the representations of demi-gods who in their turn were the heroes shrouded in the mystery supplied by blind faith. These demi gods, better known as prophets in some religions, have always led men astray from the worship of the true God, though the fact is that originally they claimed to be the true devotees of God.

These are the essential points of divergence between Islam and Arya Samaj:—

(1) The Arya Samaj believes that Divine Revelation can take place only in the beginning of the universe just as the revelation of the sun, the fountain head of material light. Islam believes that divine revelation is subject to abrogation and modification like other human codes. But the greatest inconsistency which Islam allows is that while changing and progressive, the revelations became perfect in the Qoran and the Mohammad was the last prophet. Historical researches plainly prove that the Qoran has many merits minus the merit of being new. Its teachings are eclectic. Nothing except the personality of the prophet is such as may not be

traced to one or other religious scriptures. The Arya Samaj does not reject all Quranic teachings. It emphasizes that these teachings can be traced to older books and that there are many sublime things which existed in olden times and either have not found place in the Qoran or in the current interpretations of the Qoran.

(2) In Islam human soul has no importance, not even an independent existence. It is the product of God's whims. God creates soul out of nothing. Why? God knows. How? God knows. To what end? God knows. The Arya Samaj endows soul with an independent existence. It is eternal and the centre of the universe. It is for soul's sake that God creates the universe. It is not a puppet in the divine hands. It moulds our destiny. It is responsible. Islam allots the soul only a chance existence. In it life is an accident without any history. But the Arya Samaj holds that the present life is a very small part of a beginningless and endless life. The law of Karma (action) and the doctrine of re-birth are based upon this.

(3) The Arya Samaj co-ordinates faith and

reason, while Islam emphasizes the former at the expense of the latter. 'Islam' means faith that without reason leads to fanaticism. The attitude of Islam towards other religions or religionists is a glaring example of this fact.

Is the Arya Samaj hostile to Islam? Not so much as it appears to be. Every organisation has certain aims. It is friendly to those who help and unfriendly to those who retard. This is true not only of the Arya Samaj, but of Islam, Christianity and what not. The question can be put in another form? Is Islam hostile to the Arya Samaj? The Arya Samaj stands for free thought and free action. If Islam too stands for these, then, however divergent on other points, Islam has no fear from the Arya Samaj or vice versa. But unfortunately Islam has not been doing this. In former times the followers of Islam burnt libraries on the plea that if the books there contained any thing non-Qoranic, they were undesirable and if Qoranic, they were superfluous. The same attitude of Islam is still conspicuous, especially in India. The Arya Samaj is really hostile to everything that does not leave individual conscience free.

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