

ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS DOGMATISM : A RE-READING OF THE MOVIE LAKSHMI CHELE

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ABSTRACT

We can define "dogmatism" as the philosophical attitude of those who maintain that some propositions are not merely probable, or practically certain, but unconditionally true, provided only when we agree on the meaning of their terms and are able to understand them. Religion is, in itself, a desirable thing, but no one dogma can be regarded as essential to it. Religion is clearly a state of mind. It is also clear that it is not exclusively the acceptance of certain propositions as true. It seems therefore that it may best be described as an emotion resting on a conviction of a harmony between ourselves and the universe at large. The phrase 'a true religion' is scarcely accurate, since religion is not a system of propositions, but an emotion. Yet that emotion is the result of an intellectual process. No man is justified in a religious attitude except as the result of metaphysical study. We need for religion to be able to regard the universe as good on the whole, and it does not appear that we could do this except on the basis of a general theory as to the ultimate nature of reality. On this context this paper tries to give a narrative and interplay of religious dogmatism that exist in the Bengali movie Lakshmi Chele.

KEYWORDS: *Lakshmi Chele, dogmatism, religion, emotion.*

INTRODUCTION

Religion and Dogmatism an overview

It should not be completely impossible to comprehend religion's nature, that is, what it is to all men and has always been. Religion is arguably the most fundamentally meaningful fact in human existence. The first thing that strikes us about it is that it both has a permanent and a transient character: the feeling seems to remain constant even if the object is constantly changing. We must mention any distinctions that are obvious for historical or scientific reasons. Each type of religious organisation is referred to as a religion and each variation as a sect or denomination. There are many ways to define religion. The definition offered by Prof. Tiele, "The fundamental substance of religion is found in the religiosity or religious frame of mind," may be one of the least informative of contemporary formulations. One is reminded of the well-known description of an archdeacon as 'a person who fulfils archidiaconal functions' by the phrase 'the sum of all those phenomena which are commonly considered religious in contradistinction to ethical, aesthetical, political, and others.' However, the majority of the definitions appear to fall within two categories: i.) Those who define religion as a belief in one or more superhuman, invisible, or supernatural beings. ii.) Those who see religion as an attitude toward the cosmos, a devotion to a moral standard, or a sense of the appropriateness of things. It may be referred to as the ethical view because it does not necessarily reject elements that are 'ethical, aesthetical, and political.'

Strangely enough, Tiele adds the ethical component as a defining aspect of all higher faiths. It is present in one of the lowest forms of religion. Religion is a state in the second class; it is a belief or opinion in the first. Religion in the first leads to "following God's will" or "pleasing God" or influencing God; in the second, it leads to doing the right thing. In the first, man sees his own likeness against a backdrop of the supernatural; holding this notion to be true is viewed as a sort of religion.

Definitions of dogma and religious dogma include 'those whose acceptance or rejection by anyone would modify his religious opinion' and 'any notion which has a metaphysical importance.' Dr. McTaggart examines three dogmas that have been more or less intimately associated with religion in his book *Some Dogmas of Religion*, they are A Personal God, Free Will, and Human Immortality. Regarding the determination of the will, it appears to be a purely factual issue that science should be able to address; if not already resolved, it is likely on track to be so. If this and the other two dogmas are examined, it can be said that none of them have a strong enough foundation in probability. Dr. McTaggart believes that the final theory still has some life in it, although he acknowledges that "there is no justification for a positive belief that immortality is true."

Changes have been viewed as an evolutionary process, although theological concepts rather than religion have evolved. Man is shown as transitioning from magic to some type of monotheism before resting there after experiencing animism and polytheism. The earlier kinds are reportedly only considered useful or true in relation to a final mode of cognition. So, perhaps for a hundred thousand years, man has chased after

illusions. Every religious idea has served the purpose of evolving into another. However, it appears that process is still ongoing as evidenced by the fact that even writers on the issue hold a variety of opinions. Religion occurs naturally. It is the global spirit that is animating everyone of us. In this particular instance, we do not refer to it as a religious act since we qualify it with a more specific term, but it appears to have religious roots given that the nobler option is chosen and there is also the intelligent perception of an aggregate to which the person belongs. This, however, is merely a simple expression of the religious drive; its more complex forms manifest in a continual stream of deeds, either chosen after careful consideration or arising organically from character.

Despite its humble origins in a primordial impulse, religion only becomes clearly articulate when it reaches an emotion and a desire that include the individual's place in the larger scheme and, as a result, involve claims with metaphysical importance. Dogma might be considered "essential to religion" in this sense. However, that obviously does not imply theological dogma. This has a known origin. It appears to have resulted from the application of imagination to a set of incompletely known facts, producing a moving image or an ever-changing phantasmagoria in response to the advancement of experience and changes in society; however, despite having greatly influenced the forms of religious activity, it neither constitutes religion nor its core ideas. Although they have all entered the realm of religion, mythology, magic, theology, and even politics have not produced religion and don't seem to be essential to it.

Prayers made to the goddess of smallpox or the demon of plague is not very peaceful. It is more common to pray to a bad deity than a good one. The problems of the next world have been added to those of this one, and the fact that we no longer believe it is really our only solace. However, it does not provide us peaceful possession of anything, not even this earth. Religion free from theological dogma should enable us to put an end to many of the evils in life that we have caused and to accept them with composure. In this regard, we can even learn from the primitives, whose initiation rituals, which involve fasting and excruciating physical agony, seem to be geared to teach young people how to endure suffering with fortitude or indifference. And the joy that results from a sense of harmony with the universe still stands as the positive aspect of religion. It's also important to keep in mind that dogma frequently vanishes just when it's needed the most. Even if a drug is helpful, it is useless if we are out of it. In all progressive communities, excess ceremony and dogma eventually seems to elicit a response: Jesus, Micah, and Isaiah all voiced protests in Palestine; Buddha did the same in India. The old dogmatic theology has been transformed or lost in modern philosophy. After undergoing a number of transformations, the concept of God has finally turned

into an abstraction, a metaphor, or a memory. Fewer, less demanding, and ultimately less horrible gods now exist.

One of the most important contemporary developments is the rise of agnosticism, which is quickly gaining popular among writers. Agnosticism isn't a religion; rather, it's an attitude toward dogmatic theological affirmation. However, an agnostic doesn't necessarily have to be atheist and frequently isn't. Indeed, insofar as a person is agnostic, he or she should be more receptive to religion; his or her spiritual vision will be clearer, and he or she will be better able to realise the possibilities of religion; for one who is no longer motivated by fear of punishment or hope of reward, a higher order of action is possible.

Theological dogma has long been regarded as essential to morals and as the removal of which would result in the dissolution of society as a whole. This is pretty strange considering that morality has been declared a sin at the same time. The truth is that morality predated theology. Even after the illusions have vanished, reality has not changed. Religion is what's left, and it's the most powerful and stunning thing there is, as here realised. "Believing in something good is a necessary component of religion, and religion itself is a positive thing." Yes, religion is more than just the practice of it. We scarcely need to bother asking ourselves if we believe in it. Whether we believe in the air we breathe is up to us. It still sustains our existence, but when we have a thorough understanding of it, we can make the most of it.

Theology in and of itself is not anything that religion can disagree with and can function either way. Religion has always been felt and recognised even in the worst situations, just as Hercules is Hercules even when wearing rags. The love of the highest will always lead a person to something greater than themselves, or at the very least to something that is good, lovely, and true.

'Dogmatism involves a belief in a doctrine, which provides system to all beliefs and so demonstrates each belief to be immovable.' Dogmatism is hence the unquestioning, selective, and irrational persistence of an opinion. It is an unfounded and largely immutable conviction. Dogmatism, in Rokeach's opinion, is narrow-mindedness. Dogmatism, according to him, is a very tight system of beliefs or disbeliefs about reality that is based on a core set of convictions about absolute authority and that, in turn, serves as a foundation for intolerance or conditional tolerance of others.

When someone authoritatively states their perspective and shows no tolerance for other people's viewpoints, they are said to be dogmatic. 'A proclamation by someone who does not articulate his premises or present any proof, but depends upon "prestige" (authority) to ensure acceptance of his beliefs without scrutiny,' according to Mander, is what he refers to as a dogma. Dogmatism is predicated on the belief that "I am right and

everyone else is wrong," from a psychological standpoint. A dogmatist rarely, if ever, acknowledges when he is mistaken. However, this assurance regarding one's own opinions is unwarranted. Such a person is distinguished by an extreme degree of tenacity in his adherence to his beliefs and principles. Dogmatism is not always just an individual trait; it may also be a group trait. A dogmatic assertion could be handed down orally from one person to the next. It might be a component of a specific group of people's traditional beliefs or social legacy. Social order is directly threatened by dogmatism. It is a polarising and disruptive force that causes social instability. It can manifest as an obsessive devotion to one's own idea, belief, or concept and change into a multitude of social ills as sectarianism, fundamentalism, fanaticism, intolerance, conflicts, and religious militancy. One could consider the history of religion to be the history of persecution brought on by dogmatism.

Fanaticism is dogmatism's most severe form. It appears when one's adherence to a belief system, a feeling of exclusivity, hostility, and dread are at their height. Fanaticism must necessarily have elements of hatred, destructiveness, and militancy. In the spiritual realm, fanaticism encourages ignorance and limits knowledge. Fanaticism is an excessive form of attachment that results from a lack of human intelligence. William Nicholls stated that "Fanaticism may possibly be the trait of those who believe their religious or religio-political goals excuse the employment of otherwise illegal tactics." These tactics—slander, murder, and suicide murder—are used against other organisations that the leaders of the fanatical group have designated as their opponents. On a psychological level, it appears that their intense devotion to their religious object, whether it is a deity or something else entirely, drives them to detest people who are seen as being in opposition to their own reality. Therefore, hatred is at the core of fanaticism.

From the above concepts and belief let us now re-read the Bengali movie *Lakshmi Chele* and give a narration of religious dogmatism and the socio-political aura.

LAKSHMI CHELE- THE MOVIE

As the title of the movie depicts Lakshmi there is a spontaneous feeling that it should be related with a girl but there lies the twist when lakshmi chele is named after a boy. Here the director of the movie actually has given the two central characters equal significance. Lakshmi is supposed to be the girl, little lokkhi, the miracle child with four arms became the 'god child'- reincarnation of Ma Lokkhi in a village that is situated far away from the modernized enlightened city of Kolkata. The village was inhabited by dalits. Lokkhi's ancestors suffered much racism, injustice and humiliation before the birth of this little girl. Rajat Narayan Roy, the high caste landlord of the village and the moral guardian of these villagers saw this

opportunity i.e. the birth of the child as a means to make money and also to popularize the village. Three junior doctors named Amir Hussain, Shibnath and Gayatri saw through the deceit of superstition and blind faith identify the clinical condition of Lokkhi. The baby was born with a rare condition where a conjoined twin did not fully form. In pursuing the treatment of Lokkhi, Amir and his friends took extraordinary steps. They later realized that superstition and blind faith could not be remedied.

Kaushik Ganguly the director tries to bring out the condition and a reality check of our society in 21st century where the world moved from telescope to drone, but the actual picture – our girl children, caste system and the religious dogmas in today's world remains unchanged. He was moved by the true story of Lakshmi Tatma- a baby born with eight limbs in Bihar in 2005. *Lakshmi Chele* is a realistic fiction that fills the eyes with tears. He captures the life and struggle of marginal people of rural Bengal. Never does it appeared to be out of place, or imposed. Their poverty, their festivals, worship, blind faith in destiny, their compromises with the upper caste and the rest of the world – everything looks so real that it transcends the borders of Bengal and also becomes a reflection of India's social life at the margins.

Lokkhi in the film who actually was the trump card for the landlord of the village and an avenue through which he could win the propaganda of elections was taken for treatment by the junior doctors and there this fellow saw this act as an act of disrespect that was done to the religion when he realized that one of the doctor is Muslim. The film was so portrayed that Amir Hussain was the main initiator to pursue the treatment of Lokkhi and he was beaten to that extent that in his later life he was crippled. The whole story was so planned that the film was named after Amir Hussain – he was the Lokkhi chele (good boy) the dedication, courage and the will that was reflected in the process of treating the girl child to normal was beyond imagination. There lies two aspects -one, a Muslim destroying the thought process of the Hindus second, the belief of god (spirituality) intertwined with politics were shattered. So some bigotry of religion that existed in the village was somehow disrupted. Humanity, science and technology were shown as the light through which Lokkhi was cured. But in a remote village there was no humanity when people were engulfed in superstition. So even in this era of post modernism stringent religious beliefs still lies ahead of science and technology, as because a bright young fellow who had a great future ahead was forced to lead a life entwined to wheelchair.

EVALUTION

Depending on how strongly someone holds onto an idea or a conviction, dogmatism can have a wide range of negative impacts on both an individual and society. At both the individual and societal levels, dogmatism takes the form of

intellectual narrow-mindedness, an inability to accept novel concepts, the rejection of one's own and others' right to free thought, clannishness, and authoritarianism. Increased involvement with ideas and beliefs leads to extremism and intolerance, which in turn leads to militancy and secession, wars, and conflicts.

Religion (spirituality) and dogmatism are incompatible concepts. Dogmatism is based on opinions, while religion is based on everlasting truths. Religious universalism stands in stark contrast to dogmatic isolation and compartmentalization. While dogmatism breeds societal estrangement and exclusive identities, religion promotes a sense of unity and oneness among all living things. Dogmatism develops when the intellect is neglected and spirituality suffers as a result. As a result, mechanical ritual, blind belief, superstition, and dogma have replaced the living knowledge of the scriptures and the truths contained within.

A liberal approach to spiritual and secular education must be promoted in order to combat dogmatism. The emphasis in educational institutions has to change from increasing intelligence to developing intelligence. A person with a liberal education can use their intelligence to succeed and find inner peace in both the material and spiritual worlds. A person with a high level of intelligence cannot give in to rigidity and closed-mindedness. The acute mind knows that "those who rise beyond ego interests and pursue the transcendent Self within are the truly religious and spiritual." They persistently pursue the Self through religion, religious books, and religious rituals. Keep their impartiality and tolerance of all religions without succumbing to fanatical attachment to one in particular.

In the movie *Laskhmi Chele*, religious dogmatism was seen as lack of proper education within the Dalits and the other villagers. They were unaware of the world around. They were confined to the small world of the village they live in. Livelihood to them was to search for food and clothing, their basic necessities. Education for them was luxury and they were

too rigid to understand any new development and change. For this restricted thought the landlord of the village took advantage and used their miserable situation and the miracle child as weapon to politicize the entire social structure. The prey to this strong dogmatism and closed mindedness was a bright chele (boy) who on humanitarian ground helped the special child to attain normal life.

Dogmatism and its different forms will continue to show its colours until the supreme Self within rise above personal desires. People are yet to come out of such practices. The movie itself tried to highlight the fact and gave a reality check to the backwardness that still prevails in our social structure and the extermination is a bit difficult.

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