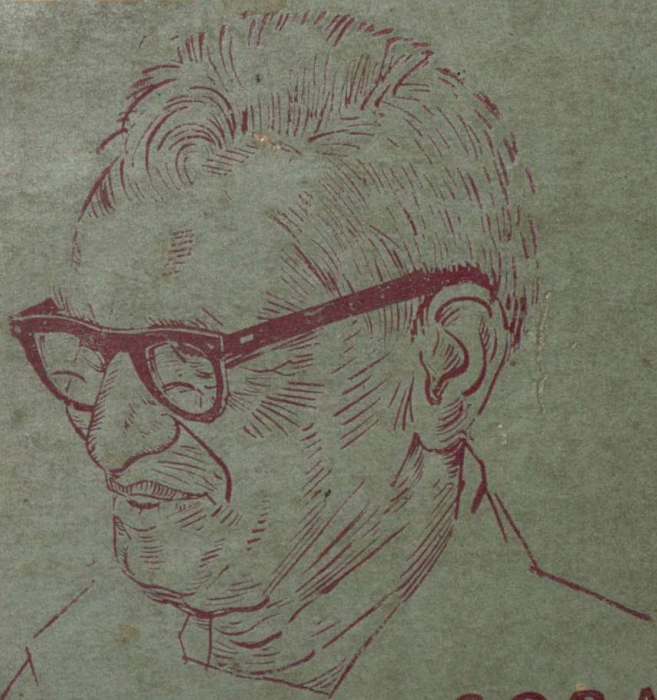


POSITIVE ATHEISM



G O R A

OTHER BOOKS BY GORA

English

AN ATHEIST WITH GANDHI

Navajivan, Ahmedabad 1951

WHY GRAM-RAJ ?

(Decentralization), 1958

PARTYLESS DEMOCRACY

1961

WE BECOME ATHEISTS

(Gora's Autobiographical
account), 1975

I LEARN 1976

Telugu

NASTIKATVAMU

(Atheism) 1941

DEVUNI PUTTU

POORVOTTARALU

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PRAJASWAMYAM

PERAGALANTE

NASTIKATVAM KAVALI

(Necessity of Atheism for
the promotion of Democracy)

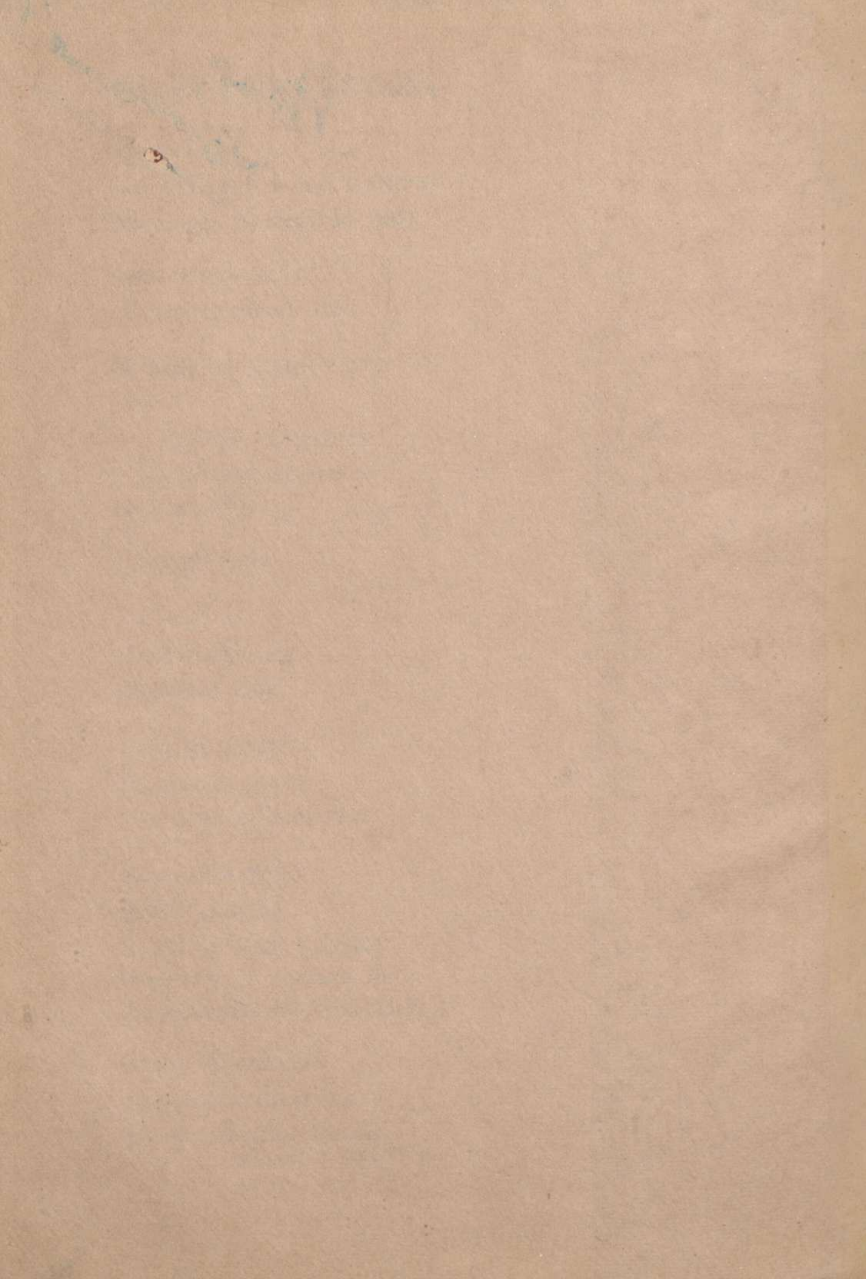
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POSITIVE ATHEISM

G O R A

ATHEIST CENTRE

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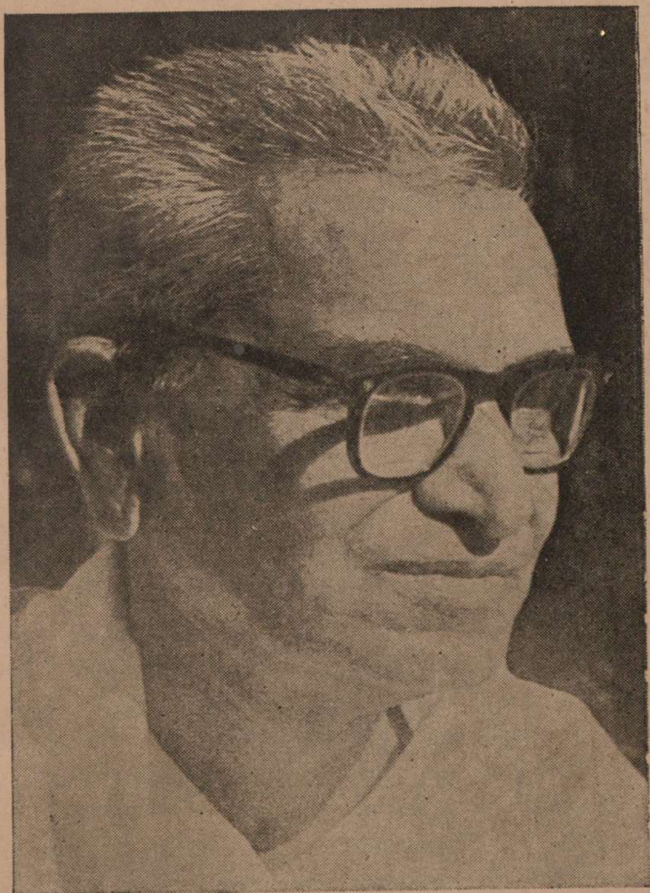
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G O R A

Nov. 15, 1902

July 26, 1975

PREFACE

The first script of *Atheism* was ready in 1938. But the Management of the College where I was teaching, prohibited me from publishing my views on atheism in writing or in speech. Earlier in 1933, another College removed me from service for contributing to a magazine the article, *The Conception of god*.

So, when the ban on atheism came to me a second time, I was faced with the alternatives either to compromise my views on atheism with the needs of a secure job, or to leave the job and gain the freedom to propagate atheism. My wife and I chose the latter. Consequently, in 1940, we got into the stream of public life. We worked in the slums of 'untouchables', addressed hundreds of public meetings on atheism, edited weekly and monthly magazines to propagate atheism and answered questions of readers. We joined the struggle for the political freedom of India, served terms of imprisonment, toured the country on speaking engagements and discussed atheism with Mahatma Gandhi. My children and my colleagues married inter-caste with a view to break social isolations. I participated in the Congress

of the International Humanist and Ethical Union at Boston, U. S. A., in 1970 and went round the world addressing meetings and exchanging views on atheism. The experiences posed a question to me: how is an atheist different from and better than a non-atheist in the way of his life? The answer is *Positive Atheism*.

Whereas the script of 1938 took the traditional negative view of atheism and was a polemic in disproving the basis of faith in the existence of god, *Positive Atheism* lays down the precise atheistic attitude towards several aspects of life. Though the script of 1938 missed publication owing to the stress and strain to which I was exposed on leaving the teaching profession, friends in Mudunur village publised the Telugu version of the book, *Nastikatvamu* (Atheism) in 1941 (239 pages). *Nastikatvamu* went through three editions. But it generally presented the traditional negative attitude. This book adds positive content to atheism.

Because positive atheism asserts freedom of the individual, a detailed code of conduct is incompatible with the freedom. Theistic scriptures like *The Bhagavadgita*, *The Bible* and *The Quran* prescribed dos and don'ts of life from morn to eve and from birth to death, since they did not recognize freedom of the individual. Atheism is the opposite.

Therefore *Positive Atheism* indicates only the guidelines for the individual to plan his or her own life with full initiative and moral responsibility.

I am thankful to Dr. F. Muliyl and to Mrs. G. F. Muliyl for going through the script of *Positive Atheism* and offering useful suggestions for its improvement. I have incorporated the suggestions in the book. I could not, however, replace the word 'promiscuity' (chapter VII), since I feel that the word, without odium, conveys the sense I mean. I thank Prof. R. V. R. Chandrasekhara Rao and Mr. G. Mahadevan for their constructive suggestions. My sons, Lavanam and Vijayam, have been of great assistance to me in the preparation of this book.

I am obliged to the Merker family (Sweden) for their continued support for my work ever since I came to know them eight years ago.

G O R A

Atheist Centre, Patamata,
Vijayawada-520006 India.
November 15, 1972.

We are happy to bring out the second print of this book. "Positive Atheism" received world_wide attention as it aims at providing a new alternative to solve human problems. Gora is no more. But his thoughts continue to inspire the younger generation to achieve equality in all spheres of life.

July 26, 1978

ATHEIST CENTRE

CHAPTER I

THEISM AND ATHEISM

THEISM and atheism express man's attitudes to the world around him. Primitive man's world consisted of wind and rain, sun and moon, dream, disease, and death. When people gathered into clans, families and tribes, the social needs of custom and morality cropped up into the world. In the modern age, political, economic and technological systems dominate man's world.

With his skill, imagination and intelligence, with his feelings of fear, hope, love, greed and hate and with his needs of hunger, lust, knowledge, plan, comfort and ambition, man reacts to his surroundings. The factors of the environment, in their turn, discipline and influence man's ways of understanding and the extent of satisfaction of his needs. Real man is himself in relation to his world.

Man's reaction to his world has been of two kinds: first, he surrenders to the forces of his world and drifts in the stream of its factors; second, he asserts himself upon the surroundings and harnesses the factors to satisfy his needs.

The former is motivated by the slave-mind and the other by his sense of freedom.

Primitive man whose knowledge was meagre and sense of security weak, was more prone to be timid and submissive than bold and assertive. His method of understanding was simple and anthropomorphously analogical. So he imagined that a man-like god created and controlled the world and he surrendered to the concept. That god should have been conceived in masculine form reflects man's domination.

Faith in the existence of god was useful to the primitive man. It satisfied his curiosity. He thought that all things and events were god's creations and dispensations. Surrender to god satisfied his slave-mind. As the concept of god was fashioned after human form, god was attributed the human qualities of righteousness, love and mercy. Obedience to a righteous god, however imaginary, served him at that stage to establish moral conduct in social groups. Faith in a god of love and mercy kept up hope amid troubles. Further, worship of god with song, dance and ritual satisfied man's aesthetic cravings. Thus the concept of god answered the several needs of the primitive man in a primitive way. And man stuck to god with intense faith.

Along with god, man fancied the existence of soul as a detachable part of the body. Dreams were supposed to be soul's rambles in strange lands during man's sleep and death as its permanent escape from the body. Imagination of the

existence of other-worlds, like heaven and hell, and of rebirth, followed the need to provide disembodied souls with a habitation. Faith in the existence of soul and ancestral worship dispelled man's fear of death.

Belief in the existence of god and of soul and the influence of the belief on man's conduct constituted religion. And the essence of religion was man's surrender to god. Therefore, in terms of god (theos), which was the first one to which man surrendered, the attitude of surrender has come to be known as 'theism'.

Religion was the early phase of the attitude of surrender. Surrender absolved man of the sense of responsibility and afforded him the security and tranquility of a caged bird. Within the quietude of religious belief, theists started thinking and grew rational. So the analogical method of understanding yielded place to the advanced ways of causal logic and epistemological inquiry. Consequently, the concept of god gradually changed from the primitive fetish to a metaphysical notion of 'being and becoming.' The noisy ritual, blood-sacrifices and ancestral worship of early religious belief were replaced by the silent meditation of later religion.

However intellectually subtle religious understanding was, it was spiritual in as much as the concepts of god, soul, other-worlds and after-life were intangible. They were imaginary and not perceptible to the physical senses of sight, sound, taste, smell and touch. Therefore, a further advance

of rationalism carried theistic understanding from visionary spiritualism to concrete materialism.

Materialism is irreligious because it rejects the notions of god, soul, other worlds and after-life for not being perceptible to the physical senses. It deals with the realities of physical circumstances and of political and economic institutions. Out of the materialistic understanding of the world arose notions of natural laws like evolutionary process, dialectical development, geographical conditioning, genetic constitution and historical necessity. Unlike faith in divine dispensation and inference of basic being, natural laws are based upon concrete evidences.

Though materialism is more realistic than spiritualism, materialism too is theistic, since it requires man's surrender to natural laws or to historical forces. As far as man's attitude to his world is concerned, the materialist dictum, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness", is not different from the religious prayer, "Oh God, Thy will be done." Both signify man's surrender to the one or to the other. The only distinction between the two is, spirituality is godly and materialism is godless. In short, materialism is godless theism. Therefore, theism is not so much the belief in the existence of god as man's subordination to something regarded superior to him. It is man's attitude of surrender to this world, whether it is understood spiritually or materialistically.

But surrender is incompatible with real living. Surrender loses initiative and breeds passivity, whereas living needs activity. From digging out tubers, picking up fruits, hunting animals and seeking water in primitive times to the modern methods of crop farming and animal breeding, man has to strive in order to earn food. House building, town planning and every achievement which makes life comfortable entail endeavour to harness natural resources to human needs. Thus real living requires man's active mastery over his world as opposed to passive surrender. Mastery is therefore, anti-theistic or atheistic. Whereas theism stands for man's surrender to his world, atheism is man's mastery over his world.

Though "atheism" looks negative in form, it is positive in content. Not an uncommon practice of etymology expresses an affirmation by the negative of its contrary. "Independence", "atom" and "umpire" are formed in that manner. Every language contains examples of the practice. "Atheism" is one of that type. In positive terms "atheism" means man's mastery over his world.

Mastership manifests man's sense of freedom while surrender represents his slave-mind. Like love and hate, the opposite feelings of slavishness and sense of freedom are inherent in the ambivalent human nature. The theistic attitude of surrender is the manifestation of the slave-mind; the atheistic attitude of mastership is the manifestation of the feeling of freedom. Since real living needs assertion, all practice of life is

always atheistic. Theism is only a theory, the attitude which is dominated by the slave-mind. Theists think that they are not free and that their lives are ordained by god or determined by circumstances. But in practice they necessarily choose and act with the sense of freedom. Religionists pray, "Oh God, Thy will be done"; in practice they go their own way. Materialists aver that the social being determines the consciousness of men; but in practice they go to control the social being through their dictatorship. To that extent all theists are atheistic in practice.

The inconsistency between theory and practice makes theists inevitably dishonest. The more active they are, the more dishonest they appear with reference to their profession of surrender. Since comforts increase with planning, initiative and active satisfaction of wants, dishonest theists live comfortably. But to call a spade a spade is easy. So the mass of theists honestly believe in surrender, cripple initiative, achieve little and fall into want. They drift in the stream of circumstances rather than turn the tide in their favour. Thus wide inequalities range in the theistic milieu, the dishonest sailing at the top, wealthy and powerful, and the honest sinking to the bottom in destitution. The inequalities correspond to the degree of self-assertion on the one hand, and to the extent of surrender on the other.

Primitive people were not dishonest when they propitiated evil spirits to escape the fury of

elements and the ravages of disease. Outside the superstitious ritual of Mumbo Jumbo and hocus-pocus, they were naively free to hunt, to revel and to bawl. The equality of freedom, however small, kept them equal. Except the authority to safeguard the taboos of a totem, the chief of a clan could not command more comfort than his kith and kin. It was the sophisticated thinking of the rational theists that entangled them in the inferences of their own logic. By regarding god as the almighty or by considering the process of evolution as deterministic, modern theists denied freedom totally to themselves. This was an absurd stance in real life. Hence dishonesty increased in civilized theism and increased inequalities as well.

Theism enabled civilized inequality to replace primitive equality. In the name of god, fate and custom, priests and princes oppressed honest folk. The glories of theistic civilization were the products of slave labour. Pyramids of Egypt, the Great Wall of China, Temples of India and the Kremlin of Russia were raised by the intellectual classes with forced labour. Roman imperialism and Moghul monarchy were nourished by the blood and sweat of slaves. *Brahminical* intellect shone bright in contrast with the forced ignorance of *Sudra* populations. Man's pride thrived on woman's motherhood. White skin claimed preference to the black. Wealth grew on the surplus value of sweated labour.

The security which resulted from settled life and the development of technological aids should

have helped all people to grow equally rational and free and therefore to live equally well. But dishonest priests and princes who were tempted by greed of pomp and power, took advantage of their position and tried to foster honest theistic faith in common people. Honest theistic faith carried with it the attitude of surrender and made common people liable to easy exploitation by swindlers. In order to tighten the grip of exploitation, everyone who was benefited by it conspired against the common people. The story of this conspiracy was the darkest chapter in the history of civilization. Priests anointed kings to exercise divine right and invested them with the halo of awe instead of responsibility. The kings in their turn, assisted priests with military power to put down heretics. The Crusades of the middle-ages were clear illustrations of the collusion between priests and princes. Hindu epics tell that King Dasaratha deputed his sons, Rama and Laxman, to fight those who disturbed the religious ritual of Viswamitra. Inquisition wickedly arrested the scientific movement started by Bruno and Galileo. The pact between priests and princes continued till princes pushed out the priests who were their rivals in power. Secular chiefs assumed autocratic authority to rule the people and demanded obedience. The people were treated as mere subjects of the State and they remained slaves by surrender to god at first and by obedience to authority next.

As godly theism got discredited due to the growth of rationality and rise of secularism,

exploiters employed the skill and talent of scientists, scholars, artists and academicians to preach godless theism. Despite their knowledge and attainments, the 'elite' were not particular about honesty. They hung on to persons with wealth, power and influence, carried out their commands and shared with them the spoils of exploitation. They supported the sovereignty of the State and the validity of laws of nature. They asserted causal determinism and supplied factitious arguments to condone inequality. Historical necessity, evolutionary process, genetic constitution, intelligent quotient and physiognomic characters were the high sounding phrases with which they confused the common man and cowed him down into acceptance of his downtrodden condition. Modern labourers stood bewildered last in the queue of evolutionary changes just as their fathers in slums gazed wistfully at the otherworld. Further, scientists armed politicians with lethal weapons to put down rebellious rationalists and heretics, if they could not be allured with bribes. The manufacture of the atom-bomb, was a glaring example of the prostitution of scientific skill. Instead of employing nuclear energy wholly for social welfare, it was used to abet the crimes of power-hungry politicians.

Though materialism is realistic in preference to religious faith, materialists lack the moral considerations of religious men. while religious men practise charity and compassion as means of attaining salvation, materialists consider ethics

and culture as mere reflections of objective conditions. The amorality of materialistic politics and economics renders exploitation callous and hard-hearted. Files of clerks, flasks of scientists and wheels of machines impersonalize exploitation and industrialise personal profit. Materialists look upon man as no more than a cog in nature's mill which runs in time and space by laws of evolution, dialectics and rhythm. They justify war, wealth, power and poverty as parts of natural processes. Materialism dehumanises its systems and considers individuality insignificant. Genocide of racism and belligerency of nationalism are more ruthless than the blood-sacrifices of superstition. By and large, materialistic civilization reduced the masses of people into positions where they are no more useful than as labourers in factories, as soldiers in battles or as voters in democracies while a few cheats rule over them and live with pomp and show.

The wide inequalities among the people which resulted from theistic faith, spiritual or materialistic, are obviously unjust, because all humans belong to the same kind. All cats live equal; all larks fly equal; all humans also ought to live equal. The variation in their talents and feature neither warrants the wide differences between lords and labourers, between *Brahmins* and *Paraiyahs* or between Nordics and Negroes, nor is it correlated to the distinctions in economic opportunity, political power, and social respect. Not all lords, *Brahmins* and Nordics are strong

and intelligent, and not all labourers, *Paraiyals* and Negroes are weak and dull. The variation is evenly distributed among all people, regardless of their class, caste and race. Equal opportunities develop all people equally well. Even the difference in sex is found no bar to the expression of abilities. The exploits of Joan of Arc and of Jhansi Laxmi Bai defied mighty generals, just as the achievements of Paul Robeson, Lumumba and B. R. Ambedkar attracted admiration. A millionaire who loses at the Stocks seeks odd jobs to eke out a livelihood while a clerk who wins a Sweep-stake can buy up his master's business. Spread of socialism abolishes class differences and change of faith discards distinctions of caste. Promiscuous mingling blurs racial features and wars and diplomatic negotiations alter national frontiers. There is nothing inherent that binds one to a distinction. Moreover, human love and skill can remove the disadvantages imposed by physical handicaps.

Because distinctions of caste, class or race have no solid foundation, inequality among people is obviously unjust. So from time to time, down-trodden people have resented their indignity. The pains of the flesh here and now have been too real to be soothed long by hopes of bliss in the other-world or by the fruits of ultimate success, especially when the down-trodden see their dishonest brethren roll in comfort.

The fallen people have two alternatives to save themselves from the degradation of subjection.

Either they have to adopt the line of dishonesty and go the way of crooks, or they have to discard theistic faith, feel free, act bold, achieve desires and live happy and equal. The choice is between dishonest theism and honest atheism.

Dishonesty may win temporary gain, but it does not change the system in vogue. When a poor man turns a thief, he may succeed in acquiring some wealth to keep him above want. But that does not change the competitive system of private property which perpetuates economic inequality. The few who sneak across a national frontier may escape a political dictatorship, but they do not end autocracy. As long as a wicked system remains, its evils recoil on everyone.

Riots and strikes by the downtrodden are protests against the injustice of inequality. Yet they have not proved a permanent remedy. They replace one kind of injustice with another. Democratic revolutions established political equality through universal adult suffrage, but they retained social and economic inequalities. Rise of socialism abolished economic inequality, but it tightened the grip of political dictatorship. Humanism recognised equality in social respect, but it hardly interfered with political and economic inequalities.

Therefore the safe and stable method to fight inequality and to abolish downtroddenness is the adoption of atheism. All people are, of course, invariably atheistic in practice. If they

think also atheistically, they not only grow honest but they remove restrictions on initiative, act free, achieve more and earn comforts. Indeed, all free men live equal, because they belong to the same species.

Primitive conditions of ignorance and insecurity which led man into slavish submission, do not obtain in these civilized times. Where religious sentiments linger, worship is social rather than devotional and artistic rather than ritualistic. Technological progress has equipped man with power to control and subdue factors of the environment instead of submitting to their savage fury. Also, instead of fancies of the other world, modern man's ideals are realistic. It is unnecessary for an honest man to be theistic any longer.

The slave-mind, contained in theistic faith, abetted inequality. By meek submission, slaves permitted capitalists, autocrats and aristocrats to ride roughshod and made tyrants of their brothers. Tyranny does not end until slavery is abolished, and slavery does not go until theism is abolished. So freedom-loving honest persons naturally spread atheism in order to rouse the masses against tyranny of any kind. Among such stalwarts were Moses, the Buddha, Socrates, Confucius, Jesus, Mohammad, Voltaire, Marx and Gandhi. Their contemporaries, regarded them as heretics, if not altogether as atheists, and contemporary vested interests persecuted them for disturbing the current systems and beliefs. Meletus accused Socrates as an atheist and condemned him

to drink *hemlock*. Jesus was crucified for uttering "blasphemy." Moses, Mohammad and Marx were banished from their native lands for preaching revolution. Gandhi was assassinated for non-Hindu leanings. Nevertheless, heretics of every age were prophets for future generations.

Indeed every prophet was more atheistic than his contemporaries. The atheistic content in the teaching of prophets set more men more free. The release of freedom raised popular rebellions against dishonesty and inequality. Yet the prophets had to compromise some times with the theistic systems in vogue, in order to communicate with their contemporaries. The Buddha fought superstitious ritual, but allowed fatalism to remain. Jesus and Mohammad decried old gods, but installed new gods again. Marx demolished religion but propounded materialism with similar logic. To Gandhi goes the credit of translating principles of truthfulness into programmes of action, but he spoke in the language of theism.

The result of compromise has been reaction. The remnants of theism in the teachings of prophets corrupted society again. Clericalism triumphed over missionary zeal. Managerial systems restricted the freedoms of socialism. Elected representatives appropriated the powers of people. Virtue was placed in a niche and was worshipped by corrupt devotees. Freedom of the individual was again in jeopardy. So prophet after prophet and rebellion after rebellion had to

rise to cleanse the body politic of the remnants of theism with blood and sweat. The progress of civilization followed the march of atheism.

Stable progress is possible when atheism is wholly adopted. Atheism in thought, word and deed asserts man's mastery over his world without reservation and thereby establishes equality with honesty in social relations. Honest life revises the systems in vogue, as they have been but a mixture of traditional theism and modern rationalism. Unless the systems are completely atheistic, they cannot subserve the needs of complete honesty and complete equality.

What, then, is the picture of atheistic philosophy, atheistic ethics, atheistic politics, atheistic aesthetics and atheistic technology?

CHAPTER II

ATHEISTIC PHILOSOPHY

PHILOSOPHY means the understanding of reality. It has two aspects: first, the understanding, and second, the reality.

An understanding is very significant in human life, since it overrides the influence of circumstances. But for the supremacy of understanding, there would have been no place in human life for suicide and celibacy which are wholly repugnant to the basic instincts of self-preservation and race-preservation. Capitalists and socialists, democrats and fascists, racists and humanists living under the same roof fail to communicate because their understandings differ. On the other hand, persons of the same ideology establish comradeship, even though they live far apart with only a remote chance of ever meeting one another. Thus, as understanding plays a big role in moulding the pattern of behaviour. A man is known by his philosophy.

It is the philosophy of private property that keeps millions of people starving while a few live

in plenty. It is the philosophy of caste-system that keeps a large number of Hindus untouchables. It is, again, a philosophy that drives hermits into seclusion or leads persons to martyrdom. Change in the understanding of life changes man's ways of life. Radical changes in the outlook of populations have sparked off revolutions that shook the world.

While an understanding is important, the understanding of reality is equally important. But what is real? Different persons understand the same situation differently, according to their motives and interests. The same flower means differently to a child who plays with it, to a housewife who decorates a vase, to a trader who sells bouquets, to an artist who paints colours, to a student who dissects parts and to a poet who projects visions. Similarly the slave-mind of theists finds the world superior to them, while atheists feel masters in every situation.

Among the different understandings, which is real? The evaluation of reality in understanding is as important as the understanding itself. If the understanding is real, it contributes to a common understanding and also places a man on a sound footing. Unreality bogs him in misery.

Facts of perception are real to all normal persons. That coal is black, fire is hot and syrup is sweet are facts beyond dispute, except when the sensations are impaired as when the eye is colour-blind and when the tongue is parched.

Certainly, the knowledge of what we see, hear, smell, touch or taste is limited to the structure and capacity of our sense organs. We do not know how things look to an insect with compound eyes and to an animalcule which has no defined organs of sense perception. We are what we are and our knowledge of facts is our own. The use of aids does not alter the position, since what one can see through a microscope or hear by a stethoscope, another can do likewise.

But our knowledge is not confined to facts of perception. The play of imagination modifies facts into ideas through synthesis, analysis and sublimation. The products of imagination are not real in so far as they cannot be perceived by the five senses. An idea of tomorrow illustrates their non-reality, since tomorrow does not exist today. Nevertheless an idea of tomorrow profoundly influences our life today by way of provision for the future. All indirect knowledge, that is, knowledge of anything which is beyond the immediate reach of eye, ear, nose, tongue and skin, is non-real. Despite their unreality, ideas immensely enrich human knowledge and enlarge human life. In short, we are civilized because we imagine.

Ideas may be visionary as in poetic imagination or disciplined and systematized as in theories. They may be seasoned with experience as in intuitions and may be balanced as in judgments and opinions. Guesses and speculations are ideas with expediency and risk associated

with them. Ideals, wishes, plans and promises are ideas which extend far into the future. whatever form ideas take, they are all products of imagination and are non-real by their very nature.

Unlike facts, the non-reality of ideas does not make them readily acceptable. Common understanding is possible on facts, as they are verifiable and demonstrable. If anyone disagrees about the description of a giraffe, he can be shown the animal in a zoo. But tomorrow cannot be shown today. It is an idea which should be held only by faith. One has to share or reject another's idea at his own risk. We know facts; we trust opinions.

In spite of the non-reality of imagination, there is the method of science to evaluate the amount of reality in them. For instance, tomorrow's weather may be forecast today as bright. The forecast is based on a mass of meteorological evidence available today. Yet the forecast is a non-reality today, because tomorrow is a non-reality today. When actually tomorrow happens and comes within factual experience, the forecast reveals itself to be true or false, according to the factual experience of brightness or dullness of the weather.

Imaginations are primarily non-real derivations of basic facts. They are at first neither true nor false. They are just opinions to be believed in or rejected at one's own choice. But imaginations sift themselves into truths and

falsehoods when they are subjected to verification with further facts. Truths are imaginations which stand the test of verification and falsehoods are imaginations which fail in the test. The method of sifting the true from the false among imaginations through verification with further facts is the method of science.

As truths and falsehoods are relative to verification with further facts, unverified and unverifiable imaginations are neither true nor false. They remain opinions. "Absolute truth" is a misnomer in this context, because the claim of absoluteness evades verification. All "absolute truths" like first-cause and infinity are mere imaginations and, at best, hypotheses. Similarly, poetic imageries are pleasant fancies which are pure imaginations. Giants of fables and angels of mythology are examples of unverifiable imaginations which amuse children and teach morals. Neither popularity nor respect can invest an imagination with the validity of truthfulness or condemn it as a falsehood without subjecting it to the indispensable condition of verification with further facts.

While a fact is wholly verified, a truth contains an element of faith in its unverified part. So a truth is a generalisation while a fact is finite. Consequently, a faith to be a truth is not verified ordinarily by all the facts that it comprehends. If that were done, the truth turns out into a fact itself and loses the advantage of

acquiring indirect knowledge through imagination. So verification with a fair sampling of further facts is deemed sufficient to accept a faith as truth or to reject it as a falsehood. On account of the sampling of further facts, some amount of faith lurks in the truth in the part that lie outside the samples. So a truth is exposed to challenges by new facts. Newton's law of gravitation had to be revised in the light of fresh facts that were known by the study of the transit of Mercury. Our knowledge grows from truths to wider truths as and when fresh facts come into our experience. Therefore, the scientific method requires an open-mind for its full functioning.

For scientific inference as well as for verification, facts themselves should be reliable. In this connection, hallucinations betray their falseness. A host who awaits a friend may hear a call at the door at the appointed time, though the friend failed to keep his engagement. The opening of the door and the failure to find the friend reveal the falseness of the sound. It was a hallucination. Dependence on hallucinations caused disappointments. Psychodelic effects of drug-addicts and visions of delirious-patients are also hallucinations. Religious devotees suffer from several kinds of hallucinations. They see the vision of the god in the forms familiar to them and receive revelations of messages in the language they know. A Hindu sees the vision of god with four hands whereas a Christian sees Jesus on the cross or carrying a lamb or healing

a leper. A Muslim devotee hears the message of brotherhood or of *Jihad* according to the frame of his mind. Poets, painters and sculptors give concrete shapes to airy imaginations. A girl who could not make up her mind as to her marriage, listened to the church-bell tell her 'ma - rry'. Later when the alliance proved unhappy, she listened to the same ding-dong of the church-bell tell her 'di-vorce'. Hallucinations and apparitions objectifications of wishful thinking. They are induced by drug, disease or by intense expectation. They appear real to the subject at the moment of experience. They can not be experienced in the same way by the same subject at another time or by another person at the same time. Therefore hallucinations are subjective realities and objective falsehoods.

Illusions, on the other hand, are produced by a real but by an unusual combination of several factors. A mirage can be seen and an echo can be heard by any person situated at the same place and time. Miracles on verification will be found never to have happened or to be mere illusions like the tricks of magical performance. Sorcery, charm, amulets, exorcism, incantations, conjuration, theurgy, and similar artifices of black-magic are either forceful auto-suggestions or deceptive tricks for selfish advantage.

Hallucinations and illusions are not facts useful for scientific investigation.

The claims of parapsychological phenomena are also facts of doubtful validity. Extra-sensory-

perceptions that are exhibited in telepathy and detection are not undisputable facts of scientific significance. They are of the nature of statistical average or chance occurrence that cannot be repeated under experimental conditions. They can be the freaks of a normal mind, like six-fingered hands and Siamese twins in physical nature. They are monstrosities, fit as exhibits and for teratological study rather than for common use and general application. Hypnosis and mesmeric effects are produced by strong suggestions.

Religionists use freaks to awe people and to claim special powers. They go to the ridiculous extent of attributing miracles to prophets. Jesus did not need to walk on water or to curse the fig tree in order to make his *Sermon on the Mount* acceptable to common people. The Sermon can well stand on its merits. The instructions in the *Quran* are good enough without the miracle of breaking the moon. Far from enhancing the prestige of the prophets, association of miracles with the lives of prophets, removes them from the reach of the common people and renders them objects of adoration rather than of emulation. After all, those whom later generations worship as prophets, were just common persons with stout hearts and devotion to the well-being of fellow-men. They were even despised by the capitalists, autocrats and aristocrats of their own ages. The so-called intuitions of prophets were broad guesses. The intuitions were respected because the prophets had no axe to grind. Gandhi

admitted "Himalayan miscalculations" in the course of his plans to lead the people out of colonial domination. So the facts of extra-sensory-perceptions are to be taken with a grain of salt, both in regard to their truthfulness and usefulness. Similarly the tall claims of the evidence of rebirth went false when they were subject to strict scientific enquiry. Further, evidence of 'rebirth' is paraded by Hindus who believe in the philosophy of the rebirth and not by Christians and Muslims who do not share that faith. The motivation is evident in the claim.

The disciplines of logic and epistemological enquiry systematize imaginations and increase their chances of being truths. But no amount of discipline, short of verification with further facts, can pass off a faith for a truth. Faiths, however logical, respectable and hoary, can never be truths in themselves without verification. The spectrum of human understanding extends from hard facts to unverifiable fancies; faiths lie between, with truths on the side of facts and falsehoods on the side of fancies; verification is the demarcating line between truths and falsehoods.

The tragedy of theistic understanding consists in mistaking faiths for truths. Theists can very well believe in the existence of god, soul, other-world and after-life. The faiths can be shared also by other theists. Yet they are only faiths and not truths at all. They cannot be left even as unverifiable faiths too. The existence

of free will is proof positive that the faiths in god, soul, other-worlds and after-life are falsehoods. The concept of almightiness is wholly false because it denies the existence of free will wholly. Thus god is clearly a falsehood, though, long ago, it was a useful falsehood.

Determinism is the essence of theistic philosophy. Whether the determinant is a spiritual factor like god, destiny or fatalism or a materialistic one like causal relation, natural law, genetic constitution, force of custom, means of production, State authority or physical conditions, theists feel that their lives are destined and determined. Verification with the fact of free will reveals the falseness of all theories of determinism. In fact, the faith in determinism is motivated by the slave-mind which is the character of theism.

Atheism which asserts the freedom of the individual, understands reality by discriminating between faiths and truths. Atheists make free use of imagination to acquire indirect knowledge. They form opinions, formulate theories and enjoy fancies. But they do not timidly close the mind. Unlike theists, atheists proceed boldly with an open mind from faiths to truths through the method of verification with further facts. whereas theists stop with faith, atheists go to truth.

The principle of atheistic philosophy is : what is capable of verification and necessary for the individual should be tested and known;

what is incapable of verification or unnecessary for the present need, should be respected as an opinion. To respect an opinion is not to accept it as a truth; it is a social norm to enable the growth of knowledge. Unless the free flow of opinions is permitted, while recognising them only as opinions, we lose the benefit of imagination. The danger is not in respecting an opinion but it is in mistaking it for a truth. Atheism, therefore, adopts the scientific method for acquiring knowledge. It promotes understanding through verification wherever possible and through respect for opinion wherever necessary.

The atheistic method of understanding requires, of course, the freedom of the individual to imagine as well as to verify the inferences. But theists go so far as to consider the freedom itself an illusion. They assert that the choice which is an act of freewill, is predetermined by divine dispensation, by fate's decree, by causation, by dialectics of development, by the process of evolution or by historical necessity. As Marxist materialists suppose that the pattern of behaviour and the mode of choice are determined by the material conditions of life, they classify cultures into feudal, capitalist, bourgeoisie and proletarian types, corresponding to the ownership of the means of material wealth. Therefore they deny the freedom of choice to the individual in the same manner as the religious persons do. Both arrive at the same conclusion of denying free will, though they proceed from opposite points of view.

The argument of the illusion is more intellectual than realistic. When Shankara, the arch-protagonist of the theory of illusion, denied free will to the individual, in order to justify the existence of "*Brahman*, the Basic Being", he ignored a hard fact. The argument whether there is free will or not is itself a choice, an act of the free will. He who considers his endeavours, ambitions and his very existence as illusory, kicks against a hard rock and says, "The rock does not exist." Is it not amusing to think that what I am writing and what you are reading are illusions?

Again if the freedom of the individual is denied, spiritually or materialistically, morality loses its base. One cannot be moral, unless he is held responsible for his actions. He cannot be responsible, unless he is free to choose between the right and the wrong, whatever be the norms. Without the appreciation of morality, there can be no social association and self-discipline. Because choice, morality and discipline are real in our life, free will is real. The arguments of illusion are either clever ruses to escape responsibilities or intellectual subtleties, labouring to save the concept of divinity which is crumbling and losing credit under the onslaughts of the reality of the freedom of the individual. Pragmatically too, Hindus, among whom the philosophy of illusion is the most widespread, are largely a set of lotus-eaters, idle, dreamy and irresponsible. The rejection of the philosophy of illusion and recognition of the reality of free will reclaim Hindus and joins

them in the main stream of free, active and dignified body of human beings.

Atheistic understanding reveals the reality that man's will is supreme. That does not mean that a man can achieve wholly what he wills. In his world, he is in the company of things, events and also of fellowmen who, like himself, are equally free to will. They are severally favourable, adverse and indifferent to his aspirations at a time. The final fulfillment is the total effect of all these forces. Nevertheless, his will to achieve is the most significant factor among them all. With the strength of his will, he can direct his efforts to order other forces also towards his purpose. Theists who believed in the supremacy of the world, surrendered to it, weakened their will and drifted in the stream of circumstances, rather than give it the direction of their aspirations. They either cut down their desires and are content to live at the subsistence level in a helpless state of sheer resignation or pray to god for boons and benefits. Atheists, on the contrary, are masters of their world. They assert their free will. They use technological skill to control non-human factors of the environment and moral conduct to enlist the co-operation of fellow-men. With added strength, they achieve more than theists can. They do not need the supplication of prayer or the resignation of helplessness. They are the masters of every situation. Like a soccer player, an atheist manoeuvres among friends and opponents to achieve his desires. He is the master. He has none to complain

against. He learns from every experience and grows wiser everytime.

The recognition of the freedom of the individual and the establishment of his mastership renders the scientific method useful to the atheists for the understanding of reality. The method is gaining esteem in the civilized age. The progress of technology is due to the use of the scientific method. The studies of humanities also are taking the name of science and adopting the method with necessary modifications. Though tradition mixes up some superstition with scientific knowledge, the rise of atheism clears the dross.

Because theists understood everything as the creation of god, they asked several idle questions and satisfied themselves with the omnibus answer that all was god's making. The questions ranged from the shape of a leaf to the number of hairs on the head! The questions had no relevance to the life they led, because they moved blindly in traditional ruts, while their fancies flew beyond the galaxies. Atheists are realists. Their questions are relevant to the needs of their life. So the answers also are realistic and scientific instead of tricks to silence doubts with the bogey of god.

Real knowledge and technological skill have already controlled the elements, conquered diseases and increased longevity. With the growth of knowledge, it seems possible to control death and dotage. The study of animalcules and procreant germs with no natural death should give the clue

to understand and to conquer death. Atheists recover what theists relegated to destiny and atheistic understanding gives a fresh look to the old ways of life. For instance, atheism dismisses as unscientific any distinction that separates man from man. All are humans. They can inter-breed. They can mingle socially. Evidently, then, the old distinctions of race, caste, culture and nation are sentimental with no solid base. Men with selfish interests who were benefited by sectarian differences, preserved the distinctions maliciously.

Atheism widens the outlook and pulls down the barriers between man and man. If differences between "Holy Scriptures" should foment difference between man and man, these books are not holy at all. Though they were the honest words of good men, they had their own imperfections of limited knowledge. Hoariness is never holiness. Nothing can be the last word any time. A closed mind is the sign of stagnation and ultimate death. Life is open and ever growing. So horiness is a warning of its incompatibility with the present times. Atheism keeps an open mind and does not flinch from rejecting the old, whenever it is a hurdle on the road towards a common humanity.

Theistic philosophy developed certain disciplines of understanding, though its fault lay in accepting their inferences as truths without subjecting them to the test of verification. Atheism can usefully adopt the disciplines with the correction of verification.

The foremost among the disciplines which grips modern thought is the method of causation. It lays down that events are related as causes and effects. Causal thinking replaces analogical understanding, and dispels the superstition of belief in special creation. Further, as effects follow causes, there is no room for prayer and worship in causal understanding. So far causal understanding is useful.

But causal understanding committed a mistake when it supposed that the relation between cause and effect was certain and universal. The chain of causes determined every event and allowed no scope for free will. That was the basis for fatalism. Indeed the determinism of causation was motivated by the slavish desire of surrender. So theists could take causation as certain and universal. But rethinking with an open-mind exposes the defects of certainty and universality. According to universality, if everything had a cause, the first cause also should have a cause; if the first cause could be without a cause, anything else could be without a cause. So the assumption of universality and of the first cause was arbitrary rather than rational. Again, if there were certainty, there can be no morality. Every wicked deed could be justified as a link in the chain of causes. The same way of thinking led Hindu philosophy to postulate rebirth of the soul to live through the virtues and vices unrequited during the previous birth. Here again the question of the first act is exposed to the same embarrass-

ment as the question of the first cause. So causality is neither certain nor universal. The reality of free will and morality gives the lie to both.

Atheistic philosophy looks at causation in a different way. Atheism regards the cause-effect relation not as a certainty but as a probability. The degree of probability increases with the proximity of events and decreases with their distance. Tomorrow's happenings can be anticipated with greater certainty than those of ten days hence or of a more distant future. Speculation and anticipation are advantages in planning; but they are attended with uncertainty and disappointment too.

It is the existence of uncertainty that is the basis for initiative, plan and idealism. The fear of uncertainty led timid theists to take shelter in causal certainty which curbed their initiative and bred fatalism. But atheists are bold. They sail on uncharted seas and achieve through initiative. Recognition of free will and the assertion of initiative foil predicability. Yet the most dependable part of human affairs is moral conduct, respect for promise and confidence in the ability to accomplish.

Arguments can be advanced to justify the certainty of causation in the case of atheists too by regarding initiative as the cause of achievement. The argument is defective in

two ways. First, atheists do not claim certainty of an achievement for an initiative. They do leave scope for probability and thus avoid disappointment. It is not the multiplicity of causes that renders predictability with certainty difficult, but uncertainty is in the very nature of events, more with those of humans than of inanimate matter. Second, an initiative becomes the cause of an event in a limited sense, since the initiative itself is causeless. An initiative ceases to be original if it is caused. Therefore, the chain of causes is broken repeatedly at every initiative and a broken chain does not serve the purpose of universality of causal relation. To regard free will as a causeless cause and thus to justify causation is but a cheap satisfaction.

The formulation of natural laws is another discipline in understanding. Imagination correlates events, ties up the loose ends, and presents a synthetic understanding in the form of a law. The concept of natural law is an aid to understanding, as it facilitates a habit of thinking. The laws of the cycle of seasons help us to plan our work. But closer scrutiny reveals that the laws are not inherent in the events of the world. They are our interpretations of our experiences. When fresh facts come to light or fresh insight develops with experience, the form of law changes with new interpretation. Though Dalton regarded the "atom" as the smallest indivisible particle and named it as such (a=not; tomos=cut), the discovery of the phenomenon of radioactivity

changed the concept of atom. Also, no natural law applies wholly to an event in all respects. The concurrence is an approximation. Over longer ranges, the difference becomes more and more appreciable, just as the present timings of the rising of the sun do vary with old calculations. Not that the old calculations were wrong, but the happening is varying. So a natural law expresses the present average of our experiences. We fit in the understanding into the event instead of the law determining the event. When we visit a boot-shop we fit our foot into a shoe rather than the shoemaker fashioning the shoe to the size of our foot.

Whereas theists consider natural laws as definite and irrevocable and submit themselves to them, atheists know themselves to be the authors of the laws and use the laws as aids. The laws are revised whenever they are repugnant to new situations. Surrender to the laws breeds conservatism while mastery over them helps progressive understanding by the reassessment of the position at every stage.

The theory of evolution is a convenient natural law to understand the relations of things around us. It dispenses with the need to believe in a creator to understand events and things. Within limited and observable lengths, a fair amount of evolution can be safely assumed. But when we carry it to the extreme of nebula and primordial matter, we commit the same

mistake as postulating the first cause. Patches of earth may look fairly flat. But putting the patches together, it cannot be surmised that the whole earth is flat. The natural law of evolution is a useful aid but a trap for the unwary.

The concept of design is a corollary of the belief in natural laws. Evidently the argument of design bristles with obvious contradictions. A design presupposes a designer with a purpose. As the designer is often supposed to be god and god is supposed to be loving and merciful, what consistency is there between love and the existence of evil? If war, fraud and poverty, untouchability, racial discrimination, infant-mortality, cancer, pest and famine were to be parts of a design, the designer should be punished for wickedness rather than worshipped for love and mercy. In the face of evil, the proposition of design poses the dilemma that divinity is not all good or else it is not all powerful. If god were both good and powerful, there should be no evil. If evil were test and temptation, it betrays the recognition of freedom to the individual to yield to or to resist temptation and thereby contradicts the almightiness of divinity. Also it presents divinity as a mischievous and malevolent spirit that plays cruel pranks with its own child.

In fact, there is no design. At best, the concept of design is wishful thinking of the modern man. Because the primitive people

understood the world analogically and anthropomorphously, they thought that a man-like spirit inhabited every phenomenon. With the touch of modernity, the wishful thinking of a civilized theist is similar to that of his primitive ancestor. The modern theist is accustomed to plan, design, law and order in his daily life. So, in wishful thinking, he reads order and design into his world. In practice, however, the concept of design has turned out into a clever ruse to reconcile honest theists to their miserable lot with faith in a divine purpose. Atheism dismisses the assumption of design and awakens the mass of people to a sense of equality. It stirs them up to rebellion against political, economic and social evils.

An important aspect of theistic philosophy is the concept of the universe as a law-bound cosmos and all phenomena, including man, as parts of it. The notion is consistent with the theistic attitude of surrender, since man becomes part of the universe and subordinate to the whole. Though religious men and materialists differ in their understanding of the structure and dynamics of the universe, both agree in the existence of the universe and thereby deny freedom to the individual.

But the recognition of the freedom of individual interprets the universe in a different way. Atheists regard the universe as a collective concept, like that of a flock. When several birds

sit together, they give the idea of a flock. But when each bird flies away in her own way, the flock disappears and it does not exist any longer. Yet each bird exists by itself. So the reality lies with the existence of the individual bird, but not with the existence of the flock. Similarly the universe as such does not exist. Only the several phenomena and the individuals of human beings exist. Their existence too is not permanent. Each one changes in form and content. Nevertheless, the collection of phenomena and of the individuals goes by the name of the universe.

Further the individualities of each one render the universe a chaos and not a cosmos. The sum total of individualities gives the impression of an order of a natural law. Several irregular grains of sand thrown together give the shape of a regular conical heap. The regularity is not pre-existent in the heap, but the relation between irregular grains produces a regular pattern, namely the heap, which is but a collection of sand grains. Likewise, the universe is a collection of individuals. Each individual is an entity by himself, but the universe neither exists nor is an entity by itself, except as a concept of imagination. Whereas theistic thinking proceeds from universe to man, atheistic understanding proceeds from man to universe. The pre-eminence of man in atheistic understanding preserves the freedom of the individual, while theistic understanding which considered man a part of the universe, jeopardised the freedom.

Human imagination indulges in several collective concepts. Family, nation, society, government, world and humanity are collective concepts. In short, all systems and institutions are material forms of collectives in a civilised world. Obviously the political system of government derives authority from the co-operation which people give and gathers revenues from the taxes which people pay. Thus the citizens support the institution of a government and the citizens are the real masters of the government. But theistic mind subordinates the citizen to the government which appropriates the sovereignty that rightly belongs to the people. In the capitalist system of economy, the proprietor usurps the surplus value from the labourers. Again society is the sum of the common personal factors of the individuals that compose it. Beyond the common factor, every person has the rest of his or her individuality. The whole individual is the total of the part which is common with the rest, and of the part which is his own. According to his intimacy in social relations, he may have more in common with some friends than with others. Also it is left to the individual to increase his commonness or decrease it by joining or withdrawing from others. A hermit in seclusion shares nothing with others. He lives all to himself. Because society is composed only of those parts of the individuals which are common with the rest, the whole individual is more than his society. Thus the individual is a reality and all institutions are only collectives with no real existence.

In practice, it is the part of the individual outside the social commonness that introduces initiative and provides dynamism to social growth. While the commonness among persons stabilises social relations, the differences move the society forward. In spite of the fact that the society is a collection of the commonnesses of individuals, the commonness seems so intense that the individual with a slave-mind feels cowed down by it. Atheists understand the relation between the individual and his society. They are aware of their importance and of the dependence of systems on their co-operation. The shift of the emphasis from the aggregate to the individual restores the dignity of the individual which was belittled in theistic understanding. Therefore, like masters, atheists wield political, economic and cultural systems as instruments. Atheists are masters of their customs, masters of their governments, masters of their economic order and masters of their cultures, systems and institutions.

Just as the universe is the collection of individuals, it can be argued that the individual is a collection of cells and each cell is a collection of molecules and electrons. This argument shifts the reality of existence from man to a cell, to an atom and so on. The fallacy of this argument is clear when we see man as the starting point from where his imagination goes synthetically towards the universe and analytically towards the electron. It is not the universe or the electron that is thinking of man, but it is the

man who is thinking of them and giving them shape and consideration. So man is the author of the concepts of the universe and of electrons. He exists and they have their habitation in his imagination. They change as his experience and insight change. So the reality of existence is with the man and not with the cell or with the atom. Atoms do not exist for those who are ignorant of them. Existence depends upon awareness. A man asleep exists when others know him; he becomes aware of his existence on waking up only. If he dies of heart failure or of an accident during sleep, he had ceased to exist for himself when he went to sleep. We recognise our dreams on waking up but not during dreaming. Due to the significance of awareness, the individual is a reality and he is not a mere collective of cells.

Materialism is the last of the theistic methods. The tangibility of material circumstances is indeed a distinct contrast with the visionary concept of spirituality. Materialism has this advantage over spirituality. Yet the materialistic principle of subordinating the individual consciousness to the social being has not improved the status of the common honest man. From god to matter is a change from King Log to King Stork. In the materialistic civilization, man submits more to the systems of life, like capitalist economy, political dictatorship and social tradition than he surrendered to god and ritual.

The inertness of the mass of people in theistic civilization is evident from the application of Gallup polls to predict electoral results and mass behaviours. They apply physical laws of statistical study for human behaviour just as meteorological observations are employed to forecast weather. Indeed materialistic civilization treats man as a bit of matter, but not as a sentient being. Gallup poll forecasts come nearly true as long as man surrenders his freedom and allows himself to be blown by the winds of circumstances, like a dead leaf. But when atheistic awakening rouses his passions, desires and ideals, all predictions, except his purpose, go wrong. Marx, who attained eminence in the materialistic interpretation of human history, thought little of agricultural Russia and predicted early proletarian revolution in industrialised Germany. But the tact of Lenin and the foolhardiness of Hitler upset Marx's calculations. Russia went socialist first while Fascism, the opposite of socialism, overtook Germany. Man is more psychological than materialistic.

What becomes predictable in human behaviour is not on account of destiny or of dialectics of social being, but on account of man's avowed objectives and his steadfastness of purpose. Astrology, palmistry, soothsaying and crystal gazing which are popular in theistic civilization, are out of place among atheists. Atheists disturb Gallup poll by a fresh thought anytime. Atheists shift the basis of prediction from material factors

to human feelings, like sense of justice, honesty and idealism. The sense of freedom makes atheists radically different from slaves to god, slaves to government, slaves to custom and slaves to systems.

Gandhi's *Satyagraha* and existentialist philosophy are large scale attempts to recognise the freedom of the individual.

Satyagraha means insistence on what one knows to be the truth. The insistence implies the exercise of free will as the need of social obligation. If one is content to know the truth himself, he does not become a votary of *Satyagraha*. A *Satyagrahi* should not only know the truth but should insist upon it in social relations. So *Satyagraha* is activation of truthfulness. Further, truth is demonstrable and verifiable. So it is open. As difference of opinion can be settled through verification or respect of opinion, *Satyagraha* eschews violence for its operations. Therefore *Satyazraha* makes people free, open, social and non-violent. These are the qualities for moral excellence. The popular movements that rose under the leadership of Gandhi gained wide sympathy and raised the moral standards of people. Though the movements were directed primarily against the injustice contained in the colonial administrations in South Africa and India, they awakened the natives all over the world against similar injustices.

As *Satyagraha* asserts the freedom of the individual to know and to insist upon truthful-

ness, it is atheistic in principle. It could have been the starting point for the atheistic movement in the modern age. But Gandhi, its proponent, clothed the explanations in the language of theism. The language of theism which was familiar to the people, gave him the advantage of easy communication with the people. But, after Gandhi, people reverted to the theistic ways contained in the language and paid mere formal allegiance to the principles of truth, equality, openness and non-violence. The experience reveals the need of avowed atheism for stable progress. Gandhian *Satyagraha* requires atheistic correction for its abiding usefulness.

Existentialist philosophy recognizes the existence of the individual as the real purpose of human life. The recognition is basically atheistic and it encourages the individual to free himself from the impositions of custom, governmental authority, economic pressures and cultural inhibitions.

Undoubtedly, existentialist philosophy has produced free and truthful individuals. But they are not *Satyagrahis*. They lack the social outlook. The love of individual freedom has stood in the way of the appreciation of social obligations, as in the case of *hippies* and *Beetles*. They live as birds, hopping from branch to branch, pecking at fruits and warbling notes at their will.

Existentialism is a powerful protest against the oppressions by spiritual and materialistic

systems. But it has been lop-sided in its development. It lacks the social complement. Without social association, no one can go far in the modern age. In fact, *hippies* live free by using social benefits of food-supply, communications and security. In this way they draw from social reserves, but they do not add to them.

In spite of their limitations, materialism, Gandhism, and existentialism have advanced civilization towards atheism. Though fundamentally theistic, materialism demolished godhead and visionary idealism. It has brought systems of life within the grips of realistic appraisal. Gandhian way of *Satyagraha* has presented a real instrument to fight against injustices. As everyone can take to *Satyagraha*, it has become the special friend of the downtrodden. Existentialism has brought to the forefront the importance of the individual. His existence is of primary significance. Yet materialism, Gandhism and existentialism have not brought about all round equality as they have not avowedly accepted atheism with all its implications. They compromised with extant theistic systems and were partially atheistic. So they established equality partially and gave scope for reaction to set in later. Marxian Materialism largely established economic equality but required political dictatorship for the purpose. Gandhism was democratic, but could not fight capitalism successfully. Existentialism attained personal freedom without social change. Every one of those methods require atheistic correction for achieving all round equality and progress.

Where atheism is not adopted wholly, even scientists are not free of superstition. Sir Oliver Lodge, who gave a powerful impulse to scientific education and was the forerunner of wireless telegraphy through researches in electromagnetic waves, believed in telepathy and thought-transference, a claim in which he could not carry with him the majority of men distinguished in science. Astronauts who could land in moon as a result of amazing advances in technology prayed to god for the success of their project. Several savants are known to be eminently scientific in laboratories but conventionally superstitious in their personal life. Some of them use charms, omens and amulets, repose belief in miracles and attend to prayers in obedience to custom. Obviously such scientists do not have the scientific mind. So dishonest theists and greedy politicians easily use their talents for prosecuting wars and establishing dictatorships. Science is essentially atheistic. But, without the avowed adoption of atheism, scientific progress is liable to be misused.

Atheistic awakening is the greatest need of the peoples of ancient civilizations of Asia and Africa and of aborigines all over the world. In Europe there have been a series of cultural revolutions due to the spread of Christianity, Protestantism, Materialism and Existentialism. Each sweep was heretic in its own age. The revolutions wiped away, stage by stage, the primitive faiths of Celts, Gauls and Druids. Europeans are virtually secular now. They go to

church partly for social contacts and mostly to spread theistic faith among the Asians and Africans in order to make them an easy prey to colonial expansion. In the Middle East too the spread of *Islam* abolished the superstitions of the idolatrous Arabs. If Buddhism stayed in India, it would have advanced Hindus beyond the beliefs of primitive animism. But *Shankara*, in order to fight the corruption of Buddhism, revived Hindu faith and set the hands of the clock back. The Buddhists of the Far East are more open-minded than the Hindus of India. But for the awakening brought about by the spread of Christianity and Islam, the Africans would have continued in the ancient ways of tribalism with totems and taboos. The seclusion of aborigines in wilds and reserves keeps them primitive still. They live equal within the narrow confines of their respective tribes, not progressively but conservatively.

The rise of Marxian materialism in Russia and particularly in China, has demonstrated that revolution in outlook brings about revolution in the ways of life. China was addicted to opium and was a miserable victim to European and Japanese exploitation. Today it is asserting itself as a world power on account of the cultural revolution. Idolatrous and caste-ridden Hindus of India won high esteem when they participated in the movements of *Satyagraha*. The feeling of freedom made people moral, scientific and progressive.

The materialistic Europeans and Americans can exploit the Asians and Africans, as long as

the latter remain godly and servile. Exploitation of any kind anywhere will end when slave-mind is discredited and the freedom of the individual is asserted. Slaves make tyrants of their brothers. When 'slaves' stand on their feet, they find themselves as tall as their 'masters'. Others mount when slaves stoop. So the widespread adoption of atheistic philosophy is the way to put down the slave mind and to establish all round equality by the full expression of the freedom of the individual in Asia and Africa also.

The appreciation of the freedom of the individual, gives a fresh orientation to the systems of life, ethical, political, economic, aesthetic and technological. Customs and governments no longer dominate over man; he becomes their master.

CHAPTER III

ATHEISTIC ETHICS

ETHICS is the kind of conduct that keeps man happy. Happiness consists in the satisfaction of desires. Through prayer and meditation in seclusion, a hermit feels happy with the satisfaction of his desires of other-worldly salvation. So Hindu hermits prefer to sit in caves of mountains, to eat fruits and tubers and to cover their bodies scantily with hides. Religious believers regard such hermits as the most ethical beings.

But the rise of rationalism renders desires realistic and mundane. Unlike the anchorite's desires of other-worldly salvation, rational desires refer to food and home, family life and positions of honour. Imagination urges man to desire for better comfort and more respect every time. As desires grow, he has also to increase powers of achievement in order to keep himself happy, because happiness is the harmony between desires and their fulfilment.

Since man is both the author of his desires and the builder of his strength, there is no room

for disharmony and complaint. Either he has to cut the coat according to the cloth or get the cloth according to the coat. Complaint which is a sign of maladjustment is idle and irresponsible.

The pruning or the proliferation of desires rests wholly with man's own will. Change of mind changes the shape of desires. Buddha, the prince, renounced his kingdom; Hitler, the painter, craved for world power.

While desires are wishful, powers of achievement are realistic. Complaints and disappointments occur in life when man goes with his wishes in easy imagination and ignores the realities in trying to achieve them.

Powers of achievement grow in two ways: by the making and use of tools and by securing the cooperation of fellowmen. The former led to the development of technology and the latter brought into being the systems of social organisation. Technological development and social organisation have been interdependent for their growth. The development from stone implements to mighty mills is the work of the concerted action of millions of people through a number of generations; the growth of society from primitive clans to metropolitan communities is made possible by the development of communications and by advances in engineering planning, medical research and food production.

In technology man deals with non-human material. He can fashion wood and metal, and

tend plant and animal very much with his skill. But in social relations, he is dealing with men like himself who have similar emotions, sentiments, loves, hates and ambitions. So relations with fellowmen bring in the considerations of morality. Morality is therefore the method of dealing with fellowmen with a view to securing their widest and fullest cooperation for the fulfilment of one's own desires.

The two basic principles of moral conduct are : honesty and tolerance.

Honesty means consistency between word and deed. Unless each is assured that the other does what he says and says what he does, and vice versa, there can be no common understanding between them and therefore no cooperation is possible. So honesty is the indispensable condition for common action. It is the cement that binds man to man in social relations. Without the cement between them, bricks form a pile, but not a solid wall. Without honesty people form a crowd, but not a society. Today our cities are crowds. A man stands lonely in a crowded street. He cares for no one and no one cares for him. If he is knocked down by an automobile, the incident may have a news value but not a social concern. Honesty converts crowds into societies.

As all words and deeds proceed from thoughts, honesty seems to be consistency between thought, word and deed, instead of consistency between words and deeds only. But

thoughts are personal. They are known to the author alone. Others know one's thoughts through his words and deeds, which are the outward expressions of inward thoughts. So the means of common understanding in social relations are words and deeds, and therefore honesty is consistency between words and deeds only.

Consistency between thought, word and deed is personal honesty. It saves a person from an uneasy conscience. But it is possible that a man entertains several opinions on a matter. In the end he may choose to express one or some of them in words and deeds. They alone gain social value. The rest of the unexpressed opinions go sterile or die suppressed without social significance. It is unfair to impute motives to anyone beyond what is said and done. Hidden motives should not be suspected until they are expressed in word or deed. When one changes his mind and informs the change through corresponding words and deeds, he continues to be honest. In fact, some change becomes necessary over long periods of time in order to cope with new situations. Otherwise, one remains conservative. Frequent changes may mean lack of purpose or fickleness but not dishonesty.

Honesty excludes secrecy, for secrecy withholds telling what is done. A lie is worse. It tells something different from what is done. Both secrecy and falsehood are dishonest, since there is no consistency in them between words and deeds.

Secrecy is different from privacy. Privacy is a personal matter in which others are little interested. When, however, interest is evinced, there is no hesitation to reveal a private affair. Secrecies and lies, on the contrary, deliberately hide and distort facts.

Secrecy is an escape from social obligation. It results from a desire for selfish advantage or from a sectarian outlook. Members of a group are honest among themselves, but are often dishonest with others. Casteism, communalism, racism, nationalism and gangsterism are examples of sectarian behaviour. In the context of wider social relations, sectarianism is as dishonest as secrecy.

Honesty requires discipline. When a person has to fulfil a promise, his selfish interest and indolence tempt him into dishonesty. One should therefore sacrifice selfish and immediate gains in view of the need of co-operation in social relations. One who fails to fulfil a promise runs the risk of losing credit and co-operation. In that way, sacrifice is a greater gain than what immediate indolence affords. But human nature is a mixture of social and selfish qualities. So ways and means should be found to encourage social qualities of fortitude, sacrifice and sympathy and to discountenance the anti-social qualities of sloth, greed and hate.

The three methods open to keep man moral and social are : self-discipline, religious faith and political power.

The best method to ensure moral behaviour is the appreciation of moral obligations by every individual. Mahatma Gandhi's *Constructive Programme* adopts the method of self-discipline. By self-discipline every one imposes on himself the duty of fulfilling promises and of maintaining honesty. At the same time, the dishonesty of anyone disturbs the happiness of others. If the speaker at a meeting comes late, he wastes the time of the many in the audience. So it is as much the duty of the speaker to be punctual as it is the right of the audience to reprimand the speaker for his unpunctuality. Rights and duties are the two sides of the same social relation. They are the checks and counter-checks to ensure honesty in social relations .

Though primitive people cannot be credited with a high level of social consciousness and sense of self-discipline, the need of honesty for social association impelled them to adopt a way similar to self-discipline. Within the limits of their tribal life, primitive people observed honesty by custom and avoided dishonesty by taboo. Transgressions were severely punished with fine and with pillory. The recognition of the social need of morality, though it was unplanned, was the distinctive feature of primitive life. The high level of honesty not only secured unstinted co-operation of all members of the tribe for any task, but significantly enough, established equality among them.

The primitiveness of the conditions circumscribed the scope for the development of social

values of honesty and equality along lines of self-discipline. If the method proceeded undisturbed, it would have outstripped primitive limitations in the course of civilization and would have evolved the right method for moral conduct.

But the encroachment of religious faith changed the basis of morality from social need to other-worldly salvation. Religionists supposed that moral conduct entitled them to the benefits of salvation. Moral values were called virtues and immorality was called vice. Hope of heaven and fear of hell served to make people virtuous and to keep them away from vice.

The religious method cut across the tribal limits of totem and taboo and formed wider social associations with common faith. The lists of virtues and vices swelled up with the growing needs of widening social relations. Myth and mythology, story and fable with gods, angels and demons figuring in them, explained the advantages of love, truth, compassion and co-operation and pointed out to the sufferings of perdition that awaited hate, greed and falseness.

The religious basis of morality inspired many believers with love and truthfulness. In the name of god and salvation, they reached heights of moral excellence. Assured of salvation in after life, believers did not hesitate to lay down their lives in the cause of honesty. Further, the belief that god knew what man did in secret chastened personal conduct.

Yet the benefits of the religious method for morality were undermined by its inherent defect. Whereas self-discipline recognised morality directly as a social need, religious belief was obviously an indirect method. It regarded morality as a means of salvation in after-life. If salvation could be obtained by other means, a believer could very well disregard his social obligations. Monasticism is a clear example of the abuse. Because religious belief invests it with respectability, idlers take to prayer, meditation, rosary and fasting instead of satisfying the rigid needs of social living. From the rational point of view, hermits are a lazy lot and prayer is a waste of time. The situation is worsened when priests sold Indulgences and thereby commercialised religious faith. Under the pretence of penance, criminals could escape opprobrium and knaves could cheat honest believers.

Another defect of the religious method was its commandments of dos and don'ts. They killed the initiative of believers and moved them in ruts of routines. With the best of intentions, the authors of scriptures, the *Bible*, the *Quran*, the *Zend Avesta*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, prescribed a long list of dos and don'ts for the faithful to follow. Though the details of life, from morn to eve and from birth to death, were worked out in the scriptures, they get antiquated in course of time. They cannot meet the needs of new situations. Yet the scriptures are so fanatical as not to permit change of their injunctions. Political constitutions provide for residuary powers and for

the amendments of their articles. But every scripture regards itself the revelation from god and claims finality and infallibility. Though the votaries of one faith do not accept another scripture as wholly wise and sacred, each group lives in its own fool's paradise. Consequently theistic ethical codes have become hopelessly conservative and outmoded and the believers have gone fanatically blind. The inflexibility of scriptural commandments renders dishonesty indispensable to theists. They have to gratify their current needs surreptitiously. The philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* is a laboured and sophisticated justification of a split personality. So Hindus talk delightfully of *adwaita* or oneness but treat fellowmen as untouchables. Christians talk of love but are found engaged in war everywhere. Muslims talk of brotherhood but like to exterminate other faiths. The fatherhood of god has not resulted in the brotherhood of man, since it did not relate man to man but man to god. So, inspite of sermons and pious wishes, the religious method failed to make man honest, loving and kind.

The need of tolerance or respect for difference of opinion received little attention in the eras of religious belief and national jingoism. Proud of its own faith, each group clashed with the rest. Religionists and patriots killed fellowmen to please their own god or country. Common people lived under suppression with no succour except prayer to god. Religion also had no remedy for the evils of its own creation. Its constant

advice was to scorn mundane desires and to look for bliss in the other-world.

When religious method thus stood discredited, Gandhi tried to restore it in the modern world to the glory that inspired its conception. He laid his finger unerringly on truthfulness and tolerance which in practice meant honesty and non-violence. His experiments with truth attracted wide attention all over the world, both because he touched all branches of modern life with the wand of truth and because he activated truth with the non-violent sanction of *Satyagraha*. Owing to his faith in the religious method he interpreted his experience in term of his faith. Gandhi's equation of truth with god was a famous example of his bias.

Devotion to truthfulness made Gandhi practical and realistic. Therefore, he did not permit religious orthodoxy to hamper progress towards truthful living. To old words he gave new meaning compatible with new situations. Though he uttered the name of *Rama*, the Hindu god, he said his Rama was an ideal but not the son of King *Dasaratha* or spouse of *Sita* of Hindu mythology. He shifted the emphasis from belief in god to practice of truth when he stated, "It is more correct to say that Truth is God than to say that God is Truth." * Confronted with the challenge of an atheist, he agreed to drop the mention of god and to have truth instead. When religious strife was raging high in India, he recommended the

* From Yervada Mandir, Chapter I: quoted in "God is Truth", Page 25. Published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay.

formation of a secular State that would treat religion as a personal matter. Thus, whenever he found a conflict between faith in god and needs of truthfulness, he was more inclined to subordinate the faith to the insistence on truthfulness.

Gandhi was the prophet of truth as the social norm par excellence. He used the religious method for the realisation of truth. But his devotion to truth cleared religious faith of the dross so much that he seemed irreligious and fell finally by the bullet of a religious fanatic. Gandhi's martyrdom to the cause of truth revealed that religious faith, however much liberalised, could not cope with the needs of an expanding civilization, since religious faith curbs initiative and closes the mind. Avowed atheism is a must to build up a moral man, full and whole.

The freedom of an atheist presents ethics in a new light. He does not move in the ruts of dos and don'ts. He recognizes that honesty is a social need and so he is honest by choice. Self-discipline keeps him moral in contrast with the impositions of primitive taboos and religious faith. Self-discipline is possible for an atheist as he feels free and lives a conscious life. Nevertheless, lapses in discipline are checked by the open and non violent methods of *Satyagraha*. By *Satyagraha* one insists on another to live up to his promises and professions. it is a social check against dishonesty. At the same time, *Satyagraha* binds the *Satyagrahi* to be moral himself, just as an alcohol addict cannot plead for prohibition.

When Gandhi said that no one could be a *Satyagrahi* without faith in god, he was showing his religious bias. Otherwise, *Satyagraha* is basically atheistic inasmuch as a votary of *Satyagraha* insists on his right to insist on the honesty of another in social relations. Because Gandhi did not accept atheism avowedly, the method of *Satyagraha* lost its strength and got sectarian in the post-Gandhian period. Adoption of atheism reinvigorates *Satyagraha* into an honest and powerful means of checking dishonesty.

The insistence on truthfulness does not disturb the freedom of the individual. The social obligation implied in *Satyagraha* turns the freedom of the individual into moral freedom. An atheist is free to say or to do what he likes, provided he does what he says and says what he does. So, in the context of social relations, the freedom of the individual is moral freedom. Of course, social relations cannot permit licentiousness, selfishness or secrecy.

The exercise of the moral freedom results in the establishment of equality among all people since no open conduct can justify inequality among humans who belong to the same kind. The practice of inequality and the conspiracy for violence imply selfishness and a sectarian attitude. Such persons exclude others from their confidence and take recourse to secrecy. Openness, on the contrary, gives no room for sectarian attitudes and therefore no scope for inequality and violence.

The sectarian attitudes of caste, class, creed, language, race and nation permitted groups of people to live in closed preserves, each developing its own vested interests. Imperialist and expansionist aims led to conflict between the groups. The fallen groups formed into minorities in self-defence.

When all people feel free and open, and the sectarian attitudes of minorities disappear, all people feel equally human. The old notions of race, class, caste and nation have no place in atheistic ethics, which treats all alike and bids fair to march towards the cherished ideal of one-humanity and one-world. Atheistic ethics is one and the same for all people, unlike the old customs of one code of conduct for man and another for woman, one for the Whites and another for the Blacks, one for the rich and another for the poor, one for the *Brahmin* and another for the *Sudra*, one for the master and another for the servant. Likewise, when the sectarian boundaries are pulled down by the assertion of freedom of the individual, the claims of separate cultures lose validity. When people mingle, they become one and the same. Indeed, culture is the conduct which enables a human to meet another human as an equal. Attributing denominational labels of caste, race, religion, class or nation to culture is definitely uncultured.

The atheistic guidelines for right and wrong are contained in the practice of honesty itself. All is right which is done openly and all is wrong

which harbours secrecy. Battles are fought openly but they are wrong since their strategy is laid in deep secrecy. The openness of conduct is a sufficient guarantee against the use of violence in social relations. Emotional outbursts of violence are not so harmful as violence hatched in secrecy. With secrecy, violence becomes a deliberate conspiracy without any regret. An open fit of violence, on the contrary may be followed by repentance and amends.

While openness is generally the test for the rightfulness of an act, slave-mind allowed certain gross injustices to prevail openly in theistic tradition, godly and godless. The insult and cruelty contained in the open practices of untouchability, poverty, apartheid, lynching, pogrom and gas-chamber-executions are examples of the injustice. Their openness has been possible on the background of theism, when the victims thought that they were destined or circumstanced to the hardships. They saw no escape from insult and cruelty, and bore the troubles patiently with faith in divine grace and social justice. Hence the openness of cruelties in theistic civilization.

Atheists dismiss the faith in destiny and determinism. They see the injustice of inequality and openly rebel against it. Hence the openness of atheistic ethics not only tests the rightfulness of an act, but leads towards the establishment of equality in social relations. Obviously, insult and cruelty have no place in atheistic ethics

whose objective is equality and method is openness.

The test of openness for the rightfulness of an act, keeps social relations progressively moral. An atheist does not bind himself to a set of dos and don'ts which by its very nature, gets outmoded and conservative. He uses his initiative and says and does openly what he considers to be right. The openness of the act makes it honest and the use of initiative makes it progressive. The response of the people to the act is the test of the suitability of the act to the present needs. If one is not satisfied with the response, he is free to change the content of his act or to become a martyr to the cause which he holds to be the truth. The spread of atheism opens the minds of people who grow susceptible to fresh ideas. Persecution of heresy diminishes with the rise of atheism. The struggles for political freedom and the movements of *Satyagraha* liberalised the caste-ridden Hindus so much that they thought of abolishing the old custom of untouchability and incorporated it in the Constitution.

The free mind of atheists loosens the ties of private property and family loyalties. Those institutions were formed when the State had not established itself in order to take up the responsibilities of social security. Though the institution of private property caused economic inequalities and the institution of family suppressed women, the evils are tolerated in view of the advantage of security which they provide. One

could buy comfort and protection with private property and the members of a family come to the aid of individuals in times of need, old age and disability.

With the establishment of stable governments the conditions have changed in the modern age. The institution of a government is better suited to guarantee social security than the institutions of private property and of family whose facilities are limited and circumscribed. Of course, the institution of government is attended with the domination of centralised authority. Notwithstanding the disadvantage which can be controlled with the rise of freedom of the individual, a government can be used to liberate women and to abolish poverty more advantageously through State authority than through the repair of rickety codes of conduct. Therefore atheistic ethics lean towards politics.

CHAPTER IV

ATHEISTIC POLITICS

POLITICS is the method of solving people's problems by means of a government. The political method came in when the methods of self-discipline and religious faith had failed to solve the problems. They failed because they did not adopt atheism. Their failure necessitated the growth of politics.

Self-discipline and religious faith produced good men but not a good society. The *Brahmin* is a good individual, disciplined in personal habits and clean in personal hygiene. But *Brahmins* have remained in small and narrow confines while Hindu society in general stinks with filth. Likewise a Christian is polite in manners and fair in thinking. But Christian civilization has been found to exploit colonies and to bomb Hiroshima. A Muslim stands equal with his fellows at the prayer-time. But he carefully safeguards his unequal advantages at other time. Obviously self-discipline cannot deal with wide populations and religious faith makes man more formal than

realistic. Political method corrects the faults and solves the problems by being social and secular.

When the early priest used cudgels along with curses to punish "sinners", he was employing both the spiritual and secular methods to curb dishonesty. Out of the curses grew the religious method; the cudgels laid the foundations for the political method. The reality of the cudgels gave the political method more power and influence over the people than the religious method could command in the long run. While religion in its own way promoted virtue promising heaven and deterred vice by inspiring the fear of hell, the political method is largely penal.

Government is the executive of the political method. It derives authority from the cooperation which people give and collects revenues from the taxes which people pay. If a considerable section of the people withdraw cooperation and withhold taxes, any government is bound to collapse. Though the people are thus the masters of their government, the mastership is possible only when the people know that they are the masters. But the slave-mind of the people prevents them from feeling that they are the masters of their government. On the contrary, they subordinate themselves to the very government which they set up and maintain with their cooperation and taxes. Hence in theistic civilization, kings rule as masters and people obey as subjects. Therefore, instead of serving the people by solving their

problems, the heads of the State in theistic politics enslave and exploit the people. Kings grew autocratic, tortured the people and built their palaces and places of amusement with slave labour. The Collesium of Rome, Pyramids of Egypt, the Kremilin of Russia and the Tajmahal of India are examples of the pride and pleasures of kings, while common people lie in miserable hovels.

Rationalists among politicians saw the injustice in political domination. They asserted the freedom of the people, rebelled against kings and replaced monarchies with democracies. Naturally monarchists and royalists regarded democrats as heretics and persecuted them as such. Indeed democrats roused the spirit of freedom among the people and led the revolt against the godless theism of political domination.

Unlike monarchies wherein kings succeeded hereditarily, the heads of State in democracies are elected periodically by the people. Besides taxes and cooperation, democracy provides people with another control over their government in the form of the vote. Not only through non-cooperation and no-tax but through voting differently also democrats can topple their governments, and change their political chiefs. Thus as the word itself signifies, democracy(demos=People, Kratos=power) is more a government of the people than kingship was.

A significant feature of democracy is the establishment of political equality among the

people. Universal adult suffrage invests each adult with one vote, not less not more. This is indeed the establishment of political equality. The implication of democracy is that, if it worked well the political equality should lead to the establishment of equality in social respect and economic opportunity also. The all round establishment of equality would solve several of the problems of the people. So democracy enunciates the principle of equality and provides for its realization through political channels. .

A right does not bear fruit unless it is accompanied by the consciousness of the claim. The consciousness is not possible as long as one believes that his life is ordained by powers beyond him. Therefore atheistic outlook is indispensable for awakening the consciousness and the will for the real working of democracy. Without avowed atheism, democracy turns into a formality of the exercise of voting franchise without deriving benefits that are intended by it.

It is a sad fact that the fathers of democracy were heretical enough to overthrow kingship, but were not avowedly atheistic to rouse democratic consciousness among the people. Rousseau who inspired the democratic revolution in France, believed in the supremacy of the Great Will and Voltaire did not disbelieve in the existence of god. Like several prophets, they were only partially successful in liberating people from theistic politics. Consequently, after the transient period of political uprising, people fell into the stupor of

theistic beliefs. They became the slaves of the representatives whom they elected with their vote. The old story of the master becoming the slave of his creation repeated again in the age of democracy also.

In the absense of control from the people, the elected representatives, especially the presidents and ministers, are no less indifferent towards their duties to the people than kings were. Periodically the voter is coaxed or even coerced to exercise his franchise and there ends his mastership till the time of the next election. The legislators are free to use the powers and revenues of the government for personal gain. Despite the voting franchise and political equality, the common people in democracy lie under the heel of their representatives. Equality is a subject for talks at election campaigns rather than a reality to be enjoyed in democracy. The democratic checks of Recall, Referendum and Initiative do not improve the lot of the common man as long as he remains theistic.

The political ignorance and the slave-mind of the mass of voters in democracy give scope for the rise of political parties. Like the trader between the producer and the consumer, political parties function as middlemen between the voter and the government, and thrive on the political ignorance of common voters.

Parties may be actuated at first with the honest desire of channelizing the aspirations of

ignorant voters. Each party professes a policy for the solution of the problems that confront people. The difference between the several parties is ostensibly the difference between their policies. Because decisions in democracy go by a majority vote, any party can serve the people well only when it obtains the majority of seats in the Legislative House. So each party competes with others to secure the majority of seats at elections or through defections and the fight for power gets precedence over the desire to serve the people. The fight for power between the parties turns politics into power politics. Power politics is the inevitable consequence of the party system in democracy. Besides, neither the majority nor the minority party or a coalition of parties is in a position to serve the interests of the people. The minority parties cannot serve the people because they have no power; the majority party cannot serve the people because the minority party does not give it peace. The minority parties constantly manoeuvre to unseat the majority party and keep it on the defensive with hardly time left to think of the people. The little benefit that people get from democracy is from the administration of permanent services rather than from any of the parties.

Though the parties differ in their policies, all the parties have the common objective of serving the people. In that case, why do not all parties join to serve the people, instead of competing for power? Further, since democracy consists in the freedom of expression, it is

possible that there can be as many policies as there are members in the legislature. Yet the democratic method of decision-making requires that, after a free discussion on the several policies, the decision should be taken by a majority of free votes. Such a method allows scope for free expression of views and also for the mutual appreciation of different points of view. Thus democracy is essentially an open-minded approach to the solution of problems.

Open-mindedness lays emphasis for the solution of a problem not on any one policy but on a consensus of several policies. The various policies are but means to solve the problem. Each is important in so far as it helps the solution and is liable to be modified in relation to other policies. The final policy which evolves after a free discussion of several policies happens to be a synthesis of all of them. So to swear by a particular policy is evidently the dictatorship of the advocates of that policy but not democracy. In fact, party-ridden democracy, wherein the parties are bound by their respective manifestoes, blocs and whips, is virtually the dictatorship of the majority party.

In the context of the open-mindedness, opposition plays a significant role in democracy. For the opposition to be useful, effective, constructive and dignified, it is necessary to regard each member of the legislature as honourable as the rest. But the party-structure enables the party in power to vote down the opposition every

time with its brute majority of votes, unless the majority party condescends to agree to the concession the opposition party begs for. Thus the opposition commits suicide when it becomes a party. In party-ridden democracy opposition has, at best, a nuisance value rather than a useful role. Whereas in naked dictatorship, the opposition is physically liquidated or is nonexistent, in party-democracy the opposition is politely set aside. So for the opposition to be real, it should be partyless. The use of the opposition consists not only in the freedom to express the opposite point of view but in the possibility of the view being accepted. Party structure denies this possibility. Therefore, real democracy should function partyless. All policies, including the opposition, should be kept free and fluid. One who clings to his point of view, may be a martyr for a cause, but not a democrat.

A democratic cabinet accepts the decision by the majority of free and fluid votes of the legislators, present and voting, even when a proposal of the cabinet is rejected or amended. If the cabinet threatens to resign everytime its proposal is not accepted in toto by the House, the government becomes the dictatorship of the cabinet but not a democracy in spirit. The essence of democracy is respect for difference of opinion and acceptance of the decision by a majority of free and fluid votes. The condition is fulfilled when the legislatures are freed of parties. Such a democracy is stable and useful to the people since it solves their problems.

Another defect of the present democracy is that it functions as Nation States, some times with unwieldy populations and territory. The Nation State is not only sectarian from the stand point of humanity, but it is too big to enable the representatives of the people to be in intimate touch with the people of their constituencies and to know their changing needs and growing ambitions. So the administration is becoming increasingly impersonal and bureaucratic, dealing more with files of papers than with beating hearts of the people. Hence the legislators are prone to use the powers and revenues of the government for personal comfort and prestige because of sheer helplessness to deal with huge populations, even though they are honest men in themselves. Therefore National Republics rule over the people rather than serve the people.

Like partylessness, decentralization of the present Nation States is necessary for the proper functioning of democracy. Decentralized democracy organizes small and handy units for basic administration. The basal units consist around a thousand of the population and a territory of about twenty square kilometres. The size of the population is more important than the extent of territory, because the administration has to be in touch with every individual within the basal unit. By and large, the possibility of personal touch within human limitations of memory and direct reach is the aim of decentralization.

Each basal unit elects its committee for administration. The committee attends to the

changing needs and growing ambitions of its people. For the satisfaction of the greater needs like communications, exchange of produce, travel and research, the basal units are progressively federated into larger units, tier by tier, until the whole humanity and the world comes within its compass. Each tier will have its own committee elected by the committees immediately at its base. The apical committees attend to the general needs while the basal committees attend to the immediate needs of people.

Such a federated system of decentralization cuts across the sectarian considerations of nationalism and minority interests, which cause war and strife. Also, as every individual belongs to one basal unit or other, he is assured of social security in the unit. The system can replace the narrow family loyalties for the care of the individual. Leaving filial affections and conjugal love to the tastes of individuals, the system of decentralized democracy is an effective alternative to the old and conservative institutions of caste, tribe and family. On the oneside it attends to the individual and on the other it enables him to grow into the World Federation of one humanity without the need of narrow loyalties to a nation or to a sect.

A type of decentralization was in vogue in ancient times. The City States of Greece and the *Ganas* of India were indeed basal units. But, as they were not federated progressively, they went to war with the neighbour units. In modern times,

Kibutz of Israel, *Soviets* of Russia, *Communes* of China and *Panchayats* of India correspond to the plan of decentralization. Yet they function within the limits and protection of the Nation State and so they are not free from the evils of Nationalism. The League of Nations and the United Nations Organization have the world outlook without the counter part of decentralized basal units. Only Sir Arthur Morgan, Acharya Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan could conceive the entire plan of decentralization and of federation together.

Democracy, partylessness, decentralization, recall, referendum and initiative are methods which bring a government closer to the citizen. But they remain formal and do not yield the results they intend, unless man feels that he is the master of his government. As long as man continues to be slave-minded, he submits to a government of any form just as he surrendered to a god of any type. Hence the best of democracies turn into dictatorship. A dictatorship is not different from monarchy, except that in monarchies people obey hereditary princes and in dictatorships people obey unscrupulous demagogues. Slaves abet tyrants, whether the tyrants are priests, kings or dictators.

The recognition of freedom of the individual gives a new complexion to atheistic politics. At first it transfers the sovereignty from the State to the citizen. Though, in principle, democracy recognizes the sovereignty of the people, in theistic democracy, the sovereignty is enjoyed by

the party chiefs in the name of the people, while people themselves remain slaves under their representatives. The atheistic outlook makes the sovereignty of the people real and effective.

The test of the sovereignty of the people is the establishment of equality. Though the universal adult suffrage established political equality through the principle of one-man-one-vote, the political equality has not led to equality in social respect and economic opportunity, because the people had not felt free enough to assert their sovereignty and compel the government to legislate in favour of social and economic equality. But atheists feel fully free. They assert their sovereignty and see that they achieve economic and social equalities through appropriate legislation.

Tax, cooperation and vote have been the links between the people and the government. Because the slave-minded people had not used these controls effectively, people's problems remained unsolved by the government; and the forsaken people had no succour except prayers to god. Atheism changes the outlook. The activation of controls is *Satyagraha*. With no-tax, non-cooperation, elections and direct action, people compel their representatives to legislate in favour of the establishment of social and economic equalities. *Satyagraha* acts through persuasion, if possible, and through pressure, if necessary.

Since people were not awakened atheistically, democracy could not deliver the goods and thereby gave scope for the rise of terrorism. Atheistic awakening renders secrecy and violence unnecessary. Atheistic politics proceed to solve people's problems by means of active participation of the people in their governance.

The foremost among problems is the economic problem.

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CHAPTER V

ATHEISTIC ECONOMICS

ECONOMICS deals with the satisfaction of man's material needs. The needs range from food and shelter to comforts commanded by conditioning air, ordering automatons and using drugs. The material needs are different from the desire for honour, power and pleasures of fine arts.

Because one has to live in order to live well, the satisfaction of material needs is the first obligation on human affairs. Yet man does not satisfy the animal needs in an animal way. Ideological considerations influence economic endeavours. Zealots smile at privation and persecution. Hope of heaven enables millions of people to endure the hardships of poverty with resignation. An affront of insult spurns luxurious comforts. As man's mood is thus a significant factor in the enjoyment of material comforts; attitudes of theism and atheism affect his economic relations.

Passive sufference of inequality in theistic civilization allows difference between the rich and

the poor to remain. Side by side with modern methods of agriculture and technology which produce a "surplus" of food and fancy articles and create new genetic forms of plants and animals, we find hungry people crying for food and fighting for place to live in. Charity is the only source of relief for the impoverished, and in theistic civilization, the needy live at the mercy of the greedy.

Atheistic economics is different. As all men are free, they strive to have equal opportunities to live and to live well. The promotion of equality in the satisfaction of the material needs of life is the principal feature of atheistic economics. In short, atheistic economics means the establishment of economic equality.

The two methods in vogue for the establishment of economic equality are Marxism and Gandhism.

The Marxian method is socialism or common ownership of means of production. But what is the symbol of commonness in which the ownership can be vested?

Because government is the executive of social relations, it is the effective symbol of commonness. In the context of a nation, national government and in the case of the world, world government are the symbols of commonness. Therefore, in practice, Marxism means the State ownership of means of production. Wherever

Communist Party, which is devoted to Marxian ideology, entrenched itself in political authority, it replaced private ownership of means of production with State ownership and attended to equitable distribution of economic produce for equal satisfaction of material needs of the people under its sway. Thus Marxism fulfils its purpose of establishing economic equality.

Gandhism adopts a different method for achievement of the same objective of economic equality. It is the method of Trusteeship. Trusteeship recognizes individual ownership of means of production. But Gandhism hopes that each individual would act as the trustee of his property and would share the benefits equally with the rest of people for common good.*

Judging by the results, Marxism and Gandhism could not proceed far to establish economic equality. In spite of their spectacular success at the start, both were halted in their march.

The Gandhian principle of trusteeship is intrinsically atheistic, inasmuch as it upholds freedom of the individual by respecting the individual ownership of property. In his zeal for the freedom of the individual, Gandhi was averse to the authority of a centralized government. He advocated the cause of "enlightened anarchy" and

* Thirteenth item - Working for Economic Equality - Constructive Programme, its Meaning and Place, by M. K. Gandhi - Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1941.

explained, "In such a state everyone is his own ruler. He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the ideal state therefore there is no political power because there is no State. But the ideal is never fully realized in life. Hence the classical statement of Thoreau that that Government is best which governs the least".*

Gandhi was convinced of the imperative need of economic equality. He regarded Working for Economic Equality "the master key to non-violent Independence".** In his lifetime, he was engrossed in the fight for the political freedom of India. He had scarcely time to develop the principle of trusteeship beyond its enunciation and persuading his nearest colleagues, like Jamanlal Bajaj, to its practice. Nevertheless he warned: "A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of the riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good." ***

In the post-Gandhian period, Acharya Vinoba Bhave popularised the principle of Trusteeship and put it into practice on a mass scale in the movement of *Bhoodan-Gramdan* (Land Gift).

* The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi - Volume 47 - page 91 - The Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India - 1971.

** Thirteenth item - Constructive Programme. Its Meaning and Place, by M. K. Gandhi.

*** Ibid.

Its initial success was amazing and it attracted wide attention. But its progress slowed down considerably. In the end, it could not achieve half as much in the direction of the establishment of economic equality as Marxism could with its materialistic philosophy. When the first flush of enthusiasm subsided, the language of religion which Gandhi and Vinoba adopted as a part of the non-violent technique, settled down people in the old ways of conventional inequality.

The main drawback of the method of Trusteeship is its non political character. In the modern age when social relations are growing in width and complexity, the institution of a government is indispensable to regulate relations. Evils of centralization should be obviated by increase in the democratic consciousness of the people and their control of the government, instead of dispensing with the government altogether. Therefore, the non-political stand of the *Bhoodan-Gramdan* was a mistake which rendered the movement pleasantly idealistic but regressive in practice. It could develop no sanctions for its promotion except persuasion, which, when it was couched in the terminology of religious faith, led people into the old ways of theistic slavery rather than encouraging them to work for free equality. Trusteeship became another word for a charitable disposition in a system of economic inequalities.

Further, the non-political position is tenable in principle, if people went to demolish the existing institution of the government with

complete withdrawal of cooperation and taxes. But to ignore the government while paying taxes and respecting its laws is like maintaining a servant at a high cost but not taking service from him. So the religious terminology and the non political stand seriously hampered the progress of Trusteeship towards achieving economic equality.

Marxism has projected the image of economic equality more markedly than Trusteeship has. It has enlisted wide support to its cause of socialism and has taken rapid strides towards the establishment of economic equality. But the method of class struggle which is described by Marx, has the same defect as the non political stand of Trusteeship. Marx considered that "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"* and that the government at any time is a reflection of the stage of class struggle. The present experience, however, does not lend support to the claim of the supreme importance to the class struggle. Wherever socialist governments are formed, the Communist Party captured power, not by the much professed graded class struggles, but by mass revolts and army coups, as in the case of conquests by non-communists. More recently, in Kerala (India) and in Chile, the communist party could get into power through open democratic elections. At best, the promise of economic betterment which

* Manifesto of the Communist Party - By Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1847.

is very pronounced in Marxism, raises hopes in the downtrodden and gets their sympathy more for the Communist Party than for the non communists.

Yet the Communist governments have required totalitarian authority in order to wrest the private ownership of the means of production and to socialize them through State ownership. Not infrequently people have resisted attempts at socialization and the dictatorship of the Communist Party. Propaganda against communism, on the score of loss of individual freedom, could mobilise people against communist regimes and anti-communist armies have their victories too. The prolonged war in Vietnam and the division of the world into the Socialistic and the Democratic blocs illustrate that what is significant in history is not the class struggle but the conflict between the two groups of people who are for and against economic equality, regardless of their present economic situation.

That in human affairs consciousness counts more than the "class structure" is borne out also by the experience of the working of the Trade Unions. Trade Unions are class organizations which are mainly intended to safeguard the economic interests of the downtrodden against the exploitation of the richer classes. If the economic interests were supreme, each Trade Union ought to stand solid. But in reality, Trade Unions are easily split on appeals to religious faith, racial distinction and by affiliation to

political parties. Working men wage war against each other for national freedom rather than uniting to break their chains.

In countries like India, that have just emerged from colonial domination, big sections of the population lead a hand-to-mouth existence due to backward economy. Even if they do not forcibly overthrow social institutions, as Marxism expects of them, they should support Communist Party at elections, because the Communist Party is the spear-head of the proletarian revolution. But the millions of the downtrodden actually cast their votes in favour of the candidates who are known for their capitalist interests.

Again if the circumstance of poverty could create revolution, no circumstance was more compelling than the *Bengal Famine* in India in 1944-46. Thousands of destitutes died of hunger in the streets of Calcutta by the side of shops that were laden with provisions and food. A hungry dog would have pounced on the shops and swooped away some food from the stalls. Why, then, the hungry destitutes did not loot the shops? All the police force of the city could not have prevented the rush of the desperate destitutes on the shops. What made the destitutes die of hunger rather than pounce on the shops was their conventional respect for private property and their ideology of fatalism. Therefore a revolutionary situation does not spark off a revolution unless the people have the revolutionary consciousness. Evidently the consciousness is

more important than circumstances. Millions of 'Untouchables' and 'Blacks' have remained degraded and downtrodden for hundreds of generations because they lack the consciousness of freedom and equality. So the Marxian maxim that the "social being" determines the consciousness of man is not confirmed in practice. On the contrary, the consciousness of men is creating new situations in life.

The stalwarts who created socialist revolutions, like Marx, Engles and Lenin did not belong to the proleterian class. To consider them de-classed denies the basic principle of Marxism that consciousness corresponds to the class structure. Further, if Marx and Lenin could be de-classed, any other could be de-classed too. The claim is as absurd as the first cause.

Trade Unions fail to achieve the objective of economic equality, because the diagnosis of the situation is false. In reality, the poor do not hate the inequality and rebel against it; they are as much capitalist-minded as the rich. The poor envy the rich and want to be rich themselves instead of wishing to abolish the private ownership of property and thereby pave the way for economic equality. A man longs to share property with the richer and not with the poorer. So it is the poor man's capitalism that protects the rich man's wealth, because the poor man does not help to abolish private ownership of property.

There is no class struggle in the social relations. The theistic society is a flux of

inequalities, each one competing with others for a better place. Strikes by Trade Unions receive support in so far as they stimulate the selfish interest of the members by the inducement of higher wages. The slogan that keeps up Trade Unions is "higher wages for us", but not "food for all". Trade Unionism expresses selfish-group-interest rather than the desire for social well-being by the establishment of economic equality. Therefore, the socially conscious persons like Lenin and HoChiMinh required political dictatorship to regiment people for social well being.

Both Gandhism and Marxism were halted in their march towards economic equality, because both of them adopted a non-political approach. Trusteeship and class struggle related man to man without reference to government. In substance, if the rich man gives away his extra advantages to the poorer brother, it is Gandhian trusteeship; if the poor man takes away the extra advantage from the richer brother it is Marxian class struggle. But in the modern world, the economic problems are not so simple as to be resolved by simple giving or by simple taking. The institution of the State is developed in order to regulate the complex relations between man and man. A more realistic approach to establish economic equality is to solve the problem through State authority than to ignore it. In fact, though trusteeship and class struggle are non-political in principle, both Gandhism and Marxism had recourse to state authority to solve the economic problem ultimately. Gandhi worked for the political freedom of

India *inter alia* other colonial countries, while Marxists established political dictatorship for implementing socialism. Realistically, therefore, atheistic economics makes a political approach to the economic problem.

A government is common to all its people, the rich and the poor, the White and the Black, the young and the old, men and women. It also belongs to all people because they pay taxes and give cooperation directly or indirectly. Therefore it is the right of every citizen to demand from the government effective economic change.

A government means the personnel of the government. The personnel are different from the ordinary citizens as long the personnel hold office. They stand in a representative capacity, different from an ordinary citizen. Whereas a citizen can request a fellow citizen for a favour, he can demand the task of the government personnel. A citizen is a friend but the government personnel are servants of the people, whatever place they hold.

Theists could not get economic problems solved by the government because in their slave-mind, they cringed for favours from the government instead of getting things done by the personnel of the government. Theists regard the personnel of the government as masters and themselves as subjects. Atheists are different. They know that the personnel of the government are the servants and that they are the masters. So

the atheists achieve through the government what the theists failed to do.

The atheist form of government is necessarily a democracy, since atheists brook no dictatorship. So atheists go to control their government through electing proper personnel at first and through the check of *Satyagraha* next on the abuses of power by the personnel, as and when they occur. With such control over the government, atheists get the appropriate legislation passed for the establishment of economic equality. It is equally possible in a democratic set-up for the theistic traditions to linger. They and the vested interests in economic inequality may oppose the legislation in favour of economic equality and pressurise the government in their own way. Indeed the confrontation is the occasion for atheistic education of the people. As the atheistic consciousness rises among the people, the appreciation of equality grows and asserts itself in the establishment of economic equality.

Partly due to the impatience of the communists and partly due to the materialist philosophy of godless theism which lacks faith in the freedom of all individuals, Marxist method rushed to achieve economic equality through socialist political dictatorships. But their progress is stemmed by the democratic forces. So the Marxian method failed to proceed with the establishment of economic equality. That which is achieved through the consciousness of the people is more stable and progressive than anything forced on them. Hence atheism is superior to Marxism.

The equality achieved through atheistic economics touches an aspect of human personality which socialism neglects to appreciate. Respect for the dignity of human personality is as important as the satisfaction of the material needs. Prisoners do not feel happy, though they are assured of the schedule of food and amenities equally among all convicts. The sense of restraint in a prison damps the pleasure of their comforts, though some times they are luxurious also. So it is not food alone, but food with dignity is the need of mankind. The meanest of beggars more often than not refuse food thrown with frown. It is the concern of atheistic economics therefore to provide food with dignity for all.

Atheistic economics has two aspects, the first is personal wherein he gets comforts with dignity; and the second is the social wherein the comforts are provided for all the people.

The range of one's society may be narrow like a family or a nation or the whole humanity. While the limit of a family for economic consideration is the most common in conventional life of individuals, a state is concerned with the nation under its rule. Atheists who have the human outlook should go beyond both the limits and think in terms of the whole humanity. The comprehension may look ordinarily ambitious or even unreal. But to an atheist who feels a human, the consideration is natural. Though his government feels national, an atheist presses

upon his government to share its benefits with more backward nations. Of course, in the context of economic equality, the distinction of affluence and of backwardness is invidious. On the other hand, the fall in the economic standards of one in the attempt to share advantage with another is certainly its gain in the moral level. And moral considerations are important in atheistic economics.

Food for all does not seem to be difficult in industrialized civilization. In some countries like U. S. A., the surplus food is posing the problem of prices. Instead of destroying the food for keeping up the price level, if the food is distributed, it would feed more mouths. Liberalization of the rules of immigration distributes population more evenly over the globe, brings more land under cultivation, harness river waters and produces food sufficient for all. Population explosion does not seem to be as much a threat as restrictions on the utilisation of resources. Free initiative and human ingenuity have immense potentiality. So atheism which seasons economics with ethics promises to provide food for all.

While provision of food crosses a big hurdle in human affairs, food with dignity is necessary to give scope for the development of human personality. Socialist regimes and affluent societies do provide food for all under their rule. But regimentation and doles of social welfare deprive individuals of the sense of participation in their

affairs and narrow down interest in life. Therefore atheistic economics recommend the organization of handy communities in which members live in close personal relations. The material resources of the community are either commonly owned or equally shared. Water and power supply, and health and educational services are fit for common management while agricultural farms and housing facilities can be shared personally. In such communities all members participate in common-weal and satisfy material wants equally to the extent they are available. The general level of life of the community rises with growth in the facilities of the community through common effort of the members.

As every individual belongs to one community or the other, it follows that material needs of all people are attended to with dignity in their respective communities. The progressive federation of the primary communities into the world federation, tier by tier, opens the scope for every individual to grow beyond his community into dimensions as wide as the world according to his taste and talent. While primary communities are concerned mostly with basic needs of individuals, the tiers of federations not only manage wider needs like communications and exchange of produce but offer facilities for special interests like research. The primary communities themselves grow in size and scope with increase in social consciousness.

The impersonal character of urban civilization pushed out the many to fall into lethargy

with a sense of helplessness after the satisfaction of animal needs, while a few exploited their passivity and built up unequal advantages. The community life, on the contrary, is highly personal and participatory. It cares for everyone, enthuses everyone and helps the growth of individuality. Billions of people working in millions of communities produce wealth far greater than a few big factories can and thereby afford material facility for promotion of personality.

Thus in atheistic economics, man raises himself beyond the animal level and becomes an equal partner in social relations. The need for conflict, small or big, is at once removed by personal attention then and there.

Atheistic economics alters the form of technology from service to a few big interests to service to all human beings.

CHAPTER VI

ATHEISTIC TECHNOLOGY

ORGANISATION of society and the use of tools are the two aids that have enlarged man's power of achievement to prodigious proportions. Out of social organization have sprung up the systems of ethics, politics and economics. The making of tools have developed industry, agriculture, engineering and medicine which constitute technology.

Like the shaping of social institutions, fashioning of tools is wholly a product of human imagination. Animals use tooth and claw to manipulate food or to make burrows. But a child uses a stone to break a nut, a spike to dig the earth and a pole to reach a distance. A recluse sitting in a cave may avoid society, but he uses some utensils and some improvised tools in everyday life. Tools have become a part of human life. Modern technology has increased man's powers as far as to promise holiday trips to the moon, to preserve youthfulness and to banish death.

In view of the potentialities of technology, it should have made man's life secure and comfortable. But the growth of mighty machines is creating unemployment among the people, except under conditions of socialist dictatorship. Industrialised Europe has thrown the millions of Asia and Africa out of employment. The manufacture of nuclear weapons has strengthened the hands of imperialists to annihilate fighters for freedom. So instead of benefitting humanity, the advances in the system of technology in vogue has proved a menace to human well being.

Evidently in the course of the theistic civilization, technologists have been amoral and sometimes immoral. They sold technological skill and achievement to capitalists and to imperialists for personal profit. Ignoring the claims of humanity, they became active accomplices in colonial wars, racial discrimination and communal prejudices. They were eager to find out the climate and contour of distant planets, but they were in the least concerned with their next-door neighbour's joys and sorrows.

In this plight, the addition of moral consideration gives technology the atheistic orientation. The criterion for the moral consideration is the amount of social benefit that accrues from a technological achievement.

The construction of a big machine is indeed a notable achievement of technological skill. A worker with a big machine may produce

hundred times the goods more than he can with simple tools. It is a gain from the technological point of view. But looked at socially, what should happen to the other ninety-nine fellowmen, whose work the machine has appropriated? They could go unemployed and depend either upon the doles of charity from the manager of the machine or on a dictatorial authority to distribute the produce equitably. So big machines render unemployment and capitalism or socialist dictatorship necessary. Even when some kind of equitable distribution is assured, big machines bring the problem of leisure in their wake. Many idlers enjoy what a few laboriously produce.

Suppose a tipe of work, like club-life or literary pursuit, is created for the idlers; it is bound to be different from productive labour. The other work also may be useful to the society in a way, but different persons will have different types of work. The differences in the work will entail division of labour.

Social organization based upon the division of labour works well where the several members are organically dependent on one another, as in the case of the bee-hive. Queens, drones and worker-bees are structurally different and are inter-dependent to constitute the whole colony, But all humans are alike. Division of labour is not possible among humans, unless they are regimented by religious faith or by political dictatorship. Voluntary division of work is but an expediency and a temporary phase.

The caste system of Hindu social order was a stupendous experiment in the division of labour. Its binding force was faith in fatalism. Each Hindu believed that he was destined to be born in a particular caste and to do a particular work by the deeds of the previous birth. He could improve his caste only in the next birth by better dutifulness to his caste of birth in this life. Such a rigid system of caste which was bound by religious faith and with threats of social ostracism, failed in the long run, when the Hindus breathed an air of freedom, especially when democracy sponsored the political equality of all people. Today caste distinctions impede the social progress of Hindus. Hindus cannot mingle with the main stream of humanity without reservations. So division of labour is not conducive either to the establishment of equality or to the development of social relations. Therefore the method of social organisation for humans is cooperation among free and equal individuals. Accordingly, the mode of technology should fit into the needs of cooperation. This new technology is atheistic technology.

Atheistic technology adopts decentralization. Instead of a few big machines, it uses many small machines. Of course, operations like mining, metallurgy and heavy industries stand on a different footing. The produce of each small machine is sufficient for the growing needs and comforts of an individual or of a small group of individuals. Small machines promote individual

self-sufficiency at least in so far as the basic needs of life are concerned, like food, comfortable shelter, clothes, health, education and recreation. The division of labour in which certain skills are monopolised by certain groups of people is avoided. On the contrary, atheistic technology will demonstrate that any individual can develop any skill. The possibility of the independence of the individual is the basis of co-operation. Otherwise dependence not only in the case of the ownership of the means of production but in skillfulness also gives opportunity for exploitation. Thus the atheistic technology of self-sufficiency which preserves the freedom of the individual, avoids unemployment and exploitation; it replaces benevolent capitalism and dictatorial socialism with democratic cooperation.

The use of big machine in a Socialist State ensures equal distribution of economic goods. But in such a system there is divorce between the machinery of production, namely, the big industry, and the machinery of distribution namely, the State authority. The separation of the functions requires dictatorial authority for the distributing agency, namely, the government. With this authority, the government of a Socialist State not only directs but controls the production in order to distribute it equally among the people. Even when the government owns the factories, the functions of production and distribution remain separate. When the functions are separate, it is possible for the dominant function to make the other subordinate to it.

But the atheistic method of decentralization contains the distribution within the method of production itself, that is, each one produces unto himself what he needs. But this is an extreme case of self-sufficiency and the freedom of the individual. Ordinarily man is social and a social group can be trusted with some amount of division of labour. A few can produce for others who may be engaged in such avocations as education and health services which are not strictly productive labour from economic point of view. But such a division of labour will not lead to dictatorship if it is confined to the limits of personal association among the members. In other words, socialization upto the basal units in a system of decentralized polity is not harmful and is desirable too. Such a socialized administration which is under personal knowledge and direct control of all the members of the basal unit is distinctly different from the Socialist dictatorship of the centralized administration which is removed far out of personal touch of the citizen. Economic equality is, of course, the same both in the case of a Socialist dictatorship and of a decentralised participatory democracy. But the difference between the two is that the former entails dictatorship which curbs the freedom of the individual whereas the latter gives scope for freedom of the individual along with economic equality.

Further, technology deals with tools and test-tubes which, like the files of papers of bureaucratic administration, are essentially

non-human. Unless the tools and files are kept small and under effective control, they impersonalise the modes of working, and tend to make social relations dry and cold, instead of keeping them sensitive and loving. The labour strikes and managerial lockouts, that are characteristic of big factories and industrial combines in capitalist economy betray the callousness with which the interests of the labour are treated. Also the production of nuclear weapons and the pollution of air and water with effluxes from factories and with sewage from cities totally disregard the security and safety of fellowmen. The indescent haste with which inorganic fertilisers are used to increase food production with a view to gain profit pay little attention to the health of consumers. The rapid depletion of mineral wealth and of coal and oil resources of the earth gives little thought to the needs of the generations to come. These evils are avoided by decentralized technology. Man to man relations can be preserved only in small scale industry. Moreover decentralized technology and handicrafts do not diminish the quantity of production. Just as a thousand candles together burn ten times brighter than a hundred-watt electric bulb, many small machines produce far more than a few big ones can.

Decentralization and handicrafts do not mean diminution of the articles of comforts that man desires. It only means equal distribution of the comforts among all the people. The comforts can increase limitlessly, provided each increase is available to all people.

Atheistic technology is made possible by atheistic awakening. When people feel free and equal, they cannot suffer the immoral distinctions between the rich and the poor, between the master and the servant, between the skilled and the unskilled, between the *Brahmin* and the *Sudra*. All men are alike in structure and talent. Geniuses are as rare as morons and their occurrence does not affect the normal course of social relations. Atheistic awakening removes the sense of inferiority that the theistic faiths created in the masses of people, and rouses them into equal activity and gives them equal facility for the expression of talents and tastes.

CHAPTER VII

ATHEISTIC AESTHETICS

AESTHETICS is the freest expression of human imagination. Philosophy, ethics, politics, economics and technology restrain imagination with the requirements of method and morality. In aesthetics, imagination soars free into the realms of fancy and creates fine arts. The appreciation of fine arts is called the sense of beauty.

Ideals, plans and speculations are also exercises of free imagination. But they are directed to definite objectives. With no tangible objectives, they turn out into utopias and acquire the character of poetic imagination.

The separation of imaginative life from real life renders aesthetics enjoyable and dangerous at once.

Freed from moral responsibilities and needs of truthfulness, aesthetics afford the pleasures of lotus-eaters. The joy is the most when saints in seclusion meditate on spiritual bliss. Poets, painters, sculptors, singers and dancers are more

social than saints. They give outward expression to their subjective experience and thus share their joy with others. The best of them tell the most of it. Yet there are restrictions inherent in the means of communication. So theists consider silent spiritual bliss superior to song and dance. Thus bliss is wholly personal while art is social also.

Art is not always for art's sake. A singer not only pleases himself but likes to please others when he holds a concert. Likewise pictures, verses, statues and ballet are to delight others also. When a hungry man stops to listen to a musical note or to enjoy the colour of a daisy, the sense of beauty does not appease his hunger, but it illustrates the basic similarity of all humans in the desire for the beautiful. So the pleasure of art is more general than personal.

The freedom of the aesthetic pleasures from the hard realities of living contains dangerous consequences also. It distracts people from the production of material wealth. In a social order wherein inequalities prevail, the rich indulge in fine arts because they live upon the labour of the poor. They beautify their homes with ornamental flowers because they eat the food which the farmers grow. Roman lords enjoyed sport because gladiators died for their entertainment. In capitalist and aristocratic cultures, fine arts are turned into profession. Artists played to please others more than to please themselves. Moreover, art for job or for joy neglects to provide for the

needs of life. The nobility appropriates the little that is produced and indulge in sensuous pleasures. The common people, from the depths of destitution, gaped at the heights of pomp. In the ages when art flourishes, man stands degraded. Roman art, French court and Moghul pomp dug their own graves.

Atheism, with its devotion to equality and morality, assigns to aesthetics its rightful place in the scheme of life. Art should come next to food. The shades of difference in artistic talents do not justify inequality in the opportunity to live well. It is but the greed of a few to appropriate leisure for themselves in the name of art and force the many to drudge to feed the few. So the establishment of economic equality should take priority over the expression of the aesthetic talent.

Moments of joy should not be divorced from the acts of real life. Life should be a continuous stream of pleasure without the crests of ecstasy and the depressions of drudgery. Everyone can learn to do every act in a beautiful way. Our dress and our gestures, our hair styles and manners of conversation, the words we write and the houses we live in each can be made to look beautiful in its own place. The separation of work from play and of factory from club leaves dreary deserts in the span of our life. Taj Mahal with slums by the side of it is a monument of imperialistic pleasure rather than a work of art in life. On the other hand, atheistic aesthetics beautifies every moment of life of every man.

Theistic festivals and sports are examples of the separation of art from labour. Festivals are occasions when people relax from arduous duties. Far from producing material wealth during festivities, they use up the store that they had accumulated earlier by production. Likewise sport is unproductive labour. While turning a mill-stone to grind corn is considered labour, it is sport to turn a heavier stone but not to grind corn. Whereas tending a fruit orchard is labour, pruning roses is a pleasure. Atheistic aesthetics, on the contrary, associates production of material wealth with pursuits of pleasure.

Strangely, the relations of sex have evoked the most artistic expression among humans. The act of sex gratification is mingled with attempts to make the person and place, the mood and manner to appear beautiful. The raptures of sex have provided a variety of themes for song, poetry, dance, painting and sculpture. The nobility of sacrifice and acts of heroism are associated with sex relationships.

Early religion combined acts of sex with their ritual and revelry, partly due to the needs of procreation and partly in response to the aesthetic cravings. But organised religion which developed strong notions of other-worldiness, distorted life by despising sex along with all mundane desires. The austerities of religious discipline were severe on sex relations. Yet human passions are too strong to be diverted into the unknown regions of the other-world. The beautification of

the places of worship and the pleasures of festivities have not proved adequate substitutes for sex impulse. Requirements of religious respectability created surreptitious means for gratification of sex. Though adultery, fornication and homosexuality are denied social or religious sanction, they do have shady dealings in theistic societies.

The influence of religious belief on sex relations was two fold. First, it organised family into a rigid institution; second, it imposed secrecy on sex relations.

Family was already a unit of economic and social security. Religious belief added sanctity to family relations. It formalised marriage with religious ritual, laid down rules of inheritance, restricted the dissolution of marriage and prohibited sexual relations outside marriage. Moreover religious faith extolled the virtue of celibacy and looked upon a celibate with greater respect than upon a married person. So orders of monks, nuns, friars, rabbis, mullahs, fakirs, sadhus and sanyasins became integral part of religious organizations.

Woman's lot became harder by the imposition of religious restrictions on sex relations. A man can contract secret sex relations with impunity. But woman's motherhood is an open witness of a sex act. Between the two parties to the same act, man goes free while the woman has to bear the full responsibility of the situation.

The unwed motherhood of Kunti and Mary could not be concealed by the outstanding achievements of Karna and Jesus. So myth and miracle were woven round to justify their irregularity. Millions of women should be silently suffering the torture of cruel custom without religious protection. The difference between man and woman in this respect and the justification for polygamy are a sordid confession of man's selfishness. Several kings took pride in harems of concubines while women were kept in *Purdah*, veiled from a stranger's gaze and preserved as private property.

Atheistic aesthetics remedies the injustice done to women by discrimination between sexes. Woman is not an object of man's pleasures. She is as much entitled to satisfy her aesthetic pleasures and sex desires as man. So she can be liberated from the "shame" of unwed motherhood, when family loyalties are revised and the surreptitiousness of sexual relations is removed. Secrecy is anti-social anywhere and more so in the realm of sexual relations.

The family has been a hoary institution which represented the beginnings of social organization. On the one hand it provided social and economic security to the members of the family, especially to those who are too young or too old to look after themselves and to the sick and to the disabled. On the other, it provided for sexual pleasures through the alliances of marriage. Despite the advantages, family has been a tiny unit of social association, too small to meet the

demands of an ever expanding civilization with its widening social contacts. So what was a useful unit in early times has proved an impediment in course of time for the progress of human happiness.

Two evils result from the outmoded institution of family in the modern age, namely, sectarianism and suppression of women.

The dos and don'ts that gathered around the family traditions, encouraged inbreeding to tighten the family ties. The conventions of endogamy preserved the purity of features and culture. But endogamy bred sectarianism too. The sectarian attitudes of caste, race, region and of nationality are the result of inbreeding. The sectarian pride of purity of race caused wars and conflicts in the modern world. The disasters that accompanied the notions of "Aryan Kultur" under Nazi regime, of the "two-nation" theory of Quadi Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah, and of the policy of "white-man's" superiority in South Africa, Asia and Australia threatened to destroy civilization itself by plunging it into the bloodshed of war.

The conventions of marriage, that formed a part of family tradition, allowed less freedom to woman than to man, especially in sexual relations. Thereby family loyalty resulted by and large in suppressing womanhood which forms half the population of the world. The examples of Jhansi Laxmi Bai and Joan of Arc are exceptions that prove the rule. The opportunities of men far

outnumber those of women who are confined to the home and kept under *purdah*.

In the modern age when the State takes up the functions of social welfare and economic security, family loses half of its weight. The Women's Liberation Movement tears the *purdah* and claims for women equal opportunities with men. So family relations can no longer enjoy the privileges of former times. It can remain only as a symbol of filial affections and of conjugal love. Nothing prevents a man and a woman and their children to live together, but they do so with free choice but not in obedience to a custom. Yet promiscuity looks outrageous to those who are accustomed to man's impudence. Just as democracy sounded the death knell of imperialism, promiscuity overthrows masculine supremacy and takes a big stride towards the equality of sexes.

At first mixed marriages mark the transition from conventional marriages to promiscuity. Mixed marriages contract alliances outside the traditional sanctions and widen the scope of marital selection. Inter-marriages between persons belonging to different castes, religious denominations, racial groups and nationalities pave the way towards the development of one humanity. Of course, a marriage alliance, affords emotional alliance also along with sex satisfaction. Yet, it attaches a stigma to unwed mother-hood and imposes a special handicap upon the women. Just as the Blacks are discriminated in humanity by virtue of

the colour of their skin, the woman is discriminated by virtue of her motherhood.

It is promiscuity that removes the basis of discrimination by colour of the skin as well as by motherhood. Wide promiscuity blurs the ethnological characters and there will be no motherhood by wedlock. The woman becomes an equal partner with man and stands as a mother to a child without reference to a father by wedlock. The advantages of promiscuity for the establishment of equality of women with men are effectively realised when the responsibility of social security is taken up by the State.

Promiscuity has its outstanding advantages in the modern world. It pulls down the sectarian walls of caste, race, community, nation or region and proceeds to mingle humans into one humanity. As promiscuity spreads, ethnological features too get blended and blurred. The wide mingling of humans and the objective of one humanity removes the causes for war and conflict.

Inbreeding is found to degenerate vitality and vigour. The purer the castes or communities, the weaker and the more susceptible to disease they are. The hill-tribes everywhere and the Jews of Kerala are examples of such deterioration. On the other hand, extensive cross-breeding reinvigorates humankind with virility and hardiness.

Family loyalty exposed woman to man's lust and compelled her to bear children. Except

having recourse to contraceptives and subjecting her health to interference with drugs, she had no alternative to restrict child-bearing. Marriage was necessary in primitive times when growth of population was needed. Now if the population explosion is a reality, then married life is sure a disadvantage. Discarding of marriage allows the option to the woman to have or not to have children. She cannot be compelled by a "husband" when her interests forbid bearing children. So discountenancing the system of marriage limits population by rational means.

In the absence of easy divorce ties of marriage formalise love and compel affection. Promiscuity keeps love ever fresh with the freedom to choose the companion. Just as private property encourages selfish interest, man's or woman's sense of possession of his or her partner in marriage rouses envy and ill-will in social relations. Promiscuity, on the other hand, allows free choice of the partner and gives dignity to sex relations.

Promiscuity frees woman of the reproach from motherhood outside marriage which had oppressed woman so long. Fatherhood loses importance and motherhood gains respect as a source of filial affection and the nursing of children. Celibacy, for long or short periods, is a matter of individual likes. It has no more value than fasting for reasons of health.

An important outcome of promiscuity and removal of secrecy from sexual relations is

development of aesthetics independent of sex. Sex is as necessary for procreation as food is to satisfy hunger. The secrecy that surrounded sex raised unnecessary curiosity and morbid interest in sex. All the activities of life seemed to be centred around sex. It was a lopsided development of life, which ignored the ideals of fellow feeling, moral dignity, and freedom from fear and want.

When sex is open, humans lose the unhealthy interest in it and divert their attention to nobler ideals. Colours of clouds, murmurs of brooks, the nobility of service and sacrifice for common good and moral excellence should attract artists more than sexual passion. The expression of aesthetic taste is not impaired; in atheistic aesthetics the theme changes from selfish interests to social good. That is beautiful which makes others also happy.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ATHEISTIC WAY OF LIFE

THE essence of atheism is the freedom of the individual. Freedom releases the immense potentialities of human imagination, initiative and effort that lay suppressed under theistic faith. Free individuals feel masters of situations. The mood of supplication and complaint, inherent in prayer to god and petitions to government, has no place in the atheistic way of life. Atheists always assert; they never surrender. They take no failure; everything is an experience that improves the method for further attempts.

Atheists too have their faiths, fancies and ideals. But their scientific outlook distinguishes between faith and truth. Accordingly the purpose of life changes. It is not the fanciful salvation after death, but happiness here and now. So, with technological skill, atheists harness wind, water and earth for the fulfilment of man's desires. They endeavour to control drought and disease and bid fair to conquer death. The by-products of artificialness, like over-population,

pollution and depletion of natural resources, are dealt with realistically through decentralization.

Atheists face facts without fear. "What is to be done?" concerns them more than "Why it is so?" Findings of post-mortems in social affairs have their limitations with atheists who open new avenues with fresh initiative everytime. For history seldom repeats itself with atheists.

The mundaneness of atheists does not stagnate in self-indulgence. Kings and capitalists had to escape into spirituality for peace and consolation. Atheistic mundaneness, on the contrary, increases social awareness and keeps atheists busy in zealously guarding the needs of honesty and equality. Atheists are militantly social. Injustice and inequality anywhere is the active concern of everyone everywhere. Obviously, poverty, violence and discrimination have no place among atheists.

The distinction between the majority and the minority communities loses validity in the atheistic way of life. Whatever label minorities take, race, language, nationality, culture, economic opportunity or political party, all claims of minorities are basically sectarian. Atheism which mingles all people alike in one-humanity cannot allow such claims. Everyone has to feel free and live equal with another, without taking shelter under the cover of a label.

Theists also talk of one-humanity. But they cannot promote equality, since they do not

recognize freedom of the individual. The recognition of the freedom marks the difference between theism and atheism. So atheism succeeds where theism fails.

In the attempt to mingle all people together, habituation to dos and don'ts stands in the way. Different sets of dos and don'ts, pertaining to details of life like dress, diet, form of address, type of work and days of rest, have kept apart groups of people in conflict with one another. Theism sustained the differences through force of custom and faith in vision and divine revelation. But atheists are realists. They know that dos and don'ts are expediciencies of common understanding and routinizations of common chores. They have to change with the needs of people. All morals, civilities and habits are subject to sociability, ease and equality. A do or a don't that breeds sectarianism, secrecy or discomfort is evidently outmoded and it has to be rejected and a new one formed to keep life happy, progressive and sociable. No do or don't is abiding except as a social obligation to be consistent in word and deed.

While the individual is the basis of all civilization, he fashions aids and systems to facilitate ease and association. The best aid in modern times is the institution of a government. Therefore atheists are political. They control the government and bend it to serve their wants instead of allowing it to exercise authority over them.

Indeed, people are masters and governments are servants.

Thus the atheistic way of life is full of initiative. It continually progresses towards increasing happiness everytime through scientific understanding and technological control of the forces of the world. Its objective is equality; its method is openness; its means is political action; its driving force is the moral freedom of the individual.

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The following words occur frequently in the book: *atheism, civilization, democracy, dictatorship, equality, freedom, god, humanity, religion.* So they are not included in the index.

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Born Nov. 1902. □ Non-Cooperation 1921. □ Married Saraswathi 1922. □ Post Graduation in Natural Sciences, Experiments against superstitious taboos 1925. □ Worked at Colombo, developed atheistic leanings; was out-caste for denouncing caste system 1928. □ Dismissal from College for his atheistic views 1933. □ Resigned from teaching profession and adopted Mudunur village establishing Atheist Centre for Rural Re-construction Work, Cosmopolitan Dinners Campaign 1940. □ First Atheist Conference at Kanumuru, (A. P.). □ Quit India Movement and Imprisoned 1943. □ Gandhi-Gora talks on Atheism 1944. □ At Gandhiji's Sevagram Ashram with family and colleagues 1945. □ National Organiser of A. I. C. C. 1946. □ Established Atheist Centre at Vijayawada 1947. □ Eldest child (daughter), Manorama wedded Arjuna Rao breaking caste-class barriers 1948. □ Founded and edited "Sangham" an atheist Telugu weekly 1949. □ Established Gandhi Sangham, Arthik Samata Mandal promoting economic equality through non-violence and openness 1951. □ Contested Lok Sabha elections on Partyless platform 1952. □ Satyagrahas against pomp in public life, 1953-54. □ With Vinoba's Bhoodan Movement

1955. □ Gram-Raj Conference organised. J.P. and T. Prakasam participated 1957 □ Direct Actions for Partylessness; convened National Conference for Partyless Democracy □ Sevagram - Delhi Padayatra, satyagraha at "Teen Murti" House against pomp of people's representatives 1961. □ Direct Action for replacing flower plants with vegetables 1968. □ National Atheists' Meet; World Tour; International Humanist Ethical Union Congress at Boston 1970. □ Beef and Pork Function, World Atheist Conference at Vijayawada 1972. □ U.S.S.R - Europe tour 1974. □ Died of cerebral haemorrhage while addressing a public meeting on Rural Re-construction at Vijayawada on July 26, 1975.

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Gora died while addressing a public meeting in Vijayawada on 26-7-1975.