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IS GOD DEAD?

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IS GOD DEAD?

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It is Nietzsche, a German philosopher who said 'God is dead' but one does not know what exactly he meant by this statement. Was he rationalist as most of the rationalists in 19th century turned atheists thinking that ultimate mystery of the universe and its creation would soon be discovered. New scientific discoveries made them hopeful. However, that hope remains still a hope and has not become reality. Or did he say this in the sense that moral values were dead and God represents ultimate values like God being ultimate justice or ultimate compassion or ultimate love and so on?

Or did he say in the sense that we no more need any values, much less its source God and what ultimately matters is power, not morality. Nietzsche after all did believe in a superior race who has right to rule. It is said that he provided inspiration to Nazis who also believed in a superior race of Aryans. It is interesting to note that Iqbal was also attracted by Nietzsche's doctrine of power, though not of superior race which did not have to follow any morals. Iqbal believed in power with morality as a Muslim and hence he describes Nietzsche as one whose mind is kafir (non-believer) but heart is believer.

Whatever Nietzsche meant the question remains is God dead? The Answer in my opinion is definite 'no' in whatever sense we take Nietzsche's statement. The rationalists' hope that ultimate mystery of the universe would be solved through scientific discoveries has proved to be more of illusion than reality. Every new discovery brings greater sense of mystery. These discoveries increase our sense of awe and wonderment. It is interesting to note that the word Allah comes from Hebrew 'iloh' which carries the sense of wonderment or awe.

Recently the well known scientist Stephen Hawkins expressed his doubt about creator of this universe and many believers in God tried to refute his statement. But Hawkins had made it clear that there may be God in universal sense of energy and power but certainly there is no personal God who answers personal prayers. To deny personal God is not to deny universal God. Even Voltaire, the noted French philosopher and firm believer in Catholic Christianity, did not believe in personal God. One Sunday when he came out of Church after prayer he saw an old woman praying to God to remove illness of his bird. Voltaire commented Madam God has more serious work to run this universe than to attend to your bird.

Is God then dead in another sense i.e. in the sense of ultimate values whose source is God? Yes, in this sense there is truth in the statement. In a way the ruling classes have always been beyond any sense of morality. They do invoke religion in formal sense and woo religious priests making them part of their oppressive establishment and it was in this sense that Marx criticized the role of religion and priesthood. However, in colonial days when Nietzsche was thinking and writing there was sharp decline in morality of colonial masters. What motivated them was their greed and naked loot.

However, colonial loot pales into insignificance if we take the loot being perpetrated by globalized economy and destructive wars being waged by global powers with the help of most

modern weapons which, with the pressing of button hundreds of miles away can destroy thousands of people and all this for monopolizing oil and other resources. Even the colonial masters would turn in their graves at such ruthless killings and sharp decline in moral standards and values.

The interesting thing is that more such naked loot and sharp decline in moral values takes place more these ruling elites need concept of formal God and religion. Thus during the Bush's time it was rightwing Christianity which was ruling the roast. Along with the army which invaded Iraq Bush had sent text of Christian prayers for every week day which soldiers were asked to recite. The Zionists are also extreme fanatics in religious matters. More they act immorally more they invoke extremes of formal religion.

It is hardly any different as far as Muslim extremists are concerned. The terrorists like al-Qaeda and Taliban have hardly any respect for human dignity and human life and human life, according to all religious scriptures, highest and best creation of God. These terrorists, for their own political designs have killed thousands of innocent people. They too need to invoke religion for their misdeeds and more they kill more they need to invoke God and religion.

The word jihad has been repeatedly invoked by al-Qaeda and Taliban to mislead Muslims. Jihad in Qur'an is a noble concept and cannot be practiced without rigorous standards of morality and ethical responsibility. Now these Taliban are throwing bombs at the highly revered mausoleums of sufi saints who devoted their lives for truth, morality and peace and had highest respect for human life. And all this in the name of religion.

Thus if Nietzsche said God is dead in this sense he was very right. And as true believers it becomes our duty to fight against such gross misuse of religion and revive true spirit of religion. It is God in the sense of ultimate moral values who can be savior of humanity. That would be real jihad which all believers must wage as their obligation and across all religious denominations.