

GLASSES AND LENSES

Jesus and Prejudice

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Intent of these notes

- ✓ *To study the mind of Jesus on prejudice.*
- ✓ *Jesus as a man free from all prejudices.*
- ✓ *Jesus unbiased vision*
- ✓ *Jesus who fought prejudice, became Himself an object of prejudice.*

Jesus Fought Against Prejudice

Many, many years ago, nobody knows why and how, people began putting “specs” on every newborn child. Some specs distorted the colours. Red looked like green, black like white, yellow like blue; worse still! Some lenses changed the very appearance of things and of people. Everybody’s vision became distorted and vitiated.

As time rolled by, each country, each race, each social class, each religion began manufacturing and imposing their own brand of specs and lenses! Children, adolescents, youth, grown ups, men, women, everyone was compelled to wear his or her glasses at all times, and in all places. Nay, even the thought of taking them off was forbidden.

Tradition and authority rigidly enforced the rule: They shouted: What? Do you think of removing your specs? No! Not at all! You will never take off your glasses! It’s forbidden. If you do so, you will be a traitor to our nation! You will be excommunicated from our religion! You will lose your caste!

And people conformed! At home, in the school, on the playground, in the temple, in the church, in college, in the bazaar, every body moved, lived, multiplied, and died with their glasses on. All, like sheep, toed the line. As a result, people saw things and others in different ways. The outcome was fatal!

Whites began shouting at blacks: “You blacks are lousy and dirty!”

Blacks retorted: “And you whites are exploiters and murderers!”

Brahmins yelled: “You, Harijans, are inferior to us, dull and worthless!”

Harijans screamed at the Brahmins: “You, Brahmins, are proud and self-conceited.”

Atheists blew out their tops: “There is no God! You, believers, are a bunch of fools! How stupid you are to believe in a heaven up there, a pie in the sky!”

Believers rejoined: “Of course, there is God! Can’t you see the wonders of God’s creation? Have you no brains, you damn animals!”

Men sneered at women: “All of you women are useless! You are inferior to us! You are good for nothing! It’s we who work hard and built the world!”

Women snorted “Shut up, you big mouths. You, men, are selfish brutes! You exploit us, use us, and when you don’t need us any more, you ditch us!”

The quarrelling voices of humanity kept on increasing,
 The yells, the accusations and counter accusations, rose and swelled.
 All over the earth one could hear yells and cries:

The Poor are lazy!

The Rich are blood suckers!

Communists, Socialists, Republicans, all liars!

Westerners! Capitalists, all robbers!

Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Madrasis, Goans, Keralites, murdabad!

Employees, Politicians, Government, Police, Exploiters!

Priests, Sadhus, and Holy Men, fakes!

Away, away with them all!

Resentments festered! Hatred increased.

Wars broke out!

Blood was spilt! Innocent people were killed!

Wives were widowed!

Children were orphaned!

The law of the jungle prevailed. Death carried the day!

The world was strewn with graveyards!!!

Finally, Jesus was born in our divided world. He had the courage to pluck off his glasses and look at things and at people as they really are!

Yes, Jesus knew that all human beings are God's children, made to His image and likeness, that all are basically good and alike in everything.

All have the same rights and privileges.

All have the same longings.

All suffer the same fears and anxieties.

All crave for affection and love.

All are good at heart but weak.

All are lovable and loved by God.

All have a common destiny.

All have the same God and Father, though they call Him by different names.

All are brothers and sisters and belong to one single family!

Jesus was shocked and heart-broken to see a hate-filled world.

A world steeped into prejudice and bigotry.

He grieved to discover that human beings were worse like wolves and at each others throats, at war with one another,

Man against man, family against family, country against country.

There was not love, no unity amongst God's children but hatred and violence.

With zeal and affection, Jesus began preaching his Gospel of love, peace, forgiveness and mutual acceptance. He strove to cleanse the minds and hearts of all, and remove the false "glasses" from their eyes. In season and out of season, he kept telling one and all:

“My little ones, all of us are brothers and sisters, all of us are Children of God our common Father in heaven! Love one another.” You have heard it said ‘Love your friends and hate your enemies’. But I tell you: Love your enemies as well, and do pray for those who persecute you, so that you will become children of your Father in heaven. He makes the sun shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain both to those who do well and to those who do evil. Love others as you love yourselves. Do to others what you would like others do to you. Remove your false glasses and see the good that is in others.”

Finally, Jesus Himself- Became an Object of Prejudice

**The crowds that heard Jesus
telling them to remove their glasses
and love all people equally,
were infuriated. In anger they yelled:**

How can this man tell us that all of us are the same?

How can Jews be like Arabs?

And Blacks like Whites?

And Harijans like Brahmins?

And Foreigners like Nationals?

And Muslims like Hindus?

And Christians like Non-Christians?

And the rich like the poor?

And men like women?

And Pharisees like Publicans?

The sick like the healthy?

The learned like the illiterate?

The masters like the slaves?

It is a fact: we are not the same!

We cannot be the same!

We shall never be the same!

This man is mad!

He is talking nonsense

He is insulting us all!

He is despising our age-old traditions!

He is speaking against our religion!

He is destroying our culture!

He is a dangerous man!

Away with him! Away with him!

At last, for once, in the history of the world,

All the peoples on earth,

Nationals and foreigners,

Educated and uneducated,

Rich and poor,

Young and old,

Though torn asunder among them,
 Became united against their common enemy!
 All felt alike! He was a threat to "all"!
 With one voice all clamoured:
 Away with him!
 Crucify him! Crucify him!
 And they crucified him (Pause)

He was too dangerous; he dared to look at the world and at people without glasses!
 He taught men and women to love one another, to share, to care, to forgive!

Yet, while still hanging from the cross Jesus kept pleading with God his Father:
 Father, forgive them all
 they do not know what they do!
 Their vision is blurred and distorted.
 They cannot see things as they really are.
 Have pity on them, forgive them, Father!

By now, since Jesus was done away with, 2000 years have rolled by.
 All along these 20 centuries quarrels went on growing.
 Hatred reigned
 Peace has given place to violence
 Forgiveness to revenge
 Wars multiplied
 Rivers of blood have flowed
 Still today innocent people are burnt alive
 Defenceless brothers and sisters are tortured
 Children are orphaned
 Oh God, how long shall we take to remove our glasses?

THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION

First Part

Jesus Against Prejudices

- Christ showed us the way to love and accept one and all without prejudice.
- He taught us that we have a common father in heaven and that all of us - without any distinction - are brothers and sisters.
- He taught us that we have to love each and every one as we love ourselves!
- For Jesus there were no Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, friends or enemies, just men or sinners, grown-ups or children, healthy or sick persons, reputable or disreputable people, saints or prostitutes, males or females. All were equal in his eyes! He loved all, he mixed with all, he talked with all he helped all, he died for all!

- As Disciples of Christ we have to fight and shed prejudices tooth and nail.

Second Part

Jesus Himself Became an Object of Prejudice

- Jesus, being a man free from prejudice became himself an object of prejudice.
- The more we try to free ourselves from prejudice, the more people will be prejudiced against us.
- The price for breaking away from prejudice is to become oneself an object of prejudice.
- If we wish to fight prejudice, we have to be prepared to face trials and persecutions.
- If, like Christ, we want to fight prejudice, love all men and women, respect all persons, accept and welcome one and all, we must be ready to be condemned and nailed to the cross like Jesus.
- Let us be aware that the more we appreciate and value a thing, the greater is the danger of falling into prejudices!
- Our love of God – *rather of our image of God* - our love for our religion, our love for our family, our love for our country, our love for money, our love for our language and culture, and specially our self-love, are fraught with potential prejudices.
- Not for nothing the refrain reads: **“Love is blind”**.
- This explains why good people, in good faith, down the centuries, killed each other in the name of God and country!
- *In reality, it was not for God or country, but for a biased and prejudiced image of God and country.*
- Religious prejudices – not religion as such - have been the cause of much bloodshed and virulent hatred in the history of mankind!
- To oppose prejudice one has to be ready to stand alone, fight alone and die alone like Jesus.
- It’s more comfortable and secure to slumber in prejudice than to wake up to reality!
- The craving for false security - *don’t rock the boat, maintain the status quo* - explains why the world and ‘the powers that are’ connive at mountains of prejudice.
- Those who stand against prejudice are “Prophets”. Prophets, however, are not welcome by the powers that are and the worshippers of the “status quo”.
- Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Bishop Romero were prophets. they had to pay the price of it with their blood.
- Prophets, for the sake of “peace”, have been always been done away with
- For the world, “peace” is more important than truth! Yet, it is only truth that can bring peace to the world.
- Jesus was condemned for teaching the truth.
- “What is truth?” Pilate asked. Yet Pilate did not wait for Jesus’ answer. He knew it was too inconvenient to know the truth.

