

## A Letter to a Hindu — Essay of Leo Tolstoy Ritu Bajaj

Letter to a Hindu is a reply letter of Tolstoy to Editor of Free Hindustan for one of his letters to him. It is introduced by M. K. Gandhi.

Gandhi approbated Tolstoy not only for his ideology of replacing violence, tyranny and securing reforms with non-resistance to evil but also called him sage of Yasnaya Polyana and urge Indian nationalist, of that eon, to vigil that we must not replace one evil, in India, with another.

It is learned from the essay that the great entities of yore like Mahatma and Tolstoy who were involved in wakening of people against oppression had understood that the vile lies within the human. And Spiritual realization or religious consciousness could be man's guide in dealing with evil, not violence as it would give birth to another evil.

Excerpts from the writings of Hindus and Krishna have been placed in between essay by Tolstoy to corroborate that human eschewed love strewn by God and chose violence as method of living.

Tolstoy has emphasized on religiosity. Compel readers to believe that religious consciousness has been eschewed by people over the period of time and is cause of evil. Essay seem more of religious wakening and lambasting on humans.

Leo Tolstoy in this letter has expressed, in general, cause of arise of dreadful evil-oppression, a minority group overpowering majority, which emits demoralization. He explains that the reason of majority of people submit themselves to handful of people is always and everywhere is same. For people believe that a community could be kept together if some of them rule others. He cites example, of uncouth days of human race when people believed to live in groups and families, in nations, ruled by one or more, by which he explains that this kind of arrangements has always been manifested.

On reason of India being oppressed. He finds the phenomena of oppression in India strange for he considered Indians lofty in religious morality than their oppressors.

Tolstoy expresses that the reason for any race being oppressed lies in lack of religious teachings. He has attached human actions with religious consciousness; religion could explain meaning of life and could provide supreme law of guidance for conduct. As lack of religious consciousness brings evil to humans.

Thus he concludes that the chief cause of India being oppressed arose from absence of religious consciousness in its people and its leaders.

Continuing with the citation, he is drawing readers to the fact of existence of spiritual element presented in everything that exists.

In every individual a spiritual element is manifested that gives life to all that exists; that strives to unite everything of alike nature to itself by love. He testifies the truthfulness and existence of this inherent in human nature by citing its presence in religious expressions in almost all the religions.

He says that 'dissemination of this truth, in a society which is based on coercion, has always been hindered. For those in power fear that consciousness would wake people; recognition of truth would undermine their position.

That the truth of man's life is directed by spiritual element, which manifests love and forces a way to consciousness. But truth had to struggle not only against obscurity but deliberate violence which compels men to accept religious law authorized by rulers which are conflicting with truth.

Such hindrance and misrepresentation of truth occurred in every religion: Confucianism; Buddhism; Taoism; in Christianity; in Mohammedanism; and in Brahmanism.

Recognition of love as highest morality was nowhere denied but at the same time it was distorted by falsehood and remained in words for personal life and home use. For public life, violence has been chosen to use over the evil doers.

Men continued to unite incompatible-virtue of love with what is opposed to love, restraining of evil by violence; eschewing the teachings of Gurus of Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Christianity who foreseen the perversion of love and always induced pervading of love by enduring injuries, insults, violence of all kinds without resisting evil by evil.

And such leading of contradictory life forms have been adopted by people and accepted an order of life allowing men to torture and kill one another.'

Tolstoy later expresses that modern scientific justifications replaced pseudo religious justifications, which allowed minority subjugating majority, oppression and evil is the same.

He hoped that this wrong would not happen in east cause of the great teachings of eastern Gurus. Once Hindus would have opened their eyes in religious fraud justifying violence they would wake and embrace the inherent law of love in humanity. But he found that the scientific superstition has replaced religion and secured hold in east too.

Tolstoy emphasized on Love for wavering all the evils than the principle of igniting violence that the editor of Free Hindustan exhibited in his periodicals. He reproves editor for following the law of European teachers and not looking at the strength of Love that is there in people of India endowed by their religion.

He deduces that Indians subjugated to English for they considered Force as the fundamental principle of social order and let English enslaves them. In accord with this Principle, Indians submitted themselves to their Rajahs first and later to English and now they were fighting with them.

He compares India's subjugation and its struggle with the state of a drunkard who complaints against spirit dealers and at the same time could not abstain drinking for he is accustomed to it. Likewise he says that people of India had let themselves be enslaved by violence for they have lived with it and failed to recognize law of love.

Again he testifies this with an excerpt of Krishna.

In the end he concludes that mankind, of that eon, must free themselves from the self-inflicted calamities. And any race struggling with oppression do not need explanations and justifications of religious superstitions or scientific theories.

Tolstoy, extremely inclined for law of love, not only he find everything else of the world decadent before it but he also urges men to abnegate it and rise from its imbecilities and recognize love—the eternal truth inherent in man.

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