

ATHEISM

GORA

Translated from Telugu

By

J.S.R.L.Narayana Moorthy

ATHEISM

[THERE IS NO GOD]



GORA



Telugu Original Published by:

ATHEIST CENTRE
PATAMATA, VIJAYAWADA 520 006

NASTIKATVAM
(LEKA DEVUDU LEDU)

BY GORA

[Grateful acknowledgements to Wendy Moorty for her excellent editorial assistance]

Table of Contents

	Page No.
Introduction to the Fourth printing	5
The Complete Shape of Atheism	8
As a Matter of Fact	9
First Chapter	
Man	12
Theism	12
Human Life	13
Truth	13
Society	15
Happiness	17
God	19
The Soul	21
The Other World	22
Second Chapter	
Theism	26
Truth	26
God	31
The Soul	35
The Other World	37
Third Chapter	
Civilization	38
The Ancient Age	39
The Age of the Prophets	47
The Modern Age	52
Fourth Chapter	
Atheism	57
Ancient Atheism	59
Theists' Hesitations	63
Modern Atheism	72
Truth	73
Society	74
Happiness	76
Fifth Chapter	
Atheism and Politics	79

INTRODUCTION

When the first printing of this book came out in 1941, it plunged the Telugu public in a revolution of ideas. Progressive-minded youth took it upon themselves to distribute the book in many villages. Although some religious people were curious enough to read it on their own, those who considered themselves staunch theists feared that if there truly was a God, he might cause them or their families harm for helping to propagate atheism, or that they might have to go to hell after they die. Being caught between, on the one hand, their curiosity to find out what atheism is and why one would advocate the idea that there is no God, and on the other hand, their fear that one might become a target of God's wrath for helping the propagation of atheism, it was hard for most theists to face the challenges posed by the youth of their time. Thousands read the book, *Nastikatvamu [Atheism]*, and they in turn influenced hundreds of thousands of others. This book clearly proved that the notions of God, soul, karma, the other world, heaven and hell are all imaginary; and that no matter by which theory they are considered, they would not stand rational scrutiny, but are mere superstitions. When the first printing sold out in six months, instantly the second printing came out. That too sold out. However, because of the emergence of the 1942 movement, the third printing could not be brought out till 1952.

In addition to writing an introduction called, "The Complete Shape of Atheism," Gora appended to the third printing a new chapter called, "Atheism and Politics". The third printing too was sold out; yet, we couldn't reprint the book immediately.

By the time of the writing of this book, Gora had taught as lecturer in colleges for 15 years. He had studied various religious scriptures, sciences concerned with human life, histories of different movements, and biographies of individuals who had supported the development of human rationality. In villages and towns he had delivered some hundreds of lectures on atheism. The history of the development of atheism filled the youthful Gora with great enthusiasm. He had established himself as a favorite of the younger generation and as a leader of a revolutionary movement by proving his arguments repeatedly and irrefutably in face-to-face debates with theist scholars using his exemplary logical skills, depth of knowledge and common sense, and, above all, by setting his personal example of practice in life. Working for the abolition of caste and removal of superstitions used to be the mainstay of his activities. For this reason, this book mostly reflects these objectives.

The title of this book given at that time, *Atheism [Or There is no God]*, expresses these objectives.

As atheism gained ground, questions frequently arose regarding adopting atheism as a way of life: how could atheism enter into the economic, social, political, moral, scientific, cultural and technical areas of life, and what sort of atheistic activities might be designed in these areas? It is in answer to many of these questions that Gora introduced through his personal living an atheistic outlook into the activities of the various areas of life.

The influence of the priestly class in society has been gradually declining and the influence of politics has been on the rise. Because atheism opposes every institution which does not let a person live as a human, it candidly and keenly opposed the institution of priesthood and the many practices handed down from the time when the priestly class was influential. Today, when political revolutions and governmental institutions are gaining prominence in removing social and economic exploitation in people's lives, the atheistic

outlook cannot but enter and affect politics. By opposing the institution of priesthood, atheism condemned superstitions, blind practices and social injustices which had hitherto been nurturing narrow selfishness. Adult education became a chief activity in those days when there were no tools of communication among people. Now, the means of communication have multiplied; but literacy has not grown with it. People have access to the means of increasing their knowledge. These means, however, are mostly in the hands of governmental institutions and wealthy people. So, more than religious superstition, it is political and economic superstition that is now being handed down. Political and economic institutions of exploitation are reestablishing the collapsing religious institutions and utilizing them as a means. That is why if we want to enhance happiness, freedom and cooperation in the human society, mere atheism and opposition to superstition are not enough. It is necessary to oppose and destroy the dominance of political and economic hegemony, inequality, narrow-mindedness and selfishness that surround human life. Then atheism will become a constructive way of life. Opposition to superstition or disbelief in God would only help the development of atheism, but do not in themselves constitute atheism.

In these times when rationalism and humanism have attained a respectable status, and when the whole society is filled with inequalities, there are those who have been enjoying superiority in economic opportunity and political power, while, on the one hand, reinforcing their political and economic superiority, try, on the other hand, to help propagate disbelief in God and demolish superstition. As long as these ideas don't come in the way of their economic and political superiority, they will continue to encourage them. But as soon as there is a strong effort to formulate atheism as a way of life and achieve equality not only socially but also in political power and economic opportunities, some will oppose that atheism. Not only that. They declare that atheism should stop with disbelief in God and opposition to superstition, and that anything which tries to enter the political and economic arenas is not [true] atheism. Gora cautioned us to be careful about this issue when he formulated political and economic programs as part of atheism.

In general, atheism is divided into three forms: Skeptical Atheism, Negative Atheism and Positive Atheism.

In Skeptical Atheism, there are a lot of questions. One questions everything with curiosity. This is the beginning stage of atheism -- What is God? What is the Devil? What is the nature of the soul? This atheism encourages a spirit of inquiry which says that we ought to question everything instead of believing in anything blindly. This is what is called skepticism.

In Negative Atheism, one tries to elicit answers to questions. This is of two kinds: one is agnosticism and the second is atheism. The agnostics say that since we don't know whether what we cannot prove exists or not, we should not decide one way or the other, but should be concerned only with human conduct. The atheists maintain that what cannot be proved does in fact not exist. The inability to prove the existence of something is evidence enough to conclude that it does not exist. Besides, even if that which is supposed to exist may not be perceived directly, the qualities which are indirectly attributed to it cannot be established even on the basis of their indirect effects. Therefore, atheism concludes that there is no omnipresent, benevolent and omnipotent force which created the universe and that, similarly, there is no fixed system of laws [*vyavastha*] emerging from such an idea either.

In Positive Atheism, disbelief in God forms the first part. However, when we assert that there is no force which caused the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe and which is omnipotent, omnipresent and benevolent, we should demonstrate how the

political, economic, social, moral, scientific, cultural, technological and other areas of our life will be. This is necessary because the theists have turned man into a mere instrument and established institutions for all areas of life. In social, political, moral, scientific, cultural, technological and other institutions a servile attitude and inequality clearly appear as representatives of the theist outlook. Positive Atheism consists in showing how different human life will be in all these areas if we reject theism and introduce atheism. So, atheism does not merely assert that there is no God, but it also tries to actively formulate how the different areas of human life will be in the state of not believing in God's existence.

When Gora wrote this book in 1941, although he spoke of some trends in Positive Atheism, he gave the most importance to the assertion of disbelief in God, which is the first part of Positive Atheism. This was then natural and even necessary. That is why the Charvakas [followers of the ancient atheist sage Charvaka] appeared to Gora to be heroes who condemned theism and proved the nonexistence of God even in the ancient age. Even as he proceeded in his later writings to propose Positive Atheism, Gora still mentioned Charvaka as an atheist. This appeared to some at that time to be contradictory. But if we try to understand, it becomes clear that there is no contradiction in this.

Led by the experiences gained from formulating atheism as a constructive way of life, the literature of atheism too progressed, detailing the final shape of atheism. In "*Sangham*," an atheist weekly published [in Telugu] under the editorship of Gora from 1949 till 1952, in "*Aarthika Samatha*," [also a Telugu weekly], in the Hindi monthly "*Insan*," and in the English monthly "*The Atheist*," being published since 1969, and in other writings, particularly in the book, *Positive Atheism*, Gora described this constructive atheism from different angles. In addition to performing activities such as walking on fire in an attempt to remove blind beliefs, communal dining in order to remove caste and religious divisions, inter-caste marriages and pork and beef dinners, Gora conducted movements and *satyagrahas* to achieve political and economic equality. He traveled around the world twice and publicized Positive Atheism extensively.

Thus, Gora demonstrated through his practice that atheism is a way of life for the purpose of achieving equality.

Gora, who always exerted himself to give shape to atheism as a positive way of living, suddenly died on July 26, 1975, while speaking at a meeting. His life and writings have been entwined with each other. They have influenced a great many people.

Our thanks to all the friends who have been helping in various ways to publicize Gora's writings.

Atheist Centre
LAVANAM
Vijayawada – 6
March 1989

THE COMPLETE SHAPE OF ATHEISM

Although we have been hoping that economic equality, democracy and world peace should all be accomplished together, indeed, to this day, if one of them moves forward, another is regressing. How can we remove the obstacles to these? We know from our experience that if these are to be accomplished, the attitude of dependence and fantasies must be removed from the populace, and confidence and a realistic outlook must grow strong. Such a change only atheism can bring about. Because the atheistic outlook has been pushed behind, economic and political problems have not been satisfactorily solved.

Atheism has not developed because of the widespread misunderstanding with regard to it. Until now, with the assumption that opposing theism is all there is to atheism, atheists have been spending their time criticizing theistic doctrines such as belief in God, reincarnation, the ultimate cause of the universe, and so on. Although that is useful as an academic exercise, the atheists have not paid attention to the economic and political problems which constitute a major portion of man's day-to-day life. Because of that, atheism has not blossomed completely; instead, it has regressed and has not yet fulfilled its duty in the development of civilization. Only when economic and political problems are investigated and solved from an atheist point of view, the full shape of atheism would become clear.

Isn't it because it taught that man's life is subordinate [to a higher being] that in the theistic way man has become impotent and has submitted himself to the hardship and cruelty of economic dominance and racial arrogance, saying, "This is my karma"? Instead, if he adopts the atheistic point of view which encourages freedom in human activity, man will revolt against this painful slavery. Moreover, because men are nearly equal in capacities and abilities, and because mutual sympathy, cooperation and tolerance are the right principles of the construction of a society, inequalities in economic opportunities, political rights or social statuses are not justifiable. For this reason, the spread of atheism will bring an increase of political consciousness and an attitude of equality among the populace, and an effort will take shape to ensure an atmosphere conducive to economic equality, democracy and world peace. This is the contribution of the complete shape of atheism in the development of civilization.

Although the first four parts of this book are mostly concerned with criticism of theism, a chapter called "Atheism and Politics" has been added in the third printing with a view to indicate the full shape of atheism. I would like readers to notice the appropriateness and usefulness of this chapter.

Atheist Center,
Patamata
11-11-1952

GORA

AS A MATTER OF FACT

There appears to be a contradiction in modern civilization. On the one side, there is abundance of crops and dairy, and on the other side, there is a clamor for food and clothing; on the one hand, moral preaching, and on the other, different ways of exploitation; and on the one side, there is self-respect, and on the other, there is untouchability. It appears as if that on the whole there are more hardships than pleasures for the human society. Why do such travails exist for man who possesses superior knowledge?

Some claim that belief in God has been on the wane and that is the cause of the decline in morality. Some others claim that economic and political circumstances are the cause of man's suffering, and that in order to solve those problems we only need to keep our belief in God at a distance. Theism is the point of view of the former and atheism of the latter.

Theism means believing that the universe and human life along with it are both governed by something transcendent.

Some theists call such a transcendent entity God. The idea of God is not something perceived. That's why we can call such theists Idealist theists. According to them, the whole universe is a creation of God, born of God's will and is under God's authority.

Others say that the whole universe is matter. They assert that because of the mutual contradiction in the properties of matter new qualities emerge and the universe evolves as a result. In such an evolution man appeared at one stage. These theists claim that the ideas of civilization are nothing but the qualities emerging from such an evolution. They only admit the directly observable material conditions, but do not accept some transcendent idea of God. Therefore, these can be called Materialist theists.

Theism is common to both of them. In other words, man's life, his ideas and conduct are governed by something transcendent to man. Such governance can be done either by God or by material conditions. Some Idealist theists propose karma in place of God. In the theist point of view there is no freedom or responsibility; man's life is determined either by God's will or by circumstances.

Theism is contrary to man's day-to-day experience. Freedom and responsibility in human actions can be perceived. Recognition of such human freedom and responsibility is atheism. The theist assumes that his life is being led. The atheist thinks that he leads his own life.

According to the logic based on the idea of causality, man does not have freedom. But where there is a disagreement between the essence of logic and immediate experience, logic is mistaken. That is why there are fallacies. The idea of causality betrays such defects as beginninglessness and human endeavor. That is why human freedom is a fact.

Such human freedom operates within circumstances. Man creates his ideas and his environment; he changes them; he abandons them; or he utilizes them.

Theism and atheism are human points of view. Each person's ideas and conduct follow his point of view. These also constitute religions. However, it is not proper to adopt

theism because it does not recognize human freedom. Everyone is an atheist in practice. Theists and atheists are divided only by their ideas.

In ancient times men were mostly Idealist theists. They might attribute the source of their ignorance, shocks and disappointments to a deity, but they did make effort to fulfill their desires. Believing in God, on the one hand, and yet making efforts to fulfill their desires, on the other, would diminish the “threefold” (word, thought and deed) sincerity of their effort. Theists may not recognize this. But such a deception is implied in theism. For this reason, contradictions have arisen in theistic civilization.

Theists became free people without responsibility; they made just enough effort to satisfy their momentary pleasures and neglected other things, saying they occur due to God’s will. They prayed to God without facing the difficult circumstances around them. They were revered in the theistic society as devotees of God, and their selfishness and cowardice went unpunished. Because selfishness, cowardliness and deception prevailed, the strength of the society waned. While immoral people enjoyed pleasures, moral people encountered hardships. Chief among the efforts of social reformers to remove such injustice was their condemnation of the ideas of God prevalent in those times. By its help they were able to make people moral and happy.

Thus, the human society that desires increased happiness cannot but turn to atheism, because there is no place for deception in atheism. The atheist recognizes human freedom; and he practices it. With the help of the “threefold” sincerity society will become stronger, and the average happiness will increase.

In ancient times people did not adopt theism thoughtfully. Because of a lack of scientific knowledge, they were afraid to take responsibility for themselves. At that stage, they found the idea called God to be useful. But gradually, as theism has created more obstacles to progress, atheistic ideas have been on the increase among the populace.

Because they were accustomed to ancient customs and because of their desire for selfish gain from theistic institutions, some theists tried not to allow atheism to grow strong. They attempted to suppress atheism through authority and tried to justify defects in theism through logic. If there is no God, what then is the cause of the universe? Can man not escape death? Will sins not multiply? By raising such questions and confusing people’s ideas, they caused people to turn away from atheism.

Although some people profited from adhering to theistic ideas, on the whole it was a loss to civilization. Because theism taught dependence, servility increased among theists. When atheistic ideas grew more or less strong, some theists became slaves to those few who stepped forward and were persecuted. The servility of some turned some others into authorities. Some researchers who couldn’t abandon the theist tradition understood such a state through a Materialist theistic point of view: whether to a God or to material conditions, servility did but occur without fail.

Because people who had servile attitudes became slaves, inequalities occurred in human society, followed by the consequent hardships. When the theistic outlook which fosters servility is gone, and is replaced by the atheistic outlook which establishes ideas of freedom, man’s suffering will be removed.

Although everyone in practice is an atheist, people’s ideas are still caught up in the confusions of theistic logic. For this reason, ideas such as God, soul, karma, the other world,

happiness, freedom, truth, morality, creation, birth and death, heaven and earth, and virtue and vice must be made clear. This book contains the details of such clarification.

Mudunuru,
5-11-1941

GORA

(Because “God” is an idea fabricated by man, nouns and pronouns have been used to suit such a meaning.

Example: In place of the phrase “God does not exist” the phrase “God [neuter gender in Telugu] does not exist” has been used.)

FIRST CHAPTER

MAN

The belief in God has been widely prevalent among people for a long time. This has not been just a belief. People's conduct, ideals and life were all based on this belief. Man has been able to accomplish great deeds because of such a belief. He built institutions and made great sacrifices. Such a strong belief that there is God is the cause of much greatness in human life. That belief is called "Theism". The word 'asti' (in "astikatvamu") means 'exists.' The word "astikatvamu (asti='there is', atvamu='ism') therefore, means the idea that there is God or God exists.

Although theism has been in such vogue and practice, doubt and disbelief in it have always been around. Such disbelief we call 'Atheism' [*Nastikatvamu*]. The word 'nasti' means 'does not exist'. That means there is no God. Whether he is a theist or an atheist, a person is still a human being. Then why is it that the contradictory ideas of theism and atheism arise in him? What is the connection between a person's life and those ideas? We must take note of these matters.

THEISM

If we want to understand the meaning of theism comprehensively, we must examine carefully the customs and practices of theists. We must look at not only the currently civilized peoples like the Hindus and Moslems, but also the peoples who are as yet uncivilized such as the Koyas and the Mountain tribes, who could also be called theists. Besides these, the races of the now extinct Babylonian, ancient Egyptian and Inca civilizations were also similar. There might have been some differences among these tribes. But they can all be said to have belonged to the theistic tradition.

If we think about it, it becomes clear that among all these tribes there is one common feature, that is, the belief in God. Some believe in many gods and some others in one God. But the one quality common to all the theists is their belief in God. In theism, there is not only the belief in God, but also the belief that there is a soul and another world. In uncivilized theism, the ideas of soul and the other world were not very clear. But as man became more and more civilized and thought more about his beliefs, his ideas of soul and the other world became more settled. Today, even if the belief in God has waned, the belief that there is a soul has not left theism.

Although all theists hold the beliefs in God, soul and the other world, there are different meanings for these words prevalent in different societies. Unless we can ascertain why these words acquired so many different meanings in those circumstances and what could have been the relationship between them and human living, we cannot understand why man needed to be a theist, and yet why there was room also for atheistic ideas. So, we shall examine the qualities of human living, and their relationship to beliefs in God, soul and the other world.

HUMAN LIFE

Happiness is being able to live. The obstacles to living constitute suffering. In order to live, humans like other animals, need food, shelter and so on. But there is a trait in humans that is not to be found in animals. That is their ability to think.

Animals grasp the affairs of the world in which they live by means of the five external senses, that is, the eyes, nose, tongue, ears and the skin. The things thus grasped remain discrete and separate in an animal's point of view. But man connects the various things that he grasps and forms ideas. The function of thinking, thus, is to connect various things into ideas.

There is a difference between the separate things grasped through the external senses and the synthesized ideas. That is why there is a difference between animal knowledge and human knowledge. The superiority of human knowledge is due to his ideas. Man's conduct is dependent on his knowledge. That is why there seems to be a difference in animal behavior and human behavior in regard to gathering food, shelter and so on.

If we observe animal behavior, we don't notice any difference in the effort they make from day to day in obtaining food, shelter and so on. For example, a cat exerts approximately the same amount of effort in catching a mouse ten days later as it does today. Humans are not like that. The same actions one performs with great difficulty one day, one is able to do much easier the next day. If we examine human history, it becomes evident that man makes progress day by day and is able to obtain his necessities of life in increasingly easier ways. In ancient times, mankind which was hunting for roots and bulbs in jungles and meadows is today able to grow fruits and vegetables of many species. Mankind which once lived in caves covering itself with leaves and twigs is today wearing clothes of many fashions, building varieties of styles of houses and cities, and enjoying different types of pleasures. It is incessantly developing means of increasing its happiness.

Thus a gradual progress which is absent in animals is evident in human life. Human thinking is the cause of such a gradual progress. It is this thinking which forms new ideas by connecting new experiences which occur every day with old experiences. Behavior changes in accordance with the demands of these new experiences. As a consequence, there is opportunity for further experiences. These new experiences would in turn become causes for other new experiences. Thinking thus causes change in human ideas and actions constantly. Such a succession of changes we call civilization. To develop a civilization is man's nature. Due to civilization human life becomes progressively easier. We can divide the products of man's of civilization in three ways: truth, society, and happiness.

TRUTH

Truth is the foundation for human happiness. Truth means knowing the mutual relationship among the items of human experience. Only because man has the power of thinking is he able to know truths. Animals and human beings both first learn about the states of affairs of nature with the help of their external senses. The states of affairs that are thus learned can be called facts. Facts are objects of perception. Human experience does not stop with facts. Man synthesizes these facts with his thinking and forms opinions about their mutual relationships. We call these opinions truths. As there is very little thinking in

animals, their knowledge mostly consists of facts. As human life is dominated by thinking, there are some facts and also some falsehoods in man's knowledge.

Men are able to know more about conditions in their world than animals can because they can know the mutual relationships between things, that is, they can know truths. Since we need to live our lives amidst the surrounding conditions of nature, the less conflict we have with our environment, the happier we will be able to lead our lives. Because our actions are based on our knowledge, the more accurate our knowledge of the world is, the greater happiness our actions will yield. Since every human being desires happiness, it is essential for him to search for truth.

Whoever grasps the truth that when dark clouds gather, it is possible that it might rain, when such a person sees clouds, he will adapt his actions to those circumstances and attain happiness. Those who cannot ascertain this truth and who thus cannot act in accordance with it will get drenched in rain and suffer hardship. Therefore, it is necessary for a human being to know the truth about many things about his body and about his time and place. So, by improving his thinking and gaining many experiences, man improves his accurate knowledge. Since ancient times, mankind accumulating accurate knowledge and changing its conduct accordingly constituted civilization. The development of a civilization follows the development of [the acquisition of] truth.

Even in tribal men there have been opinions concerning what is true ever since the ancient times. There have been some opinions concerning the sun and the moon, sunshine and rain, birth and death, dreams and diseases. Modern opinions may not concur with those opinions. Nevertheless, men at the time considered their opinions as truths and acted upon them. Even though their truths may be trivial, since those men were superior in their knowledge to the fellow animals, they enjoyed greater happiness than animals. We must note that although they were civilized to that extent, they were lagging behind when compared with modern civilization. That's why they are deemed uncivilized.

It is clear that even in the opinions of ancient men comprehension of mutual relationships between things does exist. An animal takes an unripe fruit for food, bites it with its teeth, finds the outer shell to be hard, and if it doesn't like the taste, breaks the shell up into small pieces and discards it. Then it eats the inner pulp. It does this repeatedly in the same way each time it has to eat an unripe fruit of this species. But if it were a man, even if it were a tribal person from the mountains, he wouldn't do the same thing over and over.

Even if man acts as an animal the first time, the second time he would realize from his previous experience that the outer shell is useless and try to get to the pulp quickly. In this regard, there is a correlation of previous experience to the present need. Then man grasps the nature of the stones nearby. Understanding the nature of both the stone and the outer shell of the unripe fruit, he infers the truth that he could break the outer shell with the help of the stone. Heeding this new knowledge, he uses the stone to break the shell in order to get to the pulp quickly. In this manner, man utilizes a stone as a tool, thereby satisfying his desire more easily than an animal and attaining greater happiness. In this fashion, man learns truths, that is, learns of the qualities of the things of nature, utilizes them and thus improves the comforts of his life. Animals can never utilize tools in this way. In this way human beings have earned specialized knowledge that enabled them to raise crops by improving their skills. They made fire. They tamed animals. They built bigger and bigger machines and founded factories, and thereby they have been enjoying good health and happiness. The tools such as stones that ancient man had used can still be found here and there. With their help we are today able to conjecture the state of human civilization at that time.

We can see briefly the changes that have occurred in human civilization in the stages that a person goes through from childhood to old age. Children, when they are babies know the world only through their external senses. At first they don't have the coordination to be able to look in the direction from which a sound they just heard came. Gradually, they are able to link the various items grasped by their senses. But they cannot grasp other things. After they grow up a little, they learn to grasp toys and use them later, and so on. We can say that it is at this stage that they begin to develop human nature. This did not happen before because their thinking did not blossom before this stage. As they grow older, a young person becomes a civilized human being by improving his thinking and understanding the relationships among things.

SOCIETY

We have learned that as civilization progressed, man improved his power by utilizing things of nature as his tools. His thinking is responsible for this. But he did not stop with it. He has been increasing his power by also conducting his actions based on some methods. Among these methods, human strategies for building a society are the most important.

Society doesn't merely mean a group of us living together. We must help each other in our needs. With such mutual help all work is accomplished easily. Because man's power increases by the help of tools on the one hand, and by [the help of] society on the other, he is able to obtain greater happiness.

In the initial stages of human civilization, social awareness was not strong; the thinking which led to the use of tools came first. Only later, individuals gradually started to gather together as groups. The first groups might have been families. They might have realized the fact that if they lived amicably together their amenities of life might increase. Today, man is able to foresee a method of building a society and regulate human society according to such methods. Ancient man, however, did not have such systematic thinking powers. People of those times did not get together as societies by anticipating social strength. Rather, the comforts caused by living in societies prompted the efforts to build human societies.

We have said that society means living together amicably and working together. But society does not stop with it. There is a difference between the behavior of the human being in his state as a separate individual and the behavior in his state as a member of a society. Within a society, the selfish outlook must be eliminated and a social outlook must be developed. Conduct also will then change accordingly. The methods of conduct that will enhance social outlook are collectively called morality. Methods of conduct can be defined as moral or immoral based on the needs of a society. Those that contribute to social happiness are moral. Those that are detrimental to social happiness, even though they may increase individual happiness, are immoral. A society is nothing but a collection of individuals; it follows that only the individuals enjoy in turn the happiness that proceeds from the construction of a society. The happiness that results from the social outlook is on the whole greater than the happiness resulting from the individual outlook. That is why social construction progressed gradually in human civilization.

At first, only the needs of a society became the basis of morals. As time went on, man's intelligence developed with civilization, and people have started to recognize their

own personal needs. They have also been able to recognize the process of the institution called society.

Morality is essential to society. That is why human beings determine their duties which are appropriate to circumstances as morals. As morals exert a stronger influence over human conduct, the strength of society grows and the happiness of its members too will increase. Morals such as peace, love, restraint, dedication have thus always been taught. Their uniqueness and superiority are determined by their respective circumstances. But there must be some morality for the construction of a society. That is what constitutes sincerity. 'Threefold sincerity' means the unity of what is thought, what is spoken and what is done. The thought in one's mind is expressed through spoken words and actions. The words that are not expressed will die in one's mind. Society is not concerned with them. That is why in society the 'twofold' sincerity (between word and deed) is most important. 'Twofold' sincerity entails the correspondence between what is said and what is done. That is, doing what one says one will do, and speaking of what one has done. In this morality, there is no room for secrets and deception.

Society is relationship among individuals. To relate one individual to another, words and deeds are the means. In a society, the words one speaks must be understood by another. There must be an assurance that a person's conduct is in accordance with his words. Only then is there a possibility of working together with mutual trust and improving the strength of the society. If there is no mutual trust, there cannot be any cooperation; nor will the society be strong. In order to have trust in another's words, it is essential to have the 'twofold' sincerity. Thus, the rest of the morals may need to change according to the context, but there must be no change in the 'twofold' sincerity. If there is no 'twofold' sincerity, there cannot be a society.

As civilization has grown, social awareness has been increasing along with truthfulness. That is, man has been attempting to put the 'twofold' sincerity into practice. Although it yields happiness, man has not been adopting the 'twofold' sincerity fast enough. The reason for this is that although the happiness that results from society is greater than the happiness that comes from selfishness, the happiness from selfishness is obtained immediately. The happiness from society is obtained slowly and on the average. Those people who cannot let go of their animal nature, lacking much foresight, anticipate individual happiness. But because of this desire for increased happiness, they will not leave society. Their words, however, incline toward morality. Among such people, words tend to be social, but deeds tend to be selfish; and because this is detrimental to the 'twofold' sincerity, society will not be strong. It follows that these people will not derive as much happiness from society as they could. At any time, the cause of man's suffering is the lack of the 'twofold' sincerity.

Because the human being indeed desires increased happiness, his ways of living are mostly moral and tend to strengthen society. The state, which is part of society, supports morality and decries immorality. Because, on the one hand, individuals recognize the need for morality, and on the other hand, the state enforces social norms and moral conduct in its members, increasing numbers of individuals are becoming moral and experiencing greater happiness. The present society is evidence for this.

It may be thought that there was more moral behavior in ancient times than there is now. As the communities were very small then, morality appeared in them clearly. However, while there were moral societies, there also existed cannibalistic brutes. Mankind was splintered into fragments then. As civilization has grown, the number of members in a

society has increased. Scattered individuals formed into various societies. To this day, with the exception of those who have still remained in the mountains or in the jungles, the rest of men have joined together in societies which have uniform morals codes. There is no comparison between the evolution of society in ancient times and that in modern times. If we recognize such a difference in development, we can say that on the whole in human life the 'twofold' sincerity, and along with it the strength of society, have been on the increase.

HAPPINESS

It is by virtue of his thought that man is able to recognize truth and society. Thanks to truth and society, man's strength has grown and opportunities to obtain food and clothing for living have increased. But merely having food and clothing is not enough to give man happiness. That same thinking ability which provided a place for truth and society in man's life also created a new quality in him. The thought which operates in relation to truth and society is subservient to action. The thought pertaining to this new quality is not bound to truth and society but roves hither and thither. This thought constitutes man's artistic outlook. Art entails imagining things which have not been experienced before. Artistic judgment [*kala nirnayam*] is based on hitherto prevailing opinions. Man moulds those opinions into ever-new models, forms arts and then imagines that his life would be better if it were in accordance to those arts.

The relationship between the arts and the conduct of life is of two sorts. The first is to suppose that one should conduct oneself according to the arts. We call these ideals. The second is that there is no strict relationship between artistic endeavor and human conduct; there cannot be any. Such are the fine arts.

Animals seek food and shelter. Human beings are able to acquire food and shelter easily owing to their superior knowledge. If the endeavor is just to gather food, it wouldn't have been so difficult for the human being. But he would also like that effort of his to have dignity. A human being would not be satisfied if he could merely obtain food somehow. In this dissatisfaction lies the difference between humans and animals.

Man desires that there be dignity in the way he earns his food. This dignity lies in the arts generated by his thought. The human ways of living thus mingle with art and thereby enhance the human quality. Man's life-efforts accomplish his ideals and nourish the arts.

Every person has some ideals. He feels that he is living to achieve those ideals. He is not happy with merely obtaining food and shelter. He finds happiness only in realizing his ideals. Some people have plenty of food and shelter; yet they are unable to show any persistence in their efforts, think that their life was a waste and commit suicide, because they didn't have the opportunity to achieve their ideals. Having despaired that they didn't get the woman they wanted, many sacrificed their lives. Desire for spiritual release and patriotism are also such ideals. Man lets go of other life-pleasures for the sake of his ideals. For example, he emaciates his body. When we look at the sacrifices that men make, it is clear that in their lives longing for ideals is more important than food and shelter.

Ideals are always ahead of action. Ideals carry action along with them. What were [merely] ideals yesterday, today we can achieve through effort. Thus, as old ideals become accomplished, new ideals arise. To live in accordance with ideals is what constitutes progress in human civilization. The yearning for ideals is slight among little children,

lunatics and idiots. They strive merely for food and shelter. Their life is animal-like. In ordinary human beings, however, there exists the power of thinking and yearning following that. The excellence in human life consists in striving for progress, happiness and ideals, making effort to achieve them and realizing them.

The arts that are achievable in practice constitute ideals. Their results occur one after another. Some arts, not being executable in practice, remain purely imaginary. Human beings imagine and enjoy these kinds of arts thinking how happy they would be if they were realized. But that is purely a world of imagination. Such arts do not provide food or shelter. They are not useful for physical living. These are what are called fine arts. At times a man leaves his daily activities and distracts himself by letting his imagination rove hither and thither in various ways disconnected with his practical living, and builds castles in the air. He experiences pleasure in a series of such imagined ideas. If one can control these ideas, they can be turned into poetry, dance, painting, sculpture, and the like. Every common man is a poet to some extent. In everyone there is an artistic bent of mind to a greater or lesser degree. This interest in art appears to be present in human nature ever since the times of ancient civilization. There is poetry in early men's descriptions of nature. The drawings they made on the rocks of caves and on pottery exist to this day as evidence. Dance was imbedded in their songs, music and activities. Thus, not only their interest in the arts appeared in scattered areas, but the common man's interest in art is sometimes also evident in his life in his designating some days as festival days. Festivals are filled with fine arts. They provide man enjoyment of the imaginary world. On festival days he puts aside some of his physical tools in favor of that enjoyment. When we observe people obtaining greater pleasure on festival days than on ordinary days, it is clear that fine arts are more enjoyable to the human being than mere food and clothing.

To be able to enjoy, man must first be alive. The means of livelihood are achieved only through action. Hunger cannot be satisfied through fine arts. Only after the solution of the problems of material life from time to time can there be room for fine arts. Only those who have been able to stabilize their life through economic prowess or some other means have been able to nurture the arts. This is the reason why kings were able to become sponsors of the arts. The arts have thrived only in prosperous countries. It is clear that there is no worry of material living in those who support the arts. The primary aim of civilization is to ensure material life. Hence, any development of art indicates a development in the civilization.

Although progress in the arts can result in happiness, it can also be the cause of much unhappiness. Fine arts have no role to play in the production of the necessities of material life. Only in those leisure times remaining after effort is made for material life can imagination be expressed through art. As material living becomes easier, arts will have special opportunities. Material living is the ultimate support for progress in art. Those who are immersed in the enjoyment of arts and decry earning a means of livelihood are like those who cut off the very branches they stand on. We witness such events many times in this history of our country. Through their efforts, the people of some generations have gained prosperity for their country and for their society, but they themselves did not at that time have the free time to nurture the fine arts. People of later generations enjoyed the leisure earned by their ancestors, slackened their physical effort and became engrossed in nurturing the fine arts. As a consequence, after some time their material life became more difficult. There would not have been any hindrance to their happiness if they had recognized the material difficulties that forced themselves on them from time to time and renewed their effort to resolve those difficulties. But some of these civilizations which escaped from the real circumstances and difficult problems that were pressing upon them without facing them by

temporarily turning their minds away from the temporary troubles by indulging in intoxicants, and immersed themselves in the imaginary enjoyment of arts, soon became lifeless.

We call the pleasures that occur to man through ideals and fine arts happiness. Pleasure is divided into two types – material life and happiness. Happiness is dependent on material life. However, material life alone cannot give happiness to man. Happiness plays a prominent role in human pleasures.

Thus, although human life is flourishing in the three ways of truth, society and happiness, since all these three are related to the same human life, there is a mutual relationship among them. All the three were formed from man's thinking. Although in his childhood stage man strove for food and shelter like an animal, as soon as his imagination began, his life was based on the arts. The first imaginings are expressed in primary arts. Arts that are thought to be practical and are practiced for their fruits become ideals. Truths are one type of ideals. Society is one type of truth. Truths coupled with action make material life easier. As material life becomes easier, it becomes possible to develop the arts. Art and action together add happiness to material living and enhance comfort.

We must here look into what the relationship of theism is to human life evolving in the above fashion, and also ask how, if theism indeed could bring happiness to humanity, the beliefs in God, soul and the other world have contributed to truth, society and happiness.

Beliefs in God, soul and the other world are the foundations of theism. Theism has been widely popular in human society since ancient times. But if we examine man's social history, we notice that the definitions of the ideas of God, soul and the other world have undergone many changes. Mutually conflicting connotations have been given to these ideas. Thus, although various meanings have been given in different stages of history in different societies, those definitions must have contributed to truth, society and happiness in those contexts. Otherwise, theism could not have provided happiness.

GOD

Belief in God is essential to theism. The depictions of God vary from [taking the form of] the wind, the rain, the sun, the moon, an extraordinarily courageous man, Love, a personification of peace, to being the ultimate cause of the universe. As knowledge has evolved in society, the definition of God has also been changing. Although the meaning of "God" has been changing according to circumstances and human imagination, if we examine all these definitions, we will find two common characteristics: first, that God's power is greater than man's power and governs men as well as nature; and second, that there is an inability to demonstrate God as such and such. That is, the notion that God is greater than man is only a belief and cannot be proven. Whatever meaning we assign to the term "God," these two characteristics must be included. Long ago, it was believed that rains were caused by Indra. Because it was beyond the ability of people of that time either to make rain or to stop it, Indra thereby became a greater being than men. Because they never actually saw Indra with their own eyes, that Indra exists is just a belief and not a proven fact. Likewise, in the thinking that God is a most courageous king who rules the world, the ideas of God's superiority and trust are implied. The forms as Love and peace have similar implications.

Implied in claiming that God is the ultimate cause of this changing universe is the idea that God is superior to man. The reason for this claim is that man, along with the rest of the forms of nature, becomes part of the ultimate substance of the universe. The attributes of that ultimate substance can only be inferred, but cannot stand the test of proof. It is possible to derive different essences by the same logic. That is why any conclusion which is inferred through logic can only be believed on faith, but cannot be said to be a fact.

How can believing in such a God contribute to truth, society and happiness?

Truth entails knowing the relationship between the different aspects of nature. Based on the knowledge of such relationships questions arise as to why there is such a variety of things in nature, what causes them to change and what are they dependent on. Many questions occur regarding man's living such as what is the nature of life and death, what is old age, why should human nature be of different sorts, and why sometimes one succeeds in the actions he plans and at other times he does not. He also finds the need to answer such questions.

The human being is growing every moment of his life. His strength wanes due to disease and old age. As circumstances keep changing, he experiences unhappiness because failures occur in the activities he contemplates. That is why if he could know the answers to the above questions, then he would also know the significance of the various events of his life and thus be able to conduct his life in an orderly fashion and attain happiness. Just as it is more reassuring to walk in the light even when there are obstacles rather than walk in darkness where there are none, unless man knows the truth about the chaotic affairs of the world, his life cannot be happy.

Belief in God provides some sort of answer to these questions. For example, God is greater than the universe. If one believes that the universe is a creation of God and that all the things in the universe are governed by God, then all the above questions are at once resolved. For the existence of or change in each thing, we can find meaning in terms of God. We can say all is God's creation, God's will. The whole mystery of the universe will appear to be solved. Thus, the theist's belief in God has helped him resolve questions about the affairs of the world.

If man knows the relationships between the various things of the world, he can then lead a happy life. In these [worldly] affairs, one in particular has a great relevance to human conduct of life. That is the matter of death. This event is what torments the whole of human life. What we learn from human experience is that death appears to be inevitable for every living thing. Indeed, a proverb is formed to that effect: "To be born is to die." We may not know how we were born; but since we are somehow born, that question does not bother us so much. But even if we live in an orderly fashion, old age and death are unavoidable. Furthermore, our body is subject to frequent diseases and dangers. Our life encounters danger every day. Even if we elude it from time to time, we must die at some time.

All the characteristics of life, its goals, its pleasures, all will stop at once with death. Death, which brings such an absolute change to life, frightens man every moment. Why should one put forth an effort for the life which will perish now or some other time? That is why the idea of death causes such despair in man. As soon as the idea of death occurs to one's mind, one's desires, arts, efforts, all will cool off. Happiness then will have no meaning at all.

The fact that death is inevitable can only be known to one who has developed his imaginative knowledge. Children and animals have no idea that death is certain. As man's imagination grows he is able to form an idea of the future and thus anticipate events that are yet to come. This same imagination informs him as to the truths of things, helps him form his goals, and enables him to lead a happy life. It is imagination that also points out that death is inevitable and points to the end of his happiness. Because of the idea that due to death there will be an end to happiness, all happiness becomes impermanent and devoid of joy. Therefore, if man wants to obtain happiness, he needs to know the true nature of death. How can belief in God solve such an important problem?

It is in the context of resolving this problem that the belief in God needed the help of beliefs in the soul and the other world.

THE SOUL

If we examine historically the gradual development of man's ideas, it is clear that the belief in God was the first-formed in theistic ideas. After some time, came the idea of the soul and then followed the idea of the other world. Progress in obtaining man's necessities of life is thus the cause of the occurrence of these ideas one after the other. In ancient times, when men had not yet formed into societies extensively, and when they were still searching for food and shelter, they just needed to know the truths about the things in their surroundings. That is how they started to imagine, in accordance with the theistic tradition, various forms of gods present in the natural forces. The Vedic gods such as Indra, Varuna, Vayu and other gods of ancient times such as Osiris, Horus, Chloris and Aurora belong to this category.

As man's imagination developed, there was a need to find meaning in such a thing as death. It was then that men of that time imagined something like a soul according to the theistic tradition. And they needed the other world as a support for the idea of the soul. So, along with the methods of worship of and prayer to various forms of gods, the beliefs in soul and another world became established. As it was important to give some meaning to death, the ideas of soul and the other world became implanted in human consciousness. Even if the belief in God receded into the background depending on the needs, the ideas of soul and the other world came into the foreground.

Among the peoples in whom imagination did not develop extensively there were no ideas of the other world. Even today, in the languages of aborigines such as Dhimals, Bads, Lambadis and Arapuras, there are no words to indicate the ideas of soul and another world. It appears that their imagination did not expand to the extent of needing those ideas. When they developed their imagination by coming into contact with other civilized people, they have had the occasion to develop ideas of soul and another world. Recently, when mountain tribes such as Santals got together with other civilized people, this seems to have happened; they then adopted words relating to these new ideas from the respective [host] languages.

Only after the formation of the idea of soul did the theistic tradition have the occasion to give meaning to death. Just like the idea of God, the idea of soul too has undergone changes. However, there are some common characteristics to the idea of soul. The foremost among them are: first, that the soul is not something physical; second, that it enters the body made of material substances and infuses sentience into it; and third, that it can leave the body.

There are many differences of opinion in regard to this. Is there soul only in the animate bodies of men, animals and plants, or does it also exist in inanimate things like stones and metals? What is the relationship between body and soul? Are there different types of souls or are there not? What is the relationship between soul and God? There are many differences of opinions with regard to such questions. But the ideas that death can only happen to animate things and that the soul leaving the body is what constitutes death prevail extensively. Furthermore, the forms or characteristics of the soul cannot be proved. The idea of soul, just like the idea of God, is based on belief.

It is clear that according to the theistic tradition which believes in God, the soul leaving the body is what constitutes death. Theists believe that it is the soul is the cause of sentience in living things. Just as the belief in the theistic tradition that God is the creator makes events in nature appear to be intelligible, similarly, the belief in the soul also seems to make sentience and death appear to be intelligible. Moreover, with a belief in the soul, the fear that seems to arise from the idea of death is also allayed, because death apparently happens only to the physical body and not to the soul. Theists believe that the soul is eternal and the real “I” is the soul. Employing this doctrine, the theists convince themselves that “what dies is my body and not I.” Thus, with the help of the belief in the soul theism gives a certain meaning to death and tries to remove the fear of death. But there are differences of opinion as to whether life’s goals remain in the soul that has left the body or not: if they do, where do they exist, and what are their consequences?

Regardless of the different opinions concerning the soul, since there is a common idea that it can exist outside of the body, in order to account for the state of souls which have departed from bodies there is a need for the other world. That is why in theism the idea of the other world invariably accompanies that of the soul.

OTHER WORLD

The other world entails a place where the souls that have departed from the [respective] bodies live. The existence of another world is only a matter of belief and cannot be proved. However, when people first believed in the soul, then logically they needed the other world. There are many opinions as to the status of the soul in the other world and the difference between this world and the other. The ideas of heaven and hell, which exist in some theistic societies, are also related to the idea of the other world.

Because there is a conflict between the qualities attributed to God and directly perceived life experiences, there have been many occasions when belief in God is shaken. That is why the theists who tried to somehow support the belief in God maintained that God’s complete authority is only in the other world. Their hope was that if they left God’s power in that imaginary and unprovable other world, then there would be less scope for the faith in God to be shaken. Although all theists generally believe in God, soul and the other world, due to the fact there are differences of opinion as to the relationships among them which cannot be settled by reason, there has been occasion for different sects to be formed among the theists.

Because of the belief that all things in nature were God’s creation, and also the belief that death means that the soul departs from the body, the human desire for truth was satisfied through the theist tradition. Now, we shall observe how theism answers the human needs of society and happiness.

Moral conduct is the basis of social living. Moral conduct means to let go of selfishness and strive for social happiness. If we look at it from a narrow point of view, selfishness appears to be very useful. Therefore, there are many occasions for human beings to become selfish. But if we look at this from a broader perspective, a person will realize that social happiness is more profitable. Thus, selfish outlook on the one side, and social outlook on the other, each pulls at human conduct in a different direction. However, those who desire greater happiness must suppress their selfishness with self-discipline, become socially conscious, and keep their conduct moral. But even today, there are very few people who have self-discipline. We don't even have to mention about those in ancient times. Unless there is some sort of fear or devoutness present, a person's selfishness is not generally rooted out. Even though people [generally] lack self-discipline, but because everyone desires greater happiness, some individuals who had a social outlook laid down ways of morality, and to make sure that everyone in society followed those edicts, they employed beliefs in God, soul and the other world.

In every society, people themselves used to formulate some morals and laws depending on the prevailing circumstances. In some contexts, peace and kindness could be the primary moral ideals. If warlike activities were predominant in a society, these morals would not be of much use. They would need morals of cruelty and intrigue *vis-à-vis* their enemies. Nevertheless, we learn that based on human nature, morals such as love are basic to human civilization. But in the days when society was not very strong, only morals based on circumstances were important. Kings and preachers introduced such morals to their believing public as God's commandments. The public, who believed that God is greater, implicitly accepted such morals and behaved accordingly. If they gained from acting morally or lost from acting immorally, then people's belief in God became much stronger.

In the days when statecraft was not very strong, state law could not keep immoral people under control. As a consequence, only the beliefs implicit in people's ideas could surely turn their conduct around. Towards this end, beliefs in soul and the other world assisted the belief in God. Theists indeed believe that the soul departs from the body at death, that it goes to the other world and that God exists in it. Theists believe that if by any chance an immoral man escapes punishment from the state in this world, he cannot escape the overview of God who is watching with a thousand eyes, and that he will thus reap the consequences of his evil deeds in the other world. In accordance with these beliefs, there is a doctrine among theists that in the other world the soul will obtain a life in hell as punishment for wicked people and a life in heaven with happiness as reward for virtuous people. There is also a belief that in order to evaluate man's moral and immoral actions there are gods and other staff. The anticipation of heavenly pleasures and the fear of punishment in hell can change a man's attitudes many times more than state punishment can. Conduct follows beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, among the people who were committed to the beliefs of God and soul, the belief in heaven and hell helped to put into practice the social laws that were introduced as God's commandments.

The belief in heaven and hell does not figure in all types of theism. Nevertheless, some theists believe that the deeds of a person attach themselves to the soul in the form of karma, and the soul is then reborn in accordance with the merits or demerits such karma. They suppose that life in this world is painful and that happiness consists in an existence devoid of rebirths. They believe that immoral deeds lead to rebirth and that the moral path will lead to absence of births or spiritual release. Although there is a difference between these beliefs and the beliefs in heaven and hell, the belief in rebirth corresponds to the belief in hell and the belief in release corresponds to the belief in heaven. The belief in karma

contributes to social order in this fashion too. Thus theistic beliefs not only have contributed to accurate human knowledge but also have aided society in adopting moral conduct. How then does theism cause human happiness?

Happiness is associated with life's goals and arts. Although man has had goals for his actions from time to time, as his imagination grew, he needed goals which encompassed the whole of his life. It was easy to determine such a goal utilizing theistic beliefs. Theists believe that the consequences of our deeds pertain only to the soul and not to the body, and that the karma man has acquired from his previous lives or God's commands prompt us to do various deeds. That's why goals too must pertain only to the soul. If we follow this trend of thought, according to the theistic beliefs, the sole aim of life is for each soul to attain heaven or to become free from the body such that there is no rebirth. Moral conduct becomes a means to achieve just such an aim.

Fine arts too played a prominent role in happiness. These arts can thrive in many ways. But the theists, because they were attached to their respective beliefs, adopted God, soul and the other world as subject matter for their plays and songs, sculptures and literatures. Many books were written in the name of God. Many plays and songs, sculptural edifices and paintings were created.

Theism contributed thus to truth, society and happiness which are the basis of human life. Human life should have become quite happy as a result. But, although theism has dominated human ideas for some thousands of years, men have not been able to attain happiness, and immorality has been on the rise. From time to time in human history, such immorality and unhappiness were growing excessively. At such times, great men of their respective age such as David, Vardhamana Jaina, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, Mohammad, Luther, Nanak, Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda attempted to ward off immorality and augment morality and happiness. Due their intellectual prowess, bravery and courage, they pointed to new outlooks and established morality and happiness among men.

If we examine their efforts, we can see that they had condemned the theistic beliefs that existed in their times. Although they didn't discard God, soul or the other world, they criticized current beliefs and established new beliefs that were appropriate to human nature. Such changes benefited the subsequent generations greatly. People of later generations venerated these great men as the new age prophets and have adopted the new morals preached by them.

But, although they were not atheists, such great men as Jesus, Mohammad and Ram Mohan Roy, who were venerated by later generations, were persecuted by their contemporaries as heretics. The same individuals that were persecuted as atheists of some sort or other in their own generation were able to bring morality and happiness to the people of succeeding generations.

What we can learn from this is that although theism appears to bring happiness to human life, there are some defects in it. It stands in the way of progress in man's life and of civilization. That is why, while theism has been condemned by stages from period to period in human history, atheism has grown immediately after and has been contributing to human civilization and happiness.

The prophet Jesus, who had been thought to be a heretic in his generation, courageously pushed forward human welfare to some extent. There has been much happiness due to his efforts. Even though he was considered an atheist to some degree, his teachings

were not without beliefs in God, soul and other world, which were part of the theistic tradition. Because of these beliefs, even in the new way of life advocated by the prophet Jesus, selfishness, immorality and unhappiness seeped in gradually. After many hundreds of years, with the aim of removing immorality, Luther brought forth some reforms in the practice of the way of life proposed by Lord Jesus. For this Luther was again tortured as a heretic by his fellow Christians. Luther's followers underwent a great many tribulations. Nevertheless, human society made another step forward due to the reforms introduced by Luther. Thus, in every society, theism had been condemned by different prophets, atheism had been introduced, and human civilization and happiness were enhanced.

Thus it is clear that there are shortcomings in theism; that they have become exposed from time to time; that although the theistic way of living contributed to man's happiness in the early times, theism is not suitable for human progress overall; that we need only atheism; that human civilization and happiness improve in human society in proportion to the growth of the atheistic attitude; and that there is immorality and unhappiness in proportion to the prevalence of the theistic attitude. However, we should now examine why man has accepted the main principles of theism which have been so deeply implanted in human society for so long, why we should now adopt atheism fully, and what its benefits are.

We shall first look into the shortcomings of theism.

SECOND CHAPTER

THEISM

We have seen that as man became progressively civilized, theism was not only unable to provide him happiness, but was obstructing his acquisition of happiness. That is why all the prophets who have established ways of living contributing to happiness have inclined only toward atheism. From this we can gather that although on the surface theism contributed to truth, society and happiness, there is in fact a huge deficiency in it. This deficiency was only revealed gradually.

What these deficiencies are, how theism was able to contribute to ancient civilization in spite of these defects, and why it became useless subsequently -- we have to inquire into all these questions.

We have seen that happiness first consisted of obtaining the basics of life with ease, and later in improving human aspirations. The first matter had to do totally with action. The second, that is human aspirations, point to a way of living and thus contribute to human action. Aspirations are only opinions and not facts. Human happiness is dependent on the thirst of aspirations. Hence, happiness comes from human opinions, and later from executing them in action. For ages, men have been trying to put into practice theistic opinions with earnestness, yet the majority could not attain happiness. From this we have to figure out whether there was a defect in the theist ideas or people were just unable to put these ideas into practice. If there is a defect in the ideas, then an error must be occurring in the practice. Moreover, if it were something which the majority of people could not put in practice, then society is no longer concerned with it. Such a thing would cause, in society's view, immorality. Whatever it may be, theism could not contribute to human happiness.

Some people hope that if an opinion is correct, then it would become practicable some time or other, if not now. That is why, it is necessary to examine whether theistic beliefs are correct are not. We call correct beliefs truths and incorrect ones falsehoods. How, then, can we know what is truth and what is not?

TRUTH

Truth means to learn of the relationships between items perceived through the external senses. Truth requires thought. Thinking exists in man in abundance. That is why he has such a keen interest in truth; all his opinions are based on such an interest. Human knowledge mostly consists of opinions. The special characteristic in man, rather than in animals, is the possession of these ideas.

The idea that all the events of the world exist in cause-effect relationships is one of the most important in man's ideas. To think that for one event, that is, the effect, to happen, another event exists as its cause is to recognize causal relationships. To know that for the effect of rain clouds are the cause is to follow the relationship of causation. This rain may in turn be the cause of another effect. For example, crops grow because of rain. Similarly, there is a cause for the formation of clouds. Thus the idea that all the events of the world are in causal relationships is fundamental to all human knowledge. There are indications in

man's knowledge to the effect that ever since ancient times he has recognized such cause-effect relationship.

Modern investigations inform us that to adhere only to the law of cause and effect is a narrow view of thought, and that although man is able to learn many things with the help of this law, to form ideas about other matters the law of cause and effect is not adequate. Nevertheless, by adopting the law of cause and effect, human knowledge surpassed animal knowledge by many times.

Because man thinks that the relationship between cause and effect is fixed and that nature conducts itself in its fashion, he forms opinions about events that are yet to come. Thus it is a unique human characteristic to be able to think of the future. Going beyond his immediate experience man is able to form ideas even about the ancient times. Because man is able to form ideas not only about the events known through his external senses, but also about events of which he has no experience, it is clear that his knowledge is superior to animal knowledge.

The events known through the external senses, however, are known through perception. Man can prove them. But the events that he formulates out of his thinking are inferred matters. That means, one imagines, because of the law of cause and effect, that even the events that are not directly perceived by him would probably be similar to his past experiences. He has not in fact experienced them. Observing rain when it occurs is perceptual knowledge; but thinking that it has probably rained because the pavement is wet is inference. In matters of proof, inference does not have as much value as means of knowledge as perception. Nevertheless, human knowledge is mostly based on inference. Tradition, hearsay, analogy, having respect toward ancient books and elders, all can also increase our knowledge.

Objects of perception are all facts. We can grasp them through our senses. There is no inference in regard to them. Animal knowledge is direct. Human knowledge too starts with perception. As thinking grows, suspicions start arising. That means that by imagining cause-effect relationships in perceived events, we think that other events too exist in a similar fashion. Thus man comes to think that not only [directly] perceived events, but events which are not [directly] perceived are known to him. Man's greatness consists in inferring, or opining, about matters which are not perceived, that is, known through his eye, nose, ear, tongue or skin. That's the grandeur of his intellect.

Why does man acquire knowledge by direct perception and inference as valid means in this fashion?

If we look into all the activities of every living being, we realize that all activity is carried out to prolong comfort. In man too, in the same way, this acquisition of knowledge is for the purpose of enhancing his life's happiness. Knowledge determines his action to a large extent, and causes consequences through the action and happiness from those consequences. The rest of his knowledge may not be put into practice at the present time, but it gives the same enjoyment that fine arts provide. Arts can be translated into goals and goals can prompt action; or they may not. On the whole, all human knowledge is useful in providing enjoyment either in the material world or in the world of thought.

We can divide all human knowledge into two types: the first is the knowledge that includes action; and the second is the knowledge devoid of action. The knowledge that is not translated into action is art. It remains totally in the mental world. Although some arts are

transformed into goals, some artistic ideas are impracticable. The poet sometimes imagines that he is a bee, flying from flower to flower and drinking their nectar. Such an idea cannot be acted upon. That's a fine art. It gives enjoyment in the world of imagination. In every person's thought some fine art is imbedded. Even a person is alone, he might be thinking some poetic thoughts. Just as the saying goes, each person enjoys his own craziness, so each enjoys himself in his own world of art. Sometimes, the enjoyment is not limited to the individual, but causes others to be happy too. Some men's music causes enjoyment not only to themselves, but to others as well. It's the same with arts such as poetry.

Thus, arts are of two kinds: one which causes enjoyment to oneself; and one which causes enjoyment to others too. It is not possible to determine by other means whether the first type of art is correct or not. Each person's art is enjoyable to himself. He wouldn't think of it if it did not provide him enjoyment. When a person sits alone, a series of thoughts overflows in his mind, and they are indeed enjoyable to him. He allows them in his mind only because they remove his anxiety and give him peace. Thoughts which cause unhappiness cannot occur in his mind. Some people imagine the losses that they might incur in difficult times to come, and the imaginings may appear to be tragic. But precisely because one can think of the difficulties before they actually occur, some kind of consolation occurs, and there is a pleasure in that as well. Thus, in any of the thoughts that one thinks in oneself, there must be some pleasure. But there is no independent determination as to whether these thoughts are valid or not.

Although there are individual differences in human nature, there are some common characteristics. Social construction is based only on such common characteristics. There is equality not only in hunger and thirst but also in respect to some ideas. Ideas occur according to circumstances. Generally, there is unanimity among people who live in the same circumstances. As equality in circumstances occurs, unanimity increases, differences diminish and social unity improves.

The art each person enjoys varies with his individual preferences. That's why the arts [people] enjoy themselves may not be to others' tastes. The arts which cause enjoyment to others also are associated with the common characteristics of a society. When a person sings a song, if others too have the characteristic of listening to it and enjoying it, then the society also enjoys it as well as the singer.

If the main aim of arts such as music and poetry is to provide enjoyment only for the poet or singer, then we cannot determine whether their compositions are correct or incorrect. That is because each art provides individual enjoyment. So, individually speaking, the art is always true. But when the art is addressed to a society, the determination of whether it is valid or not is dependent on to what extent it has provided enjoyment to the society. A poet may say that there is a great enjoyment in his work of poetry. But the majority in the society may not be able to enjoy this work of poetry as well as the author of the work did. Then the idea that there is enjoyment in that work of poetry is true only individually but not socially. Moreover, if the same individual likes an artistic idea today, he may not like the same one tomorrow, if the circumstances have changed. Then the truth which we say pertains to an idea may become a falsehood when circumstances change. Thus, the truth and falsehood of the enjoyment in the arts which are not practicable in the material world change according to circumstances and the common characteristics of a society.

If, on the other hand, we examine the truth of the ideas which can be translated into action, they too appear to have to be compared to other ideas.

To a traveler who is traveling across a field on a sunny day, there may appear to be water in the distance. On the basis of the scene that appeared to him, he opines by means of inference that there is water there. First, his opinion appears to him to be true. When he approaches the water that appears to be there, if he sees directly a river or a lake there, then it is settled that the thing that was grasped through inference is true. But, on the other hand, if he doesn't find water no matter how far he goes, it becomes clear that his idea that there is water is indeed false. Although all the ideas that are arrived at through inference may at first appear to be true, only when they stand up to the special verification based on action, they become truths; those that do not stand so become falsehoods.

Man's ideas are known through inference. His action is also based on these ideas. Only the results based on action provide happiness. If the ideas are true, then the action which follows them is without conflict with circumstances, and, the ideas, being in harmony with the circumstances, provide happiness. If the ideas are false, in practice they would be in conflict with circumstances; they would not provide the expected results and would cause unhappiness. It is in action that truths provide happiness and falsehoods provide unhappiness. Thus, we know that all those ideas acting on the basis of which will result in happiness are truths and those which will result in unhappiness are falsehoods. Only on the basis of the potentiality [*sampada*] of happiness found in action can we know the truth or falsehood of theories.

Perception means knowing anything through the external senses. The tastes of food cannot be seen. But they are directly perceived through the tongue. Similarly, we determine the properties of sound, touch, form, taste and smell.

Some properties are not known through the external senses. Love is one such thing. Love does not have any properties that can be perceived by a sense such as touch. It is a collective idea formed by combining some common qualities expressed in [a person's] behavior. Man recognizes that love is present in the actions performed to help others. Actions which hurt others express anger. Although we cannot judge anger or love through the external senses, one is able to ascertain whether there is love or anger from the actions which one thinks that love or anger causes. If a person professes love, then to prove whether this idea is true or false, his behavior is evidence. Similarly, a government is not something known through the external senses. But we think that the government performs certain actions, and we call such an aggregate of actions government. If we have to prove whether or not there is a government in a certain country, we can determine that based on the presence of certain qualities of government in that country. Thus, if we have to ascertain the truth or falsehood of some ideas, we must perceive either material qualities or actions stemming from those ideas. Ideas which are not perceptible remain mere hypotheses and cannot be said to be true or false. Although every idea starts as a mere hypothesis, it becomes known either as true or as false when it can be experienced. As long as it stands the scrutiny of perceptual verification, it must be considered as true, and as long as it cannot be so verified, it must be considered as false.

A person might think some of his ideas as true based on his experience and thought. They may appear to him to be verified in his own experience. To him they are true. But when the circumstances of his thinking change, what he has supposed to be true may become false. For example, at one time, people believed that contagious diseases were due to some evil spirits. Following these ideas, they used to make offerings to some evil spirits. They had determined that their opinion that contagious diseases were caused by evil spirits was true because they supposed that improvements occurred [in those who suffered from the diseases] as a result of these offerings. But circumstances have changed. With the help of better

instruments new science has developed. We know now that contagious diseases are caused by microbes, and we treat patients to eliminate these microbes. We can directly perceive the result of that. If we look from the modern point of view, we can assert that this belief of the ancients is not true, and that the property [of the disease] which they thought was certain was indeed an illusion. Thus, with changing circumstances old truths can undergo change. Truths are not eternal; they are based on verification.

Depending on special circumstances, some ideas may appear as true to an individual. Such personal truths, like personal arts, must be limited to the personal life. But as men became more civilized they gathered into large societies. Social life gained more importance than individual life. Social ideas and experiences have now become more important than personal experiences and ideas. We mean by social ideas and experiences the common ideas and experiences of the majority of the members of a society. That is why as civilization progressed, personal truths lost their value. It is indeed the case that whether an opinion is true or false is determined through practice. So, in the civilized world, if an idea corresponds with the experiences of [only] one or two individuals, it would not [necessarily] be considered true. It must correspond with the experiences of a majority of people. Only then can it become true in a society. As social knowledge and circumstance change, these truths also can change.

The idea that the sun orbits around the earth was current for a long time. But as time went on, it could not stand verification. So, based on some experiences we have recently learned that that idea is false and that the earth in fact orbits around the sun. Because this new idea corresponds with other experiences and is verified by them, it is now considered as true. Similarly, society grasps truth about many matters of nature through verification.

Of these truths, some are necessary for man's daily conduct and some unnecessary. The idea that the earth circles around the sun is not essential for many people in their everyday affairs. But the true idea that if we change food according to our profession we will be healthier is essential for many people. Thus those truths which became essential for people and which they implement have become duties. Only true duties provide happiness. Even when truth changes because circumstances have changed, if we are attached to old customs and act thereby, then that would cause immorality and unhappiness.

To test the validity of social duties, we need social action. Action means following the 'twofold' sincerity: to do what one has said one will do, and to speak [only] of what one has done. If duties are based on truth, then they should provide happiness. Those duties which man acts upon with twofold sincerity and thus attains happiness in society are indeed valid duties. If one lacks either the twofold sincerity or happiness, then their duties become immoral duties. That means that at present they lack the basis in truth. Either because the ancient ideas have become illusory or because circumstances have changed, the valid duties of previous times have become invalid now, and cause either unhappiness or immorality.

Some think that all the truths that have been subject to verification are provisional truths, and that there is another eternal truth which integrates all these truths. There is no other basis to prove such truth except logic. Because of that logic, there have been conflicting ideas about this eternal truth. Moreover, the idea of eternal truth is not practicable. Because it cannot be practiced, it is clear that such truth is just a fine art.

Having thus discerned the distinction between truth and falsehood, we shall now examine whether the beliefs in theism are true or false.

GOD

The term “God” has many meanings. We can divide them all into four classes. The first is matter, which is perceived by the external senses. The second is the laws of the universe. The third is the meaning of an attributeless entity. And the fourth is the meaning as related to the needs of human life. The ways of living formed around these meanings have prevailed as different theistic religions. Each religion has supported a certain type of God. We shall examine how true these various types of God are.

Although civilized people say that the first type of God is false, there are still those who say they have seen God. To this day some believe that the stone or metal images [they worship] are gods, that they have powers, and that if we pray to them our desires will be fulfilled. They build temples, get the images installed, consider that the image itself is a personification of God, and worship the images with great piety. The proof that the powers attributed to these images are false is in the conduct of those who condemn idolatry. The images which were worshipped with much love and fear were shattered recklessly. If it is true that there are powers in the images, then there should indeed have been great suffering for those who had destroyed them. If we notice that not only have those people not incurred any loss, but, on the other hand, they have only been experiencing the good life, then we can conclude that the belief that there are powers in the images is false.

In the behavior of those who believe that God will appear to them we find frequently singing the praise of God and prayer. They say that God appeared to them from time to time, that He possessed their bodies, that they smelled some perfumes announcing the arrival of God, and that some of their wishes were granted by such a God. Those who speak of having some such experiences at the time of their prayer may be speaking of something that is true to them. But we must inquire into the question of whether God was the cause of these experiences or there was some other cause.

If we examine the characteristics of those who are possessed, we can see that they were thinking of some form in their mind at that time, and were focusing on it with total attention, forgetting everything else. At the time when the mind is concentrating, external senses do not perform their functions, and man loses consciousness – this is natural to human nature. This is called possession. It is also human nature to feel that the scene which the mind is imagining is actually occurring and that we are actually experiencing it. When we think of a friend who is far away, the image of him that we are familiar with appears to be in front of us – this is common in everyone’s experience. Similarly, these worshippers are painting in their imagination the same image in their mind as they have been worshipping. That is why, among those who are possessed, the form of God that appears is according to their respective traditions. Vishnu for the Vaishnavas, Shiva for the Shaivites, and Christ for the Christians appear in their meditations. If the tradition changes, God too changes with it. Since it is so difficult to concentrate, fasting, sound, intoxicants and extraordinary circumstances aid these possessions.

Thus, the scenes that occur in possession are experiences similar to dreams that occur in the mind. Those who are mentally ill and who imbibe intoxicants also have similar experiences. Nevertheless, among some [groups of] people these possessions are emphasized because they have devotion for and faith in God, and because these possessions are concerned with God. The scenes that occurred [at the moment of possession] are [now] being worshipped with devotion and faith. Then [the devotees] also have the satisfaction that their wishes are granted. Thus, although these possessions are matters of fact, they are nothing but

emotional states. It is a fact that on a sunny day there appears to be water in a field. The cause of this phenomenon is the air getting heated by the sun and becoming thinner, but not the presence of water [in the field]. To think that there is water in mirages is only an illusion and not the truth. Similarly, to think that God's miracles occur in possessions is only an illusion and not the truth. Thus, the notion that God appears to the external senses cannot be verified. It is false.

The second type of God is the personification of love, benevolence, wisdom, and so forth. Love, benevolence and wisdom are not things knowable through the external senses. For that reason, the followers of this type of religion condemn idolatry. However, they vehemently assert that there is this second type of God. They say that this type of God is a force transcendent to nature, and that It governs all things in nature in ways of love, benevolence and wisdom. Moreover, they claim that through prayer man can obtain love, peace and wisdom.

Although we cannot prove this type of God by perceiving It through the external senses, we can, by examining Its actions in nature and in prayer, ascertain the truth or falsehood of such a notion of God. The reason for this is that if such a God exists, such acts would be expressed in nature too. We can ascertain the truth of ideas through actions.

They say that all the things in the universe are interrelated, that God's creation has such a property, and that creation reveals God's wisdom. The occurrence of day and night, a large tree growing from a small seed, and such other wonders of creation indicate God's wisdom. Let us suppose that a peacock's tail with the strange colors is part of the wonder of creation. But then, the same tail, when it gets heavy and gets stuck [to its back] because of rain in the rainy season, causes great pain to the peacocks; in those circumstances, peacocks will have more trouble escaping from the attacks of enemies. What then is the wisdom in the creation of such a tail? Moreover, why does man have a tail at the lower end of his spine? Why should idiots be created in the midst of human society? If we examine many such matters, we may find more foolishness than wisdom in matters of nature. If God has the omniscience and omnipotence that the followers of this religion assume, why couldn't God remove the bestiality in human nature after so long a time? Did He not have the ability to remove it? Or is it His will that human society should suffer from having such qualities? Even if we let these matters alone, if we look into the many sufferings that occur in human societies, it is clear that such a God is either impotent or devoid of love. Do we find God's love in crops being wiped away in hurricanes? Everyone knows indeed to what extent people become victims to hardships from the interminable suffering created by wars. Parents experience tragedy and heartbreak when little infants whom they have raised with much love die suddenly. What love, benevolence and wisdom can we find in the ways of creation of these things?

They say that God is a personification of love, benevolence and wisdom, that [expressions of] these ways exist in creation, and that only man's ignorance, his karma and his disobeying God's commandments are the cause of his suffering. Even if we look at it from this point of view, there is an objection to the idea that God is omnipotent: is there karma working above and beyond God? Besides, why should an omnipotent God allow ignorance in human beings? Why should He allow a human being transgress His commandments with that ignorance? In such conditions, can we find love or wisdom in God's works? Can we say that the parents who hand a sharp knife to their children and watch them passively while they cut themselves and cry in pain love their children?

They explain the presence of happiness and misery in the world by saying that God gives man his happiness, but his misery is brought on by man himself. So, it is clear that man has the freedom either to obey or disobey God's commandments. Then how can God be omnipotent? That means that there is an eternal struggle between man and God regarding the determination of human happiness and misery. We can conclude that in the context of those who have atheistic ideas and who live according to them man has won and God has lost. From this we get the idea that man is greater than God. Thus, if we consider the affairs of the world, the idea that God is the creator and personification of love, benevolence and wisdom has suffered a blow.

Let us now look into prayer. People pray to this God to fulfill their desires. They wish for rainfall and progeny, and they wish to change human nature and to succeed in their actions to destroy their enemy. They believe that God will listen to these prayers and grant them their wishes.

If we look into the truth of prayer, we find some anomalies. If nature is running a certain course, will God change that course just because we prayed to Him? In the case of two people having neighboring fields, suppose one needs rain and the other does not need rain. If both of them pray to God according to their own wishes, whose wishes would God grant? And whose would He deny? There may be mutual enemies within the same religion. Then, which one of them will win? When one of them wins, is his victory caused by his prayer to God? Or did it happen due to some other circumstance beyond God? If prayer is the cause, then why did the other person not gain victory? Moreover, if one of them prays and the other does not and if both go to fight, can we prove on the basis of our present experience that only the one who prays will win? If the one who does not pray wins, then what is the relevance of God? Moreover, is God so partial to grant the wishes of those who pray and abandon those who do not pray? Thus, if we examine prayer and [its relation to] the effects of actions, it is clear that the idea that there is a loving, benevolent, wise and all-powerful God who governs the course of the universe is false.

If we then ask what is the cause of such an idea [of God] occurring to man, the answer is that man imagined God on the basis of analogy. Because there is intelligence behind the actions of man, he imagined that the rest of the universe that he did not make is also built by a being who is intelligent. Similarly, he attributed to such a being the love and peace that he experiences and wishes for. Only analogy is the cause of man's having such ideas. He raises crops for his own use. So, he imagined that the fruit trees on the hills were grown for his enjoyment by a God who is more powerful than him. This idea of God is based on an analogical inference. And when we examine it, we will find the idea to be false.

Gods of the first and second types have attributes. People believed that we can know them through the external senses and through their acts. The third type of God is without attributes. This is an idea that resulted from logic. The idea is that because the whole of nature is changing, there must be something which is without change and which is the ultimate cause of the whole nature. They say that because every attribute changes, this ultimate substance must be devoid of attributes. They say that because it doesn't have any attributes, it can only be known through inference [*ooha chetane*] and cannot be known otherwise. Therefore, they say it is not discernable through speech or the mind.

If we look at it from this point of view, then prayer is meaningless. That which has no attributes indeed cannot listen to our prayers!

Such an idea of God is neither practicable nor verifiable. Yet it is man who maintains that God may be without attributes. That means that “God is without attributes” is just an idea. Such ideas which cannot be translated into action we call fine arts. The same sort of enjoyment is there in thinking about this idea of attributelessness as there is in poetry. Thus the idea of God without attributes is an art. Man does not let his other artistic knowledge remain merely as an idea, but makes it systematic. The principles of music, dance, sculpture and the rules of poetry and so on are systems formulated this way. Similarly, the artistic idea of attributelessness is made [systematic and] logical.

There is another argument to support the thesis that the idea of attributelessness is an art. Ideas get divided into true or false depending on proof. There is no difference of opinion regarding them. Arts are not so. They are not amenable to proof. There are many differences of opinion regarding them. These differences persist. There is a difference of opinion in the poetic arts regarding whether a woman’s face is like a lotus or like the moon. Both the ideas, however, are in accordance with artistic rules. We cannot determine whether the face is indeed like a lotus or like the moon. In fact, it is not a lotus and is the moon even less. It is just a face. To think that it is a lotus or the moon is imagination coupled with art. Attributelessness is similar. They say it is the ultimate cause of nature. There are many opinions regarding this. There is a difference of opinion as to whether it is one or two. The respective rules of logic are the basis for such a difference of opinion. Because there are differences of opinion, the idea of attributeness acquires the nature of art.

Moreover, fine arts thrive only when people are not much preoccupied with material circumstances. Thus, it is those who have reduced their concern regarding material circumstances and those who do not have much need to think about them excessively, who sponsor the idea of attributelessness. They experience in their mental world the same sort of enjoyment that fine arts provide.

Just as the fine arts are not practicable, the idea of attributelessness is also not practicable. There is no connection between this idea and human effort. Just as there is no connection between a palm tree standing forty feet high and the sun rising in the East, there is no connection between believing that the ultimate cause of the universe is attributeless and man making an effort in the midst of circumstances to gain happiness with freedom and responsibility.

Although the idea of attributelessness is an art, it has gained higher respect than the other arts because it is coupled with the idea of God. Because man has been accustomed to having respect for the idea of God, this art that is propagated in His name also commands respect. If we remove the respect from our minds and examine it, then it becomes clear that the idea of attributelessness is [just] a fine art. Thus the third type of God is not a truth that can be verified. Rather, it is clear that it is false in so far as it has any relevance to practical living. Morals, modes of living and social constructions take place based on the idea of God. As the belief that God is the basis for such ways of living is false, deception and selfishness creep into morality. That is why, in order to eliminate such a deception, prophets disclosed from time to time the falseness in the idea of God.

Common people who are engaged in other sorts of activities have neither the interest nor the opportunity to inquire into whether the idea of God is true or false. Only the morals and duties based on that idea are of use for their daily life. When these rules come in the way of achieving their happiness, they try to bring about minor changes in them. But they are not prepared to question the notion of God which is at their root. No matter how much [the morals] are reformed, because their root [belief] is not shaken, there is always deception

behind the scenes. Thus, even though there has been room for deception in the majority of society because of the idea of God, and such a deception has been injurious to social happiness, since the idea of God has been profitable for some selfish individuals, they never wanted any change in the idea. Instead, they made sure that it won't change.

As civilization developed, passion and faith were not enough to propagate ideas in a society; evidence was needed. The populace which acquiesced in faith in God, now wants the authority of proof. If people still want somehow to preserve a God who cannot be verified, and yet want to live in a society at the same time, the old types of gods are of no use now. People may lack the necessary courage to drop the reference to God on their own. Moreover, they wouldn't want extensive changes in the morals of the society from which were personally gaining. So, through cowardice or selfishness, they try somehow to maintain the idea of God. So, there is a fourth type of God in modern society. It is far removed from proof and logic. That is, although God's existence cannot be proven in any fashion, one can prove that the idea that God exists occurs to one's mind. This type of God is totally based on belief and it rejects verification which could contribute to social intercourse.

If a layman proposes such a God, modern civilized people would ridicule it as mere belief. But, due to their selfishness and cowardice, those who carry on socially useful activities in other respects and thus earn high respect wouldn't touch the God who is at the root of the deceit; instead, they propose this fourth kind of God. That is why their words carry some weight. Nevertheless, this God soon becomes an obstacle in actual practice either to themselves or to their ideas.

Some try to support the idea of God in yet other ways. They say that God is an ideal for man. But it is well known that the idea of God is purely imaginary and is dependent on man's needs. Furthermore, if we question and investigate in an attempt to arrive at definite truth, there are many things we do not yet know. Even some scientists refer to all the things we do not know as God. Thinking this way, "God" means nothing but our ignorance. If that is so, as human science improves from day to day, God recedes into the background. Instead of speaking eloquently of the things which we do not know as things which are not yet known, to call them "God" is deceptive. When people think of "God" with one meaning, if we attribute another meaning to it which people do not clearly know, then wouldn't that be deception? When people indeed think of God as something definite, to name some indefinite things as God is indeed to deceive people.

Thus, whatever meaning we give, the idea of God causes either immorality or unhappiness. It may, like art, give enjoyment. It may encourage selfishness in society through deception. But it can never cause action with twofold sincerity, action leading to happiness. So the idea of God is false.

THE SOUL

The second component in theism is the idea of soul. Although the term "soul" has many meanings, we can look into two of its most common attributes. One is that of the soul residing in the body and animating it; and the other is that of the soul departing the body.

Some say that the soul is directly perceived. Beliefs in ghosts and beliefs regarding rituals for ancestors are based on this belief. They assume that ghosts are the souls of dead people that roam about without bodies. Some say they have seen such ghosts. They say that the ghosts can possess some people and make them do weird deeds. Some others say that one

can make these ghosts possess others and bring about changes in their behavior or make them sick. This is called voodoo [*chetabadi*]. Related to this belief there are various witch healings and mantras in vogue. The witch doctors say that we can capture ghosts and not allow them to enter [a person's body]. If we investigate scientifically into the questions of what exactly are called ghosts and what is done in terms of witch healing, we can conclude that it is just the fears of deluded people that are designated as ghosts. The customary belief in ghosts and the stories related to them spread to individuals due to the publicity given them in the theistic society. A person with such a belief sees, for instance, a shadow of a tree trunk in darkness in a desolate place and fears it, thinking it is some kind of ghost, without actually investigating what it is. Just as his body temperature rises due to anger in his mind, or his health improves from being glad, a person's health deteriorates due to his fear and worry. Just to impart courage and reassure the frightened people, the witch doctors make a big hubbub such as witch healing. The fear of ghosts is more widespread in women. People who do not know the true nature of mental diseases like hysteria and epilepsy think, in accordance with their respective beliefs, that there are ghosts. Nowadays, there are special cures for such diseases. As the proverb goes, "Why step in dung [first] and why wash [your] feet [later]?" why should one be afraid in the first place, and then get the fear cured thinking it is [caused by] a ghost. If we investigate carefully beliefs in poltergeists, viz., that there are ghosts in some houses and that they throw stones at you or burn your clothes, then the deception in those beliefs becomes evident.

Someone's ghosts are another's ancestral spirits. The spirits of ancestors mean the souls of the dead belonging to the same family. The theists, who believe that the soul hovers around after death, designed a variety of rites to nourish the soul. With the aim of providing for these souls, they donated food, clothing, wives and vehicles to roam about. They assume that the items of such donations would accrue to the souls they had been intended for. In ancient theistic traditions there were many rituals relating to ancestral spirits. Due to the preaching of the prophets, the blind faith in ancestral spirituals diminished, as did the belief in God. Ghosts or ancestral spirits cannot in any way be verified in perception.

People also tried to prove the existence of the soul through inference. They have said it is the soul which is the cause of sentience and death in living things. There are many objections to such an inference. Is there a soul in every living thing? If there is, is it one or many? Trees also have life. Is there a soul in them too? We can take fragments of the plants of sugar cane, rose, *kanda* root or turmeric and grow them as separate plants. Then is the mother's soul being divided into parts? Or, does a new soul enter into the fragments? Not only in plants, but also in animals like hydra, we can cut them up into small fragments and make them into many animals. In nature many living things like the ameba and paramecium become divided naturally by themselves and become separate animals. What happens to their souls [then]? The white corpuscles in man's body's bloodstream live as separate sentience. Is there a relationship between their souls and the soul of man? And the sperm and the egg combine in a mother's womb to become an embryo. There is sentience in each of them before they combine. If they had separate souls, do these two souls then combine in a single embryo after the fertilization? Suppose there are no separate souls in the egg and the sperm. [We know that] some of the eggs develop as embryos without any relationship to a sperm and become living things. Must there not be a soul in [each of] them too? Although there may not be sentience in trees as clearly as can be observed in men and animals, we see on the basis of evidence that they too inhale and exhale, ingest food, grow and procreate, and that they too act with sentience like animals with regard to things of the external world such as light, heat and touch. Does the soul exist only in sentient plants and animals or is there an unmanifest soul also in stones and other substances which do not exhibit any sentience?

There are many differences of opinion regarding both the relationship between God and the soul, and the nature of the soul itself. Some say the soul exists materially. If that is so, then because there would be the principle of life in each atom of the substances that undergo material division, the behavior of those atoms would be corresponding to that of the soul. If the soul and matter are so akin to each other, then can the soul exist separately from matter or matter from soul? Otherwise, if the soul exists as a separate entity within the body, then, depending on the body, is the soul of one kind or many kinds?

There are many such differences of opinion within the theory which tries to establish that there is a soul. The source for such differences of opinion is the fact that the theory cannot be verified. These theories are based on analogies and, to some extent, on logic, but they cannot be verified. In bygone days when we did not know definitively what sentience is, how there happen to be so many different varieties of men, plants, animals and things in the world, and what the relationship between animate and inanimate substances might be, the theory of the soul was imagined to solve those problems. If we examine the facts, it becomes clear that the idea that there is a soul is false.

THE OTHER WORLD

There was a need for the other world to provide for an abode for the soul after it has departed from the body. Hell, heaven, the doctrine of karma -- all these are ideas related to the soul. Some believe that the soul enters bodies again and again. This is rebirth. This gave birth to the doctrine of karma. This doctrine was utilized to explain the differences between various substances in nature, especially the causes of the differences among men. There are also theistic societies which did not accept the doctrine of karma. They believe that God sends the souls which have departed from the bodies either to heaven or to hell. But none of these ideas can be verified. Besides, when we know that the ideas of soul and God are false, the ideas of the other world and karma are not only dispensable, but are false.

Thus, we conclude that the ideas of God, soul, the other world are false. To enable these notions to provide mutual support for each other, many weird and extreme ideas arose in theism. Theism became replete with a series of falsehoods.

Then how is it that human life has been dependent for so long on theism which is full of falsehoods? What is the cause of such ideas as God, soul and the other world arising in human [thinking]? Why have people supported those ideas for so long? If these ideas are false, are there any other ideas which can be verified as true that can act as the basis of man's life? We need to inquire into such matters.

THIRD CHAPTER

CIVILIZATION

As time went on, many meanings for the term “God” came into currency. One can say that now “God” can entail anything from a stone image to the ultimate cause of existence. In men in whom thought has developed some sort of belief or faith in God has always existed universally. Some ask, if the idea of God is false, why has the idea of God persisted for such a long time?

We should inquire into the question of whether it is God’s existence that is the cause for the popularity of the idea of God, or if there is another cause for it.

In this civilized world, people carry on their affairs without any reference to the idea of God. The physical sciences inform us about the true state of matters of nature. The laws of the state keep man moral. By sponsoring various types of performances, the society supports the fine arts. Thus, in the civilized world there is no need for the idea of God in the life of an individual. Anyone can be raised from his childhood without any mention of the idea of God. They will not enjoy their lives any less than the theists do. The evidence for this is the fact that people who grow up in one religion can spend their lives without knowing anything about the gods of other religions.

There are, however, still theistic notions present in the climate of society, and children are not being raised without them. Parents teach their children prayers to God from infancy. In school textbooks lessons about God abound. In our languages, in our music and in our stories, theistic notions are embedded. Modern people are exposed to these theistic notions only because they have been raised in such traditions; otherwise they have no need for them.

Nowadays if people within the theistic traditions are extolling their respective traditions, they do so not because they have understood the inherent greatness of their religions. They try to support their religion because they were born into those traditions, and having grown up in them, they have benefited from those beliefs. Being carried away by the generations-old traditions, they are unable to ascertain, by using their independent thinking, whether there is any truth to their beliefs. If a majority of people inquired discriminately into the truth and falsehood of theistic beliefs, theism would have disappeared from the civilized world long ago. It is their own theistic beliefs, however, that has turned them away from such efforts. Their attitude that theism must be believed in and not criticized is what has come in the way of their critical assessment regarding theistic traditions. Nevertheless, because some courageous persons who could not tolerate immorality examined and criticized the theists’ morals and their sources, and because of the conflicts between various religions, people began to think freely about theism. We thus find that in human history theism has receded gradually as it thus became subject to criticism, and atheism has progressed. Civilization is such a progress of atheism.

We shall look into how atheism has progressed through the different ages in human history.

THE ANCIENT AGE

Although the human being has evolved from other animals in the form of man, he developed some special facilities which animals did not have. His hind legs became useful to stand on; his forelegs became his arms which could be freely utilized. That was a great convenience for him. Unlike in animals, his thumb can be opposed to the other four fingers of the hand. With this he was able to grasp any object easier than animals could. Because of this same facility he has been able to gradually use tools and accomplish tasks which animals could never do. Higher than any of these facilities is his ability to think. It is his thinking that primarily contributed to his superiority. Although his thinking did not initially develop so extensively, human knowledge aided by thinking has always been excellent.

Because of these facilities, human life became easier than animal life. Ancient man utilized stones as tools. He built houses. He was able to recognize the places where he could find animals, roots and fruit to eat, or water to drink. Facilities of [preparing] food and residences were developed. As he developed conveniences of life, he gained more leisure.

If we observe the life of plant species, we notice that they imbibe water through their roots day in and day out and make food. Having been endowed in their body constitution with superior facilities, animals which are endowed with a brain and a nervous system are able to gain the food that they need for living in a much shorter time. Thus, it is a commonly observed fact that animals such as dogs, cattle and birds sometimes lie down to rest. It's no wonder that man, who has many more facilities than animals, can obtain much more leisure. However, animals, because they are endowed with little thinking, are unable to utilize their leisure time in any other way than by merely lying down. Man has extensive thinking powers. He is able to envisage his future and his ideals. That's why in his leisure time he searches for ever easier ways to improve his comforts by extending his imagination in different directions. Because he can execute these plans of his, he is able to make his life progressively easier. This is what we call civilization.

It is thus that ancient man started to acquire civilization. He obtained food and shelter somewhat easily, and as soon as he had some leisure, he strove for bigger comforts. The first stage in his efforts consisted of grasping the nature of things in his environment – since he has to spend his time in the environment, it would indeed be more convenient to him if he can learn its nature.

Analogy is the easiest way to determine the nature of things. Analogy means comparing things that are not known to things that are known. Among all the things that were known to the ancient man, his own life was best known to him. That's why he first imagined that the things in his environment were like him. He thought that what moved him was also the cause of the movement of the wind. However, he didn't find any man like him in the wind. So he imagined that there was a man called "wind" hiding somewhere. Later, it was this same imagined being that was recognized as the god of wind. People of those times started imagining that behind everything there was some god.

In their imagination the sun, the moon, the earth, wind, rain, trees and anthills – all were transformed into gods in their imagination. In this totally unknown world which evoked wonder and fear, the thinking that there is a god present in everything brought peace of mind to ancient men. He learned the nature of things in this manner.

Ancient man thought everything was like him. However, he could not bring them under his control. He could not change the speed of wind and rain in those days to suit his convenience. Although he benefited from the sun and rain sometimes, some other times he incurred loss due to them. To remove such difficulties, he started coaxing them [the natural forces] according to his imagination. In the same way that he is satisfied by being offered prayers, food and other things, man tried to please the sun, the moon and the storms. Man's behavior of those times was also in accordance with his idea that storms too were like men.

In those times, there was neither the need nor the opportunity to determine whether the natures of things grasped through analogy were correct or not. Neither the tools nor the residential accommodations of those times could help man escape from wild animals, heat and cold or hunger and thirst, and thus make him free from fear. The strength of social unity and discriminatory knowledge were not well developed. Besides, man had intense fear of the gods that he had fabricated by means of analogy. The lack of ability, in those days, to harness the forces of nature was the cause of such fear. Because of this fear, practices such as prayer were developed. People did not have the curiosity to determine for themselves the truth or falsehood of these beliefs which were accompanied by fear and reverence, by whatever means they were formed. On the one hand, because the ability to determine their truth was absent, and, on the other, because, thanks to fear and devotion, there was a taboo against criticism, the idea that forces of nature were personified gods remained as a [fixed] belief in men of those times.

As a result of such a belief, in ancient societies there were different sorts of gods and varieties of rituals and worships addressed to them. Gods of the times of Rg Veda such as Agni, Varuna, Mithra, and Surya; Egyptian gods such as Osiris, and Horus; Roman gods such as Jupiter and Minerva; Greek gods such as Zeus, Artemis and Pallas were all formed in this way. As beliefs in the gods became more and more established with usage, these gods were given forms, and methods of prayer were designed for them.

Peoples of the different societies had great faith in their respective gods. Whenever people incurred a loss because of natural forces, they thought that it was caused by the anger of these gods; they used to worship them, made sacrifices to them, and would thus reconcile themselves to their losses. Even today, we can find in uncivilized communities worshipping of the respective gods whenever there are epidemics like cholera. People celebrate with festivities, as a sign of gratitude, not only in times of loss, but also when they gain victory in wars or harvest crops.

Because gods are related to natural forces, and because they [by themselves] couldn't control the forces of nature, people in ancient times believed that the gods were endowed with supernatural powers. It is through such a belief that the idea of God came about.

The urgent need to understand the forces of nature was the cause for the development of the idea of gods. With the belief that they had understood the forces of nature in terms of the gods and they had thus known them, people became free from anxiety, attained peace and relaxation and thus developed their thought. Prayer helped them a great deal in enduring hardships that occurred to them.

In addition to learning the truth about natural forces, building a society was also necessary for man's happiness. His happiness might increase somewhat by using tools. But if he was to be happy in a more extensive fashion, he needed the support of his society. The splendor of human thinking is mainly shown in the building of society. Social unity is also necessary to improve the use of tools. Everyone knows how the cooperation of many people

is necessary to execute tasks in factories. Man has designed language by discerning the interrelationships of sounds. Language helped him to express ideas and created social unity.

Selfish qualities such as envy, greed, anger and miserliness, as well as social qualities such as love, peace and compassion, exist in the same person. If we want to strengthen society and attain happiness, we must suppress selfish qualities and bring out social qualities. Although social gain gives man higher happiness than individual gain, temporarily individual gain seems more attractive.

Although man desires society, he is also interested in the gains coming from his selfish outlook. As the selfish outlook grows, it disrupts the construction of society. However, as his thinking develops, man desires society more. That's why, although he has selfish interest on the one side, in human history, social awareness [lit. 'social outlook'] has been improving gradually and society has been getting stronger. Not only is social awareness taught, but moral rules and laws have been established. These rules and laws provide the opportunity for social awareness to improve. The moral man is praised and the outlaw is punished.

The laws and morals that are prevalent in various societies may change from time to time and from place to place, but a society must have some rules at any [particular] time. As civilization develops, individual affairs become subservient to social codes. Gradually mankind becomes one family.

The society that has been growing stronger in this way started slowly even in ancient times. The realization of the need to recognize morality was not so strong in those times. In the majority of people self-discipline was rather rare. That's why moral codes became quite necessary for the construction of society. Today, because society has developed prolifically into many branches, the political system is strong. As a result, violators of morals are subject to punishment no matter where they hide. But in ancient times, the political system was not so strong. That is why in those times fear of God was used to assist the king. People came to believe that violators of moral rules would be punished by gods. Even the king was considered a representative of the gods. Fear of God was joined with [the threat of] king's punishment and thus made sure that social regulations were obeyed.

The idea of gods thus contributed to the needs of human civilization. The first need of man is to know the truth about circumstances. Accordingly, man imagined circumstances to be a creation of the gods. That is why gods were thought to be the first creators. Social construction is the second need of man. So, later on, gods were also considered to be guardians. In order to rule, there must a king and his army. So, among ancient gods, one god was considered a king. In the Vedic age, first Dyaus, then Indra and Vishnu later on, were considered as chiefs. Marutis and Ashwins became part of the army. Similarly, Osiris in Egypt, Bel Marduk in Babylon, Zeus in Greece and Jupiter in Rome were shown to be chiefs. When one society conquered another, the gods of the vanquished became attendants to the gods of the victors. The gods of the Dravidians were joined with the gods of the Aryans. The Egyptian gods were subordinated to the Greek gods. Thus, as societies changed, gods too changed in the order of governance.

Furthermore, because gods too were imagined on the basis of analogy to have human natures, relationships among the gods were arranged. Goddesses were thought to be wives of male gods and to have had progeny. Lakshmi was Vishnu's wife; Isis was Osiris's wife, and Horus was their son. Just like human families, divine families were also designed.

Regarding the creator gods as also rulers of men is the second stage in the evolution of the belief in God. These two stages came one after the other. The reason is that man's social outlook also developed soon after. Ever since the second stage occurred, the belief in gods gained much more prominence. The primary reason for this prominence was the assistance that this belief provided for the establishment of morality which was necessary for social construction. The kings who were the heads of societies also supported this belief. The fear of God among people helped their rule. The belief in God grew day by day due to royal support and worked its way into various human affairs. Even the attire and language became related to the belief in God. Songs, poems, sculpture, painting, music, dance, stories, and works of poetry – all had God as their theme.

In ancient times, human societies and the professions of people constituting them formed according to geographical conditions. Agricultural professions were taken up in places where there were contrasts in seasons and plentiful rainfall. People became cattle keepers in places where there were meadows. Jungle dwellers became hunters. Those who lived in arid lands moved to fertile lands and looked after the crops. Among the societies which were formed this way, people attributed qualities to gods according to their needs and professions. A rain god and a god of harvest were important for an agricultural society and for highway robbers a god of war was important. Different gods arose for different professions. And depending on the characteristics each god, various moral codes, arts, viewpoints, and customs came into practice. People who lived in the same society lived on the whole in the same way and differed from members of other societies. On account of these differences, people in those days used to live in tribes. Although hostilities among those tribes were then based on economic matters, they were also to some extent due to the gods they believed in.

In each tribe, depending on the extent of their reverence for their gods, people built huge temples and installed gods in them. Thanks to royal support, the temples were built with great sculptural skill. There used to be extensive worship of the gods, sacrifices and celebrations. This was the initial stage of theism.

Although the idea of God which was formed due to man's weakness was supported by belief, [the existence of] the gods themselves could not be verified. Hence, as the material circumstances began to play a greater role in human affairs, the belief in an invisible god began to wane. Nevertheless, if the belief in god continued to be with people for so long, there must have been other reasons. The foremost among them was royal support. The second was [the influence of] religious institutions. Gradually there came to be priests, preachers and religious teachers in societies. As the common man was busy being entangled in the material affairs needed for making a daily living, he had little opportunity or interest to think about the unseen gods. But he did have the faith in God, which he acquired through tradition. That is why the priest was needed to relate common man to God. The common man made the same offerings to the priest as those he would wish to make to God. By doing that he remained content thinking that those offerings would be passed on to God.

Since the priest always imagined that form of God which was unique to his tribe, he was deluded into thinking that that God actually appeared to him. He thought of those same imagined things to be boons and commands of God. Because common men thought that there was a close relationship between the priest and God, they had great trust in the words of the priests. But as the priest took so much care of the affairs relating to the gods that he had many opportunities to learn about the ins and outs of the belief in God. He could figure out that if one thought a little rationally, the idea of God could be exposed as pure falsehood. But because his livelihood and honor were dependent on his priesthood, he would not disclose it.

Furthermore, because the offerings made to the priests would also grow as the faith in gods increased, the priestly class attempted to firmly plant the fear of God in people. Priests spread superstitions among people, which would instill the fear of God in them in many ways. They staged many deceptions, calling them divine miracles. In the name of God they ordained many moral codes useful [only] to their self-interest. They tried, through persuasion and threat, and aided by intrigue, to appropriate the positions of running the temples, and also to shackle people in superstition, in order to ensure that the critical abilities among people necessary to determine truth and falsehood would not blossom.

At one time, the chief of a society was also the head of its religion. But later, as political affairs multiplied, the head of the religion and the king became separate entities. But there was always an intimate relationship between them. The former through the fear of God and the latter through punishment, they both kept people under control and maintained social order [*dharmanni poshinchevaru*].

Faith can make people do many courageous deeds more than any physical strength can. Faith, however, is the handmaiden of religion. Therefore, the head of religion occupied a higher position in society than the king.

Long ago, the idea of God was formed in the above-mentioned way in man's mind as an analogy. First as a creator, then as a ruler, the idea of God spread. In uncivilized times this idea was not subjected to criticism. It was supported by kings and teachers of religion. Institutions were founded to strengthen it. Gradually people adopted the idea of God in accordance with their social customs. They did not adopt it by critically examining and verifying it as true. Then came the prohibitions by means of kings' edicts and taboos laid down by religious teachers that one should not criticize theism. Thus for generations the belief in God took root in human society.

But even when the idea of God was still in its early stages, the idea of soul was taking shape among men. Just as is the case with the idea of God, with respect to the meaning of the term "soul" also there is much difference between then and now. Nevertheless, we should inquire into how such an idea arose among men.

People believe in the soul just as in God according to their social traditions. If we look back many generations, we will get to the ancient age. We should inquire into how the idea of soul came into being then.

In his sleeping state ancient man used to have dreams and in those dreams he saw new events which he had not witnessed in his waking experience. The dreams were astonishing to him. Some of the scenes in the dreams must have caused fear and wonder in him. He must have become agitated. To remove his fear he had to figure out the true nature of his dreams. Just as he formulated the idea of God in his attempt to figure out the truth of natural occurrences, he tried to figure out the truth of the experiences of dreams through analogy and became deluded into thinking that there existed a soul. That means that there were two parts in his body, one being his body and the other his soul. He thought that at the time of sleep, the soul would go out and visit strange places and then return, and that dreams were nothing but the scenes from these strange places. Just as man had no opportunity in ancient times to verify the idea of gods, he had no opportunity to verify the idea that there are two parts to his body. But these ideas helped him understand his dreams in some fashion, putting his mind at ease. The part that left the body during sleep was mentioned later as the soul. Today there is no belief in a connection between the soul and dreams. But in ancient times dreams were the basis for the creation of the idea of the soul.

Although in those days [the idea of] the soul was not as useful to man as [the idea of gods], we must recognize that it followed [the idea of] gods. Even though the soul was at first useful only in explaining dreams, as time went on, it became useful in explaining other matters too. Death is the most important of these. Man would see a fellow man, who had so far been eating food and going around, sometimes losing consciousness and falling down. He probably didn't at first recognize this as death. He probably thought that the person was just sleeping. As per his previous belief, he probably thought that the soul was wandering somewhere and had not returned yet. Even if it did return, worrying that it might be hungry and thirsty, his relatives would leave some food by the side of the dead body. Because the body never regained consciousness, and because it rotted, they assumed that the soul had never returned. Thus, they thought that the soul departing the body and returning after some time constituted dreams and [its] not returning [constituted] death.

Because it was essential for man to understand the meaning of death, and because the soul was useful in explaining the nature of death, the idea of soul gained importance. As time went on, three qualities were attributed to the soul. The first was that the soul could depart from the body. From the thinking that death occurred only because the soul had departed, and for the reason there was no consciousness in the corpse after death, the second was to think that the soul had sentience. They thought that the sentience in a living body occurs only due to the soul. Because consciousness is essential to human life, the soul with sentience gains more importance. Moreover, because it was supposed that in man's sleep the soul departs from the body and roams in strange places and events and experiences them, the third quality attributed to the soul is that the human qualities such as hunger and thirst, love and attachment pertain to the soul. Since these three qualities were attributed to the soul, people's conduct was congruent with such a belief.

Because it was thought to possess sentience, the soul became more important than the dead body. Thus, the living honored the souls of the dead. Since it was imagined that the souls that departed from the body possessed human qualities, to see that the souls of the dead people would not suffer from hunger and thirst, people used to leave food and drink for them. The custom of honoring the souls of the dead subsequently became the basis for the ancestral rites among Egyptians and Aryans. Even now the Hindus perform many rites for the dead based on their belief in the soul. Besides food, they used to offer clothes, vehicles, wives and many other things for the comfort of the soul. Because they believed that affectionate or angry souls can possess the bodies of the living even after they have departed from their own bodies and speak through them, the belief that there were ghosts and evil spirits also spread among people. In ancient times, widespread belief in ghosts and various measures to remove the afflictions related to them were widely prevalent.

At the time when verification was not possible, to provide evidence for a belief, which was man's first necessity, gods became useful to explain some things through analogy, and souls to explain some other things. Based on the usefulness of the time, these beliefs became stronger, were absorbed in society and influenced human conduct and customs. People imagined then that everything that dies has a soul. However, they only worshipped human souls.

Although people worshipped both souls and gods for different reasons, at first there was no intimate relationship between these two. However, the same priests who worshipped gods were also performing ancestral rites and witchcraft. As long as gods were considered creators, souls too were used to explain the meaning of death. When human society grew and needed morals and laws, and when there arose a need to attribute political order to gods, then

God was associated with the soul. We have seen how the punishment handed down by the king was coupled with the fear of divine punishment [in order to deal] with moral violations. The punishment of the king can be directly experienced. Divine punishment is not immediately experienced. Nevertheless, the idea of the soul became expedient so that the human belief in divine punishment would not be disturbed. The religious teachers warned that whoever acted immorally, God would punish their souls after their death. Neither God nor souls can be perceived. Nevertheless, people had a profound faith in both of them for other reasons. That is why they also believed without a doubt in an idea which combined the two. The belief that God punishes the soul for its moral violations helped in its day to establish morality and build society.

Ancestral worship started only after the idea of soul became well established. There was at first no thought as to where the ancestors lived. They used to think that the departed souls lived in the air. When the idea of the soul had to be connected to morality there was a need for more new ideas. These are heaven and hell. Neither of these can be perceived; nor can they be verified. In those days these constituted the other world. People thought there were many pleasures in heaven and many pains in hell. They thought that heaven and hell were in God's control. They believed that there were separate sub-authorities for the two. These authorities were the attendants of God. They thought that the souls who showed good conduct in the material world would go to heaven and the souls who showed evil conduct would go to hell. Thus heaven became God's place of reward and hell became His prison. People in various societies thought that their respective heaven contained their social pleasures and their respective hell contained their hardships. As the ideas of society changed, the affairs of heaven and hell would also change. Some also believed that heaven is above the earth and hell is below the earth. The belief that the upper area was better and the lower area was worse is the reason for this. Besides, in thus imagining, people were unaware of the fact that the earth is round like a ball. Since they believed that the earth was flat, they thought of the ideas of above and below the earth.

Thus the ideas of God, soul and the other world were initiated in man. In those days when there was no scope for verification, the human intellect did not blossom fully. So, only faith was strong in men. These three theistic ideas were supported by faith. In a way, they pacified the thirst for truth. Moreover, they even helped in the construction of society. Because of the beliefs in theism and so on, people had peace and morality. Because somehow there was peace and morality, human society became stronger and civilization was enhanced. A variety of political, economic and artistic activities grew. In this political system the king was the chief.

In the society which thus became strong through theistic beliefs, ways of living became easier. With that came leisure. People started thinking freely. Intellect flourished. There was an opportunity to tally human experiences with one another. By then language was well-developed. Meetings and discussions began to take place. Because of all these, there was the opportunity to verify [ideas and beliefs]. Whenever there was an occasion for criticism and verification, it became clear that the ideas of God, soul and the other world that people believed in were false. But, because those beliefs were deep-rooted in society, because social respectability had depended on them and because criticism of theism was forbidden, people did not have the ability to openly overthrow the beliefs in God, soul and the other world. But as it became known that God was false, the fear of God that existed before was gone. Although to keep up social respectability people pretended to believe in God, their personal behavior was no longer dependent on devotion to God.

Morals, however, are still based on ancient customs. These old morals did not tally with the new knowledge man had acquired. So, he had been only paying lip service to the social morals, but did not show them in his deeds. What he said was one thing and what he did was another, and twofold sincerity declined. Even though he acted immorally, man was not afraid that God might punish him. Thus gradually immorality grew in people. The same theistic beliefs which were at first responsible for civilization to become established now caused immorality and became an obstacle to the progress of society and to civilization. The reason for this is that theistic beliefs were exposed to be false. As the quest for truth in man increased, it is inevitable that falsehoods became exposed.

Foremost among the people in whom devotion and faith in God declined were kings and religious teachers. It is not surprising that it was the religious teachers who carried out the rituals of the temples and kings who conducted their affairs with the power of authority that first realized the falsity of theism. But since theistic beliefs among people were profitable to both of them, neither kings and religious teachers revealed the falsity of theistic beliefs; instead, they covered it up further by their authority, sophistry, deceptive magic, and mystery. They pretentiously propagated theism, reinforced theistic beliefs in common people, and exploited them for their own selfish gain. To anyone with any amount of thinking ability, the fact that the belief in God is false became clear. But these people too became selfish and joined the kings and religious teachers in exploiting people. Thus theism helped to divide people into two classes. The first class consisted of those who were engulfed in theistic beliefs, had twofold sincerity, but were exploited. The second class consisted of those who were immoral, became exploitive and, pretending to have theistic beliefs, propagated them.

If theistic beliefs decline in everyone, then it is not possible for people to exploit one another. The appeasing words which assure you that even if you undergo hardships in this life you will be happy [later] in heaven can no longer deceive. Exploitation requires deceit. To deceive others must have theistic beliefs. That's why, as long as there are theistic beliefs in some, there is scope for exploitation in a society.

If everyone has theistic beliefs, they would all be happy. If no one has theistic beliefs, then too everyone would be happy. But if some do not have theistic beliefs and others have them, then it will lead to deception and exploitation. It is no wonder that immoral people propagate theism. The reason for this is that unless others have theistic beliefs, their deception cannot go on.

Thus, because the lies in theism became exposed, immorality grew stronger in some. Those who had theistic beliefs and yet were bound to morality were exploited and underwent hardships. The exploiters became pleasure seekers and selfish, and thus became immoral.

After the ancient age, unhappiness, on the one hand, and immorality, on the other, grew; society became disjoined and many hardships were visited upon people. Human life became meaner than animal life. People suffered for lack of food and clothing. In those tribes where such states of affairs transpired, now and then prophets of a new age emerged. Due to their efforts, the happiness which people had aspired for returned.

THE AGE OF THE PROPHETS

Because human knowledge is superior to animal knowledge and knowledge drives conduct, man ought to gain greater happiness. If, instead, man's life has become worse than animal life, there must be some defect either in his knowledge or in his actions.

Knowledge and action together become religion. That is, every person has some sort of opinions about the affairs of the world. Each person could form these opinions either by his own thinking or by accepting the opinions current in the society into which he has been born and in which he has been brought up. Many accept social customs without thought. People adopt the religious customs of the religious society in which they were born. Each person must belong to some religion. His aspirations, arts, action and ideas, all follow the point of view of that religion.

The conduct based on true knowledge indeed leads to happiness, and the conduct based on false knowledge leads to unhappiness. In every religion there must be opinions which express truths about the world. When these opinions are true, then the followers of these religions gain happiness by practicing their respective religion. To the extent that there are falsehoods in the knowledge of that religion, to that extent the followers would only obtain unhappiness. Besides knowledge, one also needs action to attain happiness. Action is undertaken according to one's knowledge. If a person's knowledge is not true, then there are two methods to remove the unhappiness that results from such knowledge. The first is to subject his religious knowledge to verification, abandon its falsehoods and accept only those truths that stand verified. That is, to bring about a change in the religious knowledge. The second is not to change the religious knowledge, but merely to direct one's conduct toward happiness. In this method people talk about religious virtues, but strive for selfish gain. This is immoral. Thus, the cause for immorality to occur is the existence of falsehoods in the religion. Therefore, if there is unhappiness or immorality [in a society], it is clear that there must be some defect in those respective religions.

From the fact that there was unhappiness and immorality in times after the ancient ages, we can conclude that there were some defects in their religions. They could have tried to remove these defects by themselves. But the knowledge and morality of their times were tangled with their beliefs in God. It was not possible to verify this God. Their devotion and faith in God prevented them from verifying that God. Moreover, kings and religious teachers enjoined that no one should question about God and [threatened] that those who did would be punished. Because of their beliefs and fear, people couldn't examine their own religious knowledge. People fell into either unhappiness or, in an attempt to remove that unhappiness, into immorality. Cowardice, selfishness and deception grew among common people, social unity declined and individual happiness also diminished.

At that juncture, some dared to change their religious knowledge fearlessly. They were the prophets. They too first followed their social customs. As they gathered further life experiences, they observed the immorality and unhappiness in their society. They sought ways of establishing happiness and morality. They realized that the belief in God [current] in the religions was false, and that their superstitions regarding gods were the cause of their hardships. Thinking that unless the superstitions were eradicated, one wouldn't be happy or moral, the prophets condemned the social customs and gods of their respective societies. The Buddha, Jesus and Mohammad were such heroes. An Egyptian king of 1300 B. C. called Amenophis IV also changed the religion of his time. He condemned the belief in gods such as Osiris. But because human knowledge was not so developed, and because self-seeking

religious teachers surrounded society on all sides, religion regressed to the old ways after Amenophis.

By the time of the age of the Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed, human civilization progressed to some degree. Science and social unity had enhanced. Within that context, the prophets expressed their respective opinions. They declared that the gods that their brothers were worshipping were totally false. Because of the [limited] knowledge available at that time, they could not, however, totally remove the idea of God. These prophets instituted a new God in place of the old ones and founded new religions. But there are many differences between the gods of these prophets and the old gods. Along with these gods, the notions of soul and the other world also changed.

Although the religions founded by the prophets were part of the theistic tradition, many atheistic ideas penetrated into them. They based much human knowledge on verification. They placed a greater emphasis on serving mankind than on salvation. They taught that God is not like a king who has a punishing nature, but like a father who is kind and loving. Along with this came hymns in place of worship and festivities in place of sacrifices. There was no need for religious teachers. Those who followed these new ideas became freer and socially conscious. There was a difference between the old and new points of view. That's why the prophets and their followers were tortured as heretics and atheists. But these prophets stood bravely and courageously while severely criticizing the religious customs of their times. They clearly taught that the old religious knowledge and old gods were false. They explained how morality and happiness could arise from the new points of view.

Although these prophets and their followers were opposed and tortured by selfish people, their new teaching attracted people. Since human nature is inclined toward happiness and morality, people hastened toward the new religions. Morality, enthusiasm and happiness have again taken their place in them. Even though some changes took place while the prophets were still alive, their ideas became more widely publicized only after their deaths. Because they created new ideas for people who were lost in immorality and unhappiness, and thus helped them return to happiness, Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed and others are considered as new age prophets.

There is one difference between the old religions and the religions of the prophets: in the Ancient Age, the construction of the society was not strong. The desire for a special salvation was, to some extent, the cause of this. However, due to their fear of God, people were to some degree obedient to the political system. Due to the belief in God there was some peace. Because there was peace to some extent there was some social construction. But the prophets brought about great changes in the methods of social construction. In the religions of the prophets much emphasis was placed on the social outlook. They taught that salvation lay in serving humanity, that God loves only those who love their brothers, and that serving humanity is worshipping God. Due to such ideas, social outlook and efforts toward social construction were put forth extensively. That is why a new doctrine that people could convert followers of other religions into their respective religions came into existence. If some believed in older gods and some others believed in newer gods, social construction cannot go on properly. Because the belief in God is fundamental to theistic religions, if there is a difference of opinion concerning that idea, then social construction cannot go on smoothly. That is why, it is better in theistic societies to have belief in one kind of God. It is desirable to convert everyone in a single country or society into a single religion.

Those who had adopted the religions of the prophets bubbled with enthusiasm. Those who believed in the old gods and were in fear now felt that their shackles of slavery were broken. Their feeling of independence led to enthusiasm which in turn led to strength. They formed societies and started recruiting followers of other religions with a view to improve the societies. They founded religions in the name of those prophets and began propagating the new points of view. Those who adopted the new religions even fought wars to win followers from the older religions. We can see from history how, after the prophets, the religions of Buddhism, Christianity and Islam have spread. The morality and happiness made possible by the new points of view were responsible for the spread of those religions. When the new religions came into practice, their new point of view, new moral codes and new arts became quite strong. Human happiness increased. Society improved.

In the eyes of the followers of the new religions, followers of older religions appeared to be fanatic, and in the eyes of followers of older religions the people of the new religions looked like atheists. So, it is clear that only because of the upsurge of atheism, morality and happiness grew in the new age. The atheistic outlook was able to break down the immorality and unhappiness of the ancient age.

Although the religions of the prophets were theistic traditions, they moved forward further than the older religion. There is a difference in the theistic qualities of these two. The beliefs in the soul and the other world did not undergo much change. But they were made much clearer. Heaven and hell and soul were described in accordance with those beliefs. But there was an important change in the idea of God. Buddhism started out as a reformation of the Hindu religion. Since God was already thought to be attributeless in the Hindu tradition, the conception of God was abandoned in Buddhism and special emphasis was placed on social morality. That was not the case with Christianity and Islam. In Palestine and Arabia, from where they emerged, people in ancient times used to believe in many gods and worship stones and natural forces. In these two religions intended to reform those religions, the concept of God was well-defined.

There are two essential differences between the ancient age gods and gods of the age of the prophets. In the ancient age people believed in many gods. The sun, the moon, the wind, rain, harvest, sickness, health, war and the fine arts – various gods presiding over all these were worshipped. People designated forms for these gods, created icons and built temples. The change that the prophets introduced into the idea of God was to establish a single God in place of many gods. They imagined a single God to be the creator. This God had no form. It was thought to be personification of love or benevolence. The places of worship where the followers of these religions gathered and worshipped the formless God became temples. There were no images in these places. No rituals of worship and no sacrifices. Only prayer remained. The Christians of those times, however, regarded their prophet as the son of God and set up his image in temples. Thus, to think that there is only one formless God is the first change that occurred in this religion.

The second change was regarding the qualities of this God. In the ancient age, gods were seen as punishing autocrats. People used to perform worship and other rituals such as sacrifices to pacify the anger of these gods. The gods of the prophets were not like that. Qualities of love and benevolence were attributed to this God. God was imagined to be not as a punishing ruler, but as a loving father and guide to righteousness. So, instead of fear, the followers of the new religion acquired the qualities of affection and courage. Because qualities such as love were also attributed to this God, only a way of addressing God remains in these new religions. Instead of begging for forgiveness for the sins committed and

entreatings to remove hardships, prayers changed into conversations in which people related their joys and sorrows.

Thus, as soon as there came about a change in the idea of God which was the foundation of theism, a change also occurred in the modes of living of the followers of the older as well as new religions. With this people's conduct changed as well.

The most important change occurred in people's social outlook. This was better than before: people now loved one another and, following social morality, formed into large societies. As new ideas developed, the old religious differences diminished and people assembled together as larger and larger societies. As there was the same God for all the followers of this religion, their way of life became one and people formed into a large society. As the construction of the society improved, we know that morality too became more widespread. The strength of society had increased. With that increase, unity, effort and social happiness also increased, and all the individuals became increasingly happy. Their previous hardships were removed.

Thus, because these gods helped form a new point of view, and especially helped social construction, the followers of this religion had greater reverence for and trust in these gods. Because this God has been of use in social reconstruction, it became possible for people to think that this God was true in other circumstances as well. So, they incorporated this God also in the true arts necessary for living. As knowledge of logic improved among people, the connection between the idea of God and the life of man became closer. People believed that man was created by God and man's life is inspired by God. They believed that a single God was the author of the whole creation. As the reverence and trust in God increased, people did not verify the idea that God was the creator. It remained a mere belief. Since it was held with a great deal of belief, and since people thought that everything was the creation of God, the knowledge those men had of natural forces remained merely a matter of faith devoid of proof.

Although in ancient times there was a fear of God, the connection between human life and faith in God was not as logical and strong as it was in the age of the prophets. The idea that God was the creator did not come in their way of understanding the forces of nature in a verifiable manner. They were worshipping God, on the one hand, and on the other, they were making the needed human effort. As a consequence of that, in the ancient countries of Greece, Egypt, Arabia, India and China, mathematics, logic, astronomy and medicine, and to some extent physical science, developed extensively. The scientific discoveries that started in those times have also been contributing to modern science. But in the age of the prophets, as there was an abundance of knowledge of logic and social restrictions, and as the belief that God was the creator became established, people had neither the courage nor the interest to prove scientifically the causes of natural forces in terms of other physical forces. As a consequence, the quest for truth in that age was based on the faith that the universe was a creation, and not based on verifiable scientific knowledge.

In the age of the prophets, the stronger society became the further the quest for research and verifiable truth declined. In those times, works of law, ethics, social construction and theistic doctrines did flourish, but the physical sciences had not yet taken root. Even the physical sciences that flourished in the ancient age had now been banished; they were condemned and suppressed.

In the age of the prophets, the strength of society increased and people's happiness improved. Belief in the religions of the prophets grew. Every fine art was about either gods

or the prophets or other religious matters. Stories and works of poetry were written about religions. Sculpture and painting were developed. Many festivities gained currency in the name of the religions. Thus, in the age of the prophets, the scientific outlook declined and society and art flourished. That is why, consonant with the social outlook, many huge universities were built in that age. Physical science was not taught in them. Only logic, art, ethics and theology were taught. To serve the society, public inns and medical clinics were built. As the social outlook became stronger among people, political systems also flourished. In the ancient age, only the fittest one in each tribe became the chief. Tribes fought with one another in mutual hostility. In the age of the prophets, political systems became quite stable. Kingship was passed on from generation to generation through heredity. As people adopted a social outlook, they submitted themselves willingly to the rule of the kings. The customs of the ancient age, however, did not yet go away. People still believed that the king was of divine origin.

As God was the personification of love, and as the ritual of worship was mostly dispensable, the need for priests diminished to a large extent. The ideas of God, soul and the other world, however, have still remained in some fashion or other in these religions. None among these ideas is verifiable. The common man did not have either the interest or opportunity to understand their meaning. Yet, because he had faith in them, he could not relinquish them. So, there arose a need in society for some people to explain the theistic ideas in religions. Men were also needed to assemble people in places of worship and conduct prayers. Those who thus propagated theistic ideas based on such needs connected themselves with places of worship and formed the priestly class.

The priests in the ancient age used spells and incantations extensively. People in that stage believed in magic and witchcraft. Magic requires secrecy. Using these secrets, priests used to exploit people. When the prophets changed the idea of God into an idea of someone who was like a father, then secrecy was needed in the relationship between the people and this new God. Instead of spells and incantations, prayers now contained praises full of love. As anyone can go straight to his father, followers of these religions set aside the priest who recited spells and incantations, and started praying directly. In regard to the sequence of duties to be carried out by the priests, this is the difference between ancient religion and the religion of the prophets.

Furthermore, social construction had been progressing well. The responsibility of executing social construction, and preaching the morals needed for it, fell on these new priests. The reason for this is that social morality was tied up with faith in God. The burden of defining such a faith in God lay on the priests. So, the priests of this age of the prophets relinquished spells and incantations and started preaching morals. Thus, manuals of spells and incantations were gone and in their place came ethics; repeating spells was gone and moral discourses took its place. The priests became preachers. In the religious texts, in place of [directions for] spells and incantations social duties were spelled out. Books like Zend Avesta, Dhammapada, the Bible and the Quran were such. The morals that were necessary for social construction of those times were clarified in these books. The teachings of the prophets are contained in these books. To some extent the duties pertaining to human life were explained in them.

These moral duties became popular as principles. In practice they became social customs. Subsequently, they were codified in the form of books. These books became the basic texts of those religions. In order that people could have extensive faith in them, they were publicized as authorless or as revealed by God through the prophets. People who had faith in God continued to believe in whatever was written in those books. Gradually, people

came to have blind faith in every word that was contained in them. The followers of the respective religions would not be willing to criticize the contents of those books or change them on the basis of changing times and places. When social circumstances changed after some time, the books remained the same and formed the old customs which would hinder progress.

Because people had gained faith in theism, and because in those days the priests had an intimate relationship with theism, people had great respect for these books. Gradually priests were able to turn people over to their side. They even gained the audacity to defy the kings. As they had an intimate relationship with the theist ideas, they knew the falseness in them. Nevertheless, as their respectability was based on the propagation of those ideas, they suppressed their bogus quality and emphasized theism ever more. People became selfish and deceiving. Society does not condone deceit. So, the religious teachers wasted their talents and abilities to cover up their deceit, misleading people with their sophistry, and established blind beliefs. Gradually, just as in the ancient religions, there appeared in these religions religious teachers who reinforced deception and immorality. With that came unhappiness. After the age of the prophets, people once again were unhappy. Theistic ideas in those religions were the cause of this.

Since human life does not tolerate unhappiness and immorality, people revolted against the religions of the prophets. However, society was more extended and regulated by the end of the age of the prophets than in the ancient age. Political affairs were conducted more systematically. As colleges had been established, people had developed interest in sciences like logic. As there was much social strength, there were facilities for traders and travel, and due to frequent intermingling people were beginning to have broadminded ideas. Wherever tools to develop human civilization existed, they were propagated in other countries also. Instruments such as writing tools became widespread in many countries. Human intellect and literature increased enormously on the average. So, this time, the revolt that occurred against immorality and unhappiness occurred in the general population and not in isolated prophets as before. The most courageous person who stepped forward among them was considered a social reformer. But he was not worshipped as the old prophets were. Due to improved social construction and development of science, there was not as much difference between these reformers and their followers as there was between the prophets of old and their followers. Sankara, Ramanuja, Luther, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Dayananda were social reformers of this sort. They courageously struggled hard to remove the unhappiness of their contemporary fellowmen. The changes which these reformers brought about led the way to the modern age.

THE MODERN AGE

The efforts of social reformers to remove unhappiness in their respective societies also changed the theistic ideas current in their times. Sankara, Luther and others changed the ideas of God, soul and the other world yet again. The authority of the old religious teachers declined primarily due to these changes. There was a new awareness among people. People who were previously caught in the hands of and exploited by the priests because of their blind faith in the scriptures opened their eyes and liberated themselves.

The commotion that resulted when Luther's opinions became publicized among later Christians, and the enlightenment that came about in India thanks to the efforts of Raja Ram Mohan Roy are historic. There was a belief in God present in the ideas initiated by them as

well. Thus they too were theists. Nevertheless, since there was a difference between the ideas they advocated and the ideas of God prevalent before them, they too, like the prophets, were considered heretics and atheists, and were tortured. For a long time to come, their followers also were tortured. Still, because their ideas contributed to human happiness and the progress of civilization, human nature was increasingly attracted to them.

Just as social awareness in human civilization was brought forth by the efforts of the prophets, the quest for truth also resulted from the efforts of the reformers. The essential feature of the modern age is that the quest for truth became popular. Thanks to the teachings of the prophets, blind belief in human society was gone; instead, people started to accept only those ideas that stood the test of verification. Gradually, material issues [*bhautika vishayalu*] and the sciences were revived. Modern scientists brought out into the open the physical sciences, which had originated in the ancient age but were suppressed in the times of the prophets, and strove for their development. Because of those researches, doctrines such as evolution and the atom were brought into currency with verifiable evidence. There is a conflict between the information revealed by the researches of the physical scientists and the information in the scriptures. As a result, although the physical scientists were first tormented by religious teachers, the knowledge that resulted from their researches was disseminated among people. Verification of and quest for truth spread among them. Scientific investigations increased. As a result of this, man began building machines.

The development of machines is an essential feature of the modern era. Due to the methods of social construction that were carried forth from the age of the prophets, due to the abundance of the mechanical instruments available in the modern era, and due to the removal by the social reformers of the obstacles created by blind faith, men developed a social outlook and a quest for truth in the modern age, and regained their happiness. With the help of the mechanical tools, relations among men became easier. Human society became even more populated. The opportunities for every person to improve his scientific knowledge became freely available.

Thus, as the blind beliefs were gone, the independent ideas that had been [previously] suppressed among men became expressed. Nevertheless, human society needed happiness. So, man could not live lawlessly. His quest for independence had to cater to human needs. Individual freedom had to be adapted somewhat to social welfare. Before, morality and social customs used to be tied to faith in God. The governance of such morality used to be the responsibility of the king who was believed to be of divine origin. But the desire for individual independence grew stronger. Yet, people needed morality. Society had to have a political system. So, kings were outmoded and democratic governments were slowly implemented, and along with them the political and economic circumstances also changed.

Every aspect of life now becomes subject to scrutiny because the quest for truth with added scientific verification has grown stronger. Natural forces have been given meaning in terms of physical sciences. The idea of creation is gone and the idea of evolution has taken its place. The talk of God's will is gone. Instead, things have been understood in terms of the interaction between the environment and human effort.

The ideas of God, soul and the other world have also been subjected to critical examination. If we look from a broad point of view, it is certain that there is no Creator who maintains peace and loves humans as other human beings do. The forces of nature are evidence for this. The fact that one prophet interpreted the ideas of God, soul and the other world one way, and another prophet interpreted them in a different way is also proof of this. Each claimed that his own belief was true basing himself on his respective scriptures, but

none of these doctrines could stand verification. Man realized that there was a mistake in his belief that God was a just ruler as it was clearly apparent to him that those who led a moral life underwent many hardships and those who acted immorally enjoyed happiness. People started criticizing that, since it was the same very actions that God would not approve of and the same behavior that the scriptures bemoaned as unjust and immoral, that were [still] widely predominant, God must not have any power to eradicate such injustice; or, that if people were [still] caught in injustice and were suffering, God remained mercilessly indifferent. As there were mutually conflicting opinions also regarding the soul and the other world, and as none of them could stand the test of verification, these ideas too, like the idea of God, became subject to criticism.

If the ideas fundamental to theism such as God, soul and the other world, had been examined with an intense sense inquiry, they would have been exposed as false. But, even though people did not have much devotion or faith in theism, because social construction had been depending on the morals of the previous age, some people in the modern age have made selfish gains. Thus, regardless of any changes that theism itself went through, they attempted to conserve old morals without disturbing them in any way. They have been making every effort to preserve those morals as they had a selfish motive in doing so. In the ancient age, those morals had been tied to the belief in God. So, if those morals had to be preserved, then they needed to preserve theism. So, they tried to interpret theism on the basis of the physical sciences which were flourishing in the modern era.

As soon as he realized through his critical inquiry that there were no such things as God's will or creation, man in the modern age realized that all the knowledge that had been acquired and thought of as true in the past was a deception, and that human ignorance was the cause of all this. So, he has been attempting to understand natural forces through theories which can stand verification. Such [efforts of] critical inquiry started only in the modern age. Due to those efforts, we are now learning about natural forces gradually in a definitive fashion. We already know to a large extent about the stellar constellations, meteorological conditions, the courses of diseases, and so on. But we have yet to know many more things. Why are there life and death, inequalities among men, accidents, what is the ultimate cause of this changing universe, and how and why it is changing – there are many such questions. Physical science may not have answered such questions definitively yet. That is why those in the modern age who are still supporting the idea of God are giving the meaning of God to this human ignorance.

The physicists who have theistic beliefs themselves are becoming the [new] priests to this [modern] God. On the one hand, they do their research, and prove physical phenomena with certainty. They do understand the difficulties involved in their researches and the things that are yet to be known. If only these [unknown things] are mentioned as things to be known through further research, there wouldn't have been any lack in the spirit of inquiry. But, as they were raised in the theistic society even since their infancy, some of the scientists could not let go of the theistic beliefs that were fed to them with mother's milk. Although what they use in their research is their quest for truth, they are afraid of being called atheists. So, they are considered atheists in the laboratories and theists in society. This [arrangement] worked as a compromise for them between their research and their theistic beliefs. Scientists [such as these] have become the source of support for this [modern] God.

There is much difference between this type of God and the older types of gods. The older gods were transcendent to men and unknowable. Nevertheless, they somehow supported truth and society. But the God of the scientists is not such. Man has been dispelling his ignorance through his own effort. He has been progressively trying to remove

it. The things one does not know today become known tomorrow. In addition, there is no connection between this type of God and social outlook or quest for truth. How can ignorance help us know things? What is the connection between there being many things which man does not know and his conduct?

Although incongruent, it was the old gods who had a connection to human life. But the God of these scientists became an art built through pure human imagination. This God has no relevance to life.

The means to [higher] civilization were created in man's life through scientific research and they resulted in happiness. So, people have grown to have this respect for the scientists. Because of this respect, people have faith in other matters too which the scientists pronounce judgments on. Just as the details of their research are unintelligible to the common people, this type of idea of God too is not completely intelligible to the common people. People have not realized that this idea of God is a mere art and has no bearing on social outlook or the quest for truth. Although there are two different meanings, there has been confusion in grasping the idea because of an ambiguous use of the same word ["God"]. People have not realized that the reason for the scientists to propose this type of God stems from their weakness. As a consequence, in the modern era, old and new gods have been mixed up. With the growth in the spirit of inquiry, the old God became useless; in its place, came the God of the scientists. Since there is no connection between this new God and human morality, new morals did not develop. As the old morals are still in practice, there has been one God to profess and another to act upon. The selfish people who have remained dependent on the old morals have been trying to support this dual thinking and deceiving people with their sophistry. Scientists have been exploiting the respect given to them.

As scientific knowledge grew extensively, some people have recognized this ambiguity in the idea of God and criticized those who propagate theism. Unable to withstand their attack, some modern age theists say that it is not possible for man to know what God is, but that the idea of God does occur to the human mind, and that that idea leads to man's happiness. It is clear that with this answer they avoid the responsibility of having to prove God's existence and try to cover up their ignorance.

In the modern age, as the spirit of inquiry grows stronger, the falsehoods in theism are exposed. If the quest for truth becomes stronger, then people must relinquish notions such as God, soul and the other world, and base their truths, society and happiness on atheistic methods. If this shift occurs, then the gains of the religious teachers who have so far been selfishly benefiting from their immorality will be lost. They will not be able to exploit people any more. That's why, by turning things topsy-turvy, they have been trying to somehow keep the theistic beliefs from leaving people. There is no peace for people in the conflict between the atheistic outlook that has been gaining strength and the theistic outlook.

In the history of human civilization, the decay of theistic beliefs through stages and the flourishing of atheistic beliefs have been clearly evident. In each age, theism has represented barbarism and atheism has represented civilization. Due to theism, immorality and unhappiness have gradually increased. If man has to be made moral and happy once again, we need atheism. The reason for this is that theism is false. As the quest for truth and social awareness came pressing forward, theistic beliefs have dwindled.

From the visible trees, anthills and stone images to the invisible personification of love and later to the current unknown and unthinkable form, the idea of God has undergone transformation. For such a change only the pressure of civilization which has been growing in

human nature is the cause. In becoming civilized, human life has adopted atheism in practice to a large degree. But people have not yet completely relinquished the theistic idea. The God that people have believed in the past has become useless. Still, as people have not wholeheartedly adopted atheism, they have been losing the twofold sincerity. Such immorality has been causing them unhappiness. For all the hardships that are happening to them now, even after civilization has grown so much, the cause lies in people not following atheism with the sincerity of thought, word and deed.

By now atheism has already pushed theism to its last stage. From one side atheism has occupied human life. If mankind goes one step further and adopts atheism completely, not only will its present hardships will go away, but it will attain happiness. The hardships man is encountering in the modern age are pointing to the atheistic age that is to come.

FOURTH CHAPTER

ATHEISM

Due to the predominance of his thought, human life depends more extensively on ideas than on facts. Every person has some idea of how to live his life. That idea is his religion. Every person must have some religion. People understand the affairs of their life and their environment according to their religion. There are also ideals in religions. To live up to those ideals people modify their behavior and character traits. Thus, behavior also changes according to one's religion. The actions performed to fulfill ideals in a religion constitute progress in civilization. To fulfill those ideals is the fruit of civilization. Thus [advancement of] human civilization is dependent on man's religion.

When we look into various religious ideals, the quality common to all of them is human happiness. Animals too strive for their happiness. But their actions are temporary and are based on facts. Man is no so. There is a religion, in other words, a method, in man's life. He not only understands from time to time his actual circumstances according to his religion, but he also attempts to modify those circumstances to suit the method of his religion. Although his behavior is to some extent dependent on the force of actual circumstances, man tries mostly to change his conduct according to his religion. It is clearly evident from history that he adapts to his methods by changing natural conditions like sun, rain, dairy and crops and bodily conditions such as health and exercise.

Thus, it is thought-generated religion that contributes to human happiness. There is no religion in animals' lives. As there is religion in man's life, human happiness is greater than animal happiness. As being able to live is happiness, on the average animal species do not live as long as humans do; although some animals live for their whole life span, many animals die being unable to escape the sun and rain. Men are able to protect themselves from hurricanes of any size because they live in houses. But the number of animals that die in hurricanes is quite high. Thus it is not an exaggeration to say that on the whole mankind lives longer and enjoys greater happiness. Man's religions are the cause of his attaining such happiness.

Religions are thought-generated. Ideas may be true or false. The determination of truth and falsehood is done only through verification. To the extent that religions contain truths, to that extent they contribute to the progress of civilization and human happiness. To the extent that there are falsehoods in religions, to that extent they cause men unhappiness. Man's life based on falsehoods experiences more unhappiness than animal life which is based on facts. Thus it is clear that the cause of the hardships in the life of man who is becoming civilized is the falsehood in his religion. So, people cannot attain happiness just because they possess thinking. If they want to attain happiness, they must subject their thoughts to verification. Discriminating between truth and falsehood contributes more to man's happiness than his thinking. We must give credence only to verified thoughts. It is dangerous to human happiness to place trust in ideas which are impractical and doubtful of being verified.

Man is able to prepare his food with the help of fire. He melts metals [in fire] and makes tools. With the same fire sometimes his house is burned down. Just as with the proper use of fire man attains happiness, but attains unhappiness with improper use, in the case of belief also, by believing in ideas which are true, man attains happiness. If he believes in untrue ideas, then he only gains unhappiness. Only because immorality and unhappiness

occur in practice, do we know that the ideas leading to it are false. Thus, by the proper use of belief man attains happiness, and by its improper use he suffers unhappiness.

Unless man has belief in the religion he follows, he cannot carry out his actions successfully. That's why, although belief is necessary for religions, depending on the proper and improper use of belief, religions provide happiness or unhappiness. Based on the use of belief, religions are of two sorts: that which misuses belief is theism and that which uses it properly is atheism.

One can only believe in the doctrines in theism; they cannot be doubted. Even though those doctrines are false and only cause unhappiness and immorality, theists attempt either to cover them up or reconcile [their ill effects] in some other way. They merely try to explain that the cause of the unhappiness as *maya* or karma or God's will, but they do not correct the defects in theism. They only reconcile themselves [to these defects] by saying that even though we go through hard times in this world, we will be happy in the next. They thus submit themselves to their hardships, but would not confront the hardships by inquiring into them with a view to determine their true causes. That way, belief is essential to theism and would not allow verification.

Although belief is necessary for atheism also, it can be subjected to verification. Whenever immorality or unhappiness arises, people have to be critical of their beliefs. They must then determine their truth. Belief in theories should be allowed only to the extent that they contribute to morality and happiness. Theories change according to time, place and role [in society]. That is why we must ascertain their truth from time to time. Truths thus change according to time, place and role [in society] and do not have a permanent status. Atheism recognizes such a change. As theists believe that truth is eternal, they do not modify their doctrines according to time, place and role, and do not verify them; they follow the old customs, lag behind in civilization, and become victims of immorality or unhappiness.

To base one's knowledge on verification, one needs a keen intellect and knowledge of things. As these were lacking in the ancient age, atheism did not flourish then. Moreover, in the atheistic outlook, man assumes responsibility for his whole way of life. The atheist has to live in the world by understanding circumstances and steering them toward his happiness. To assume such a responsibility he needs courage and knowledge of things. As extensive knowledge of things was lacking in the ancient age, man's mind was filled with bewilderment and fear. He lacked the courage and bravery necessary to assume responsibility. So, he did not think of himself as an independent person as an atheist would, but imagined himself to be a spec in the vast scheme of the universe. The vast thing that he imagined became God, which is the basis of theism. He thought that his life depended on God. As man thought that God was directing his life, responsibility shifted from him to God.

Thus the theists are afraid of taking responsibility for themselves; instead, they shift it to God. It's not a wonder that the ancient man who was filled with fear and amazement got used to theism. If we look into the human society on the whole, as civilization grew people became atheists. Only in the modern age there are more opportunities to become an atheist. Thanks to some circumstances in that country, atheism was introduced to some extent in India in the ancient age.

ANCIENT ATHEISM

Just as in Egypt, Babylon, and China, in India too, along the Indus River, human civilization flourished in the ancient age. The climatic conveniences, the facilities of the river streams and the fertile plains contributed to this. The civilized people who grew around the Indus River were called the Aryans, and their religion was Hinduism.

People of all ancient civilizations first used to imagine natural forces to be gods and worshipped them. In Egypt the sun was worshipped as *Ra*, the earth as *Geb*, the Nile river as *Hapy*, and the sky as *Nut*. In Assyria, the wind was prayed to as *Im*, the earth as *Ima* and diseases as *Numtaru*. Similarly, around the river Indus rain was worshipped as the god *Varuna* and fire as the god *Agni*. As these gods were imagined to be more powerful than humans, people praised them, prayed to them, and to satisfy their desires they offered them gifts and sacrifices.

As the worship of gods became established, sects of priests were formed. The priestly class among Aryans later became the Brahmin caste. Gradually, ideas of soul and the other world developed. Ancestral rites and methods of gaining liberation came into being. The use of rites such as sacrifices, and rules of caste and stages of life grew strong among the Aryans. Due to the theistic beliefs, there was peace, social ideas became predominant and civilization advanced.

There is an important difference between the Aryan civilization that grew in ancient times and other ancient civilizations. There was little [geographical] protection around the countries of Egypt, Babylon and China. As a result, there were frequent enemy attacks on those countries even in the ancient age. Their political systems and peace were disrupted. As they lacked leisure, the quest for truth did not develop significantly. However, in order to confront the enemies, methods of social construction and the laws regulating them flourished. Because of wars, the tribes of those times joined other tribes and formed into huge societies. The Persian and Roman empires were formed in this way. In these empires greater emphasis was placed on social construction and political constitution.

In India it was different. The Himalayan Mountains on the one side and the oceans on the other sides separated India from other countries. As a consequence, in the ancient age, foreigners did not come frequently to the area of the Indus. Aryan peace was not disrupted. Due to the peaceful environment, the Aryans had leisure, their ideas flourished, and their critical outlook tended toward determining truth. They thought about their gods. The idea that behind the different natural forces there were different gods to drive them occurred to them in that context.

Thus, whenever peace developed, in other regions also, the respective religions and older ideas were subjected to criticism. In Egypt, Amenophis IV dropped the gods that were worshipped then, and instituted a formless god called Aeton. In the heyday of Greece physical science flourished well.

Although on the one hand, the ancient Aryans worshipped gods such as Varuna, Indra, Agni, Vayu and Soma, on the other hand, their critical outlook trod new paths. They thought that as a foundation for this changing world there ought to be something which does not change. This was described in the Upanishads as Brahman.

The idea of Brahman imagined by the ancient Aryans is not verifiable. It is a logical fine art. Nevertheless, the ancient Aryans' curiosity which set aside the gods imagined primitively [lit. grossly] as the causes of the natural forces and thought seriously of an ultimate cause is praiseworthy.

In the Hindu inquiry into truth, the idea of Brahman assumed importance. But there is a difference between supposing that Brahman is the source of the universe and supposing that Vishnu or Indra was its creator. Vishnu has attributes. He is separate from man. He conducts the affairs of the universe. He sends the souls of the dead, depending on their deeds, either to heaven or to hell. Brahman, on the other hand, is attributeless. Since everything is in essence Brahman, man is also part of Brahman. The soul is reborn. The freedom from rebirth is release. Because they had such contrasting ideas of having attributes and not having attributes both together, the ideas of the Hindus [on the whole] are not clear. There is one God for logical thinking and another for worship.

An attributeless God is useless for people. Moreover, the logical idea of Brahman is not within the easy grasp of people. So, the common people of the ancient age used to believe in gods like Indra, perform rituals such as sacrifices and ancestral rites, and were exploited by the priestly class. Furthermore, in those days, the logical quest for truth was only channeled in the direction of Brahman, but was not committed to verification and material facts. As a consequence, not knowing a way to ward off hardships, people used to blame their karma or offer gifts to the gods. There was confusion in their thinking concerning immortality and unhappiness.

In these times, Charvaka taught atheism in ancient India. He taught clearly that soul, God, heaven and release are all false notions, and that rituals such as sacrifices were designed by the priests looking for selfish gain to mislead foolish people. He exposed the loopholes in the ways of rituals by questioning why, if the sacrificial beast goes to heaven, the sacrificer shouldn't sacrifice his own father as the sacrificial animal, and, if the food morsels offered on funeral days reached the ancestors, why not feed here at home those living who are far away traveling. If the soul is bogus, then rebirth and the other world would also become bogus. He said that just as heat is the nature of fire and cold is the nature of water, consciousness is the nature of the body. After the body perishes and becomes ashes, there is no soul returning from it. So, Charvaka concluded, as long as man is alive, he should conform to society's moral laws and enjoy happiness.

It appears that in the process of criticizing theism Charvaka criticized the idea of soul more than he criticized the idea of God. The reason for this is that among the Hindus of his time there was the idea that Brahman is the essence of the whole universe. So, because it was thought that man's essence too is Brahman, according to other theistic traditions, the idea of Brahman did not have as much influence over people as did a transcendent God. In Hinduism, the idea of Brahman was only useful to prove truth, but in daily practice and the ascertainment of morals, the idea that there is a soul had gained more importance. Following the idea of the soul, the doctrines of karma and rebirth became the mainstay of the Hindu religion. While other theists believed that the things that they didn't understand were acts of God, the Hindus thought they were the effects of the karma from a previous life. Thus, it is natural that the Lokayata religion founded by Charvaka, who had grown up within the religion of Hinduism in which the idea of God receded and that of the soul gained prominence, condemned the ideas of soul and another world.

Although some other prophets adopted to some degree the atheistic outlook in order to eradicate immortality and unhappiness that occurred because of the theistic outlook in

human society, they couldn't completely relinquish theism. They supported the idea of God, soul and the other world in other ways. But even in the ancient age, Charvaka condemned theism completely and proved atheism. He taught that there is no other world; that the idea of release is false; and that man must enjoy happiness while he is still alive. He made clear that man is free in his actions and experiences; that he is responsible; and that neither God, nor rebirth nor karma exist.

Since man is free and responsible, and as there is no other world, he must exert himself amidst circumstances of this world to obtain his happiness. He must utilize his facilities and his intelligence. In such an attempt, his inquiry into truth and social outlook become most essential. That is why an atheist must have the thirst for truth and be moral. As an atheist is free and responsible, he seeks ways of avoiding the unhappiness that happens to him with the help of his social strength and dedication to truth. He pushes aside the old customs that hold him down, adopts new ways suitable to the new circumstances, and moves only in the direction of improving his happiness. The rights and wrongs of his conduct will only be revealed by the results. Then the atheist accepts his rights, corrects his mistakes, and keeps his conduct on the whole in the right direction.

Man must understand the context of the various circumstances and control them in a way that is conducive to satisfying his desires. Toward this end, his inquiring into truth, in other words, his knowledge that is verifiable will help. Moreover, as social strength is greater than any individual's abilities and capabilities, the more social strength man can gather around him the easier he can control his circumstances and attain happiness. Moral conduct is necessary to gain social strength. In a moral society happiness does not belong to just a few individuals. Unless all the members of a society are happy, morality will be upset. So, even though an atheist appears to desire individual happiness, when it comes to action, he strives for social happiness.

Since his truths can stand verification and since morality means conduct, the atheist's life consists of incessant action. He verifies his ideas. He supports his social duties with action. He protects his society by not letting deception creep into it. Thus, the atheist's life is dynamic. It is free and responsible.

Because the idea of attributeless Brahman was dominant, it was possible for atheism to be taught in Hinduism before any other religion. But in that age, they used to acquire knowledge of truth through logic, but they did not think that they should verify the ideas arrived at by logic by comparing them with experience. That is why in Hinduism ideas of Parabrahman, soul, rebirth and karma, on the one hand, and beliefs in gods like Indra and rituals like sacrifices, on the other, grew profusely. To be sure, none of these could stand verification. Nevertheless, people were entangled in these sophistries and superstitions. A correct inquiry into truth was not present in the general population. Moreover, there was then a widespread Brahmin domination. If Atheism gained ground, that would be damaging to caste duties and priesthood. So, the Brahmins tried in various ways to suppress the atheism introduced by Charvaka. They claimed that atheism was reprehensible. They forbade dialogues with atheists. With the help of the six orthodox systems of philosophy, of works of mythology, and later, of the Bhagavad Gita, they attempted to support the Hindu religious doctrine. The people of that time yielded to those pressures. Atheism could not establish itself as a social institution in the ancient age.

The quest for truth in Hinduism was led astray by logic. Besides, even though they had adopted the path of knowledge to become free from births and deaths and the path of karma to obtain release, there was only an individual outlook but no collective outlook in the

Hindu religion. Even the duties of caste and stages in life were based on individual differences, and did not recognize the common qualities among men. Some religious precepts which were introduced to gain entry into the other world tried to unify the splintered Hindu society. On the whole, the quest for truth and social awareness did not flourish. As a result, superstitions, selfishness and deceit thrived well in Hinduism.

Whether it was due to the predominance of the priestly class or it was due to the rigidity of the caste duties, as time went by, only the theistic ideas gained strength. Hindus moved away from ancient atheism toward the theistic outlook. Image worship also occupied a prominent place in Hinduism. Hinduism, then, should have suffered much hardship due to the prevalence of theism. But because India is a vast country and has fertile river basins, people did not have to struggle for food and shelter. The moral sense which people traditionally inherited sheltered them from extreme unhappiness. People spent their time thinking about the other world, being content with what they had and not desiring progress. They did not have the curiosity to visit new places or learn new things. They did not exploit the many especially beautiful natural settings in India. They did not improve civilization as much as they should have. All this was caused by their logic and their otherworldly thinking.

Hindus could remain this way as long as foreigners did not intrude into their country. While they lived this way, changes were going on in Arabia and Europe. Those lands were not so fertile. There were intertribal wars. Those peoples did not have the leisure to sit down to logically discuss and debate. Their prophets were not immersed in a multitude of thoughts about the soul and the supreme Self. The Arabs and Europeans laid great emphasis on human effort. In their quest for truth, they firmly believed in some kind of God. Mohammed in Arabia and Luther in Europe brought about such changes. People were enthused by their preaching, and striving for progress, they spread in all directions. They entered India also. Foreigners conquered the Hindus who had disregard for the present life and who lacked social awareness. The outsiders subdued them. The Hindus became enslaved. They handed over their wealth and prosperity to the foreigners. With that their leisure and science disappeared. Thus, due to their poverty, the Hindus had to encounter problems of food and clothing.

In the age of the prophets, the inquiry into truth was not so sought so keenly by the Moslems and the Christians. On the one hand, they believed in some sort of God. Yet, as they conquered other countries and gathered amenities of life, leisure became available to them. They developed science. And atheistic ideas also grew among them. Ideas hostile to theism taught by Omar Khayyam among the Moslems and Ingersoll among Christians became famous.

In the modern age, due to the development of civilization, people had facilities for travel and facilities for the publication of ideas. As a result, the quest for truth has improved from [a process of] logic to [one of] verification. In the modern age atheistic ideas are able to grow from such quest for truth. While in the kingdoms of the emperors leisure was available, in the modern age atheism has been flourishing.

Thus, as Hindus have been moving away from atheism toward theism, some others have been moving away from theism toward atheism. Among the societies in which atheistic ideas have been growing, freedom and happiness have been increasing. And in the societies in which theism has been on the increase, slavery and poverty have been growing. It is only because some remain as slaves that some others can acquire authority. Only because there are such disparities in human society, characteristics such as oppression, exploitation, deceit and disillusionment have been increasing and causing unhappiness. Social unity has been on

the decline. Wars and imperialism have been thriving. The cause for all these is indeed that some people have a slavish mentality. Slavish ideas are a consequence of the practice of theistic religion. If we have to build a universally happy human society, slavery must be eradicated. If slavery is to be eradicated, then people must relinquish the theistic point of view.

In the modern age, atheistic ideas have already been very strong. Theistic ideas exist only nominally. However, because both of them exist together to a greater or lesser degree, there is abundant scope for selfish individuals to deceive innocent people. That is why some people are still trying to nourish theism in society. If such deception is to go, then society as a whole must accept atheism with the twofold sincerity. The respect for old customs and the hesitations regarding [relinquishing] them are still coming in the way of this [acceptance] happening. Such hesitations must go.

THEISTS' HESITATIONS

The hesitations which theists have are essentially of three varieties. The first is [related to] the authority of scriptures; the second [concerns] [the idea of] the ultimate cause; and the third [pertains to] the fear of sin.

Although the belief in religious scriptures is mostly gone in enlightened people, it has not disappeared among the common populace. Some people wonder: "Various scriptures talk about God and miracles, are they all false? Are their authors ignorant and deceptive?" They also believe that those works are authorless. Thus they conclude that the contents of those books must not be criticized.

Normally, people merely memorize the texts [*sutralanu*] of the scriptures without understanding them, and do not try to understand and examine the contents with a view to discriminate truth from falsehood. Besides, they know their own scriptures but do not compare them with the scriptures of other religions. As a consequence, theists form a narrow point of view about the content of their scriptures. If, on the other hand, one examines those scriptures with an inquiring attitude, it will become clear that the superiority that is attributed to them is exaggerated.

The scriptures were first written in ancient languages. People of the modern age do not understand those languages and are deluded into thinking that there is substance in those scriptures. When those works are translated into a colloquial style and made available to people, their true status will be exposed. The change that happened in people's beliefs when the Bible was translated from Hebrew was historical. Similarly, if we examine the Vedas, it will become clear that they comprise poetic descriptions incorporating some beliefs. The fanaticism regarding scriptures came about only due to a lack of scientific knowledge and will disappear if we examine these books critically.

No book can be authorless. Each book contains the customs and manners of the corresponding age and the opinions of the respective authors. No ancient prophet sat down and wrote the scriptures. There was no settled script or instruments of writing in their time. People who had been following the teachings of those great persons recited them from generation to generation and put them into practice. Later, after some time, the teachings were codified. By that time the original ideas might have gone through many changes. The ideas attributed to Mohammed [later] became Quran Sharif. The history of the people of

Palestine before Christ, of Christ's life, and what are thought to be Christ's teachings, together became the Bible. Perhaps to glorify its contents, many accounts of miracles were added in the Bible. The ancient Aryan ideas, customs and manners, their beliefs in spells and incantations, their descriptions of natural beauty, their hymns addressed to various gods and goddesses, together became the Vedas. The religious texts of other civilizations such as China and Egypt were of the same kind. Because they contain the ideas and customs of the people of those times, the religious texts are very useful to the historians in conveying the atmosphere of the ancient age. Each book expresses man's deeds and poetic ideas, but none of them is superhuman.

Each religious text ought to express true and socially useful things. Some ideas reported as true [*satyamunu gurinchi*] do not stand the test of verification. That things of nature are created separately by some other being, that they all exist to provide happiness for the human being, and that there is some purpose and knowledge in nature's transformations, are all ideas which cannot stand scrutiny. It is evident that the belief that there is an ultimate source for the world which governs the creation, maintenance and dissolution of this universe is also an idea that is only based on logic and is not verifiable.

Furthermore, things that one scripture mentions about the universe differ from what another scripture declares. Yet the believers of each scripture justify their scriptural pronouncements in some fashion or other and condemn those of other scriptures. This is the source of the various hostilities among theists. There is no way to decide between their debates, as none of the doctrines is verifiable.

Not only is the knowledge of truth expressed in the scriptures unverifiable, but it also obstructs the development of accurate and verifiable knowledge. In the modern age facilities to verify ideas have been developed. Currently scientists also are subjecting their theories to verification. Thus, there is a vast difference between the knowledge of ancient times and the accurate knowledge of the modern age. Sometimes, knowledge in the modern age may seem to contradict a doctrine mentioned in the scriptures on a certain aspect. Then we should indeed cancel the old idea and uphold the modern idea. But when such differences occur, religious teachers, instead of encouraging modern scientists, have tortured them. The lives of Bruno and Galileo are testimony for this. Thus, we can conclude that unless the attachment to scriptures goes away, proper inquiry into truth will not develop.

Moreover, miracles were inserted in many scriptures. We can say without doubt that the quest for truth of the theists was led completely on the wrong path because they believed that these miracles did occur and believe that they still occur sometimes. If we try to verify the miracles that are supposed to continue to occur even in the modern age, they will definitely be proved to be mere false rumors or deceptions. From this we can conclude that the miracles of the ancient scriptures are of the same sort.

Due to the reverence felt for the great personages of ancient times, their deeds were exaggerated and absurd miracles were attributed to them. This can only degrade the broad-minded ideas and courage of those great men, but does not make them great. We form great respect for them only because they are considered to be great men and not because we think they are puppets in the hand of God. If they are to be our ideal examples, they too must have similar abilities and capacities like us. And they must be subject to pleasures and pains like us. Their character, their sacrifices, determination and broadmindedness must attract us.

Man needs moral conduct just as much as he needs his quest for truth. So it is that every scripture teaches some moral duties or virtues. These duties are of two sorts. Some are

common virtues pertaining to [overall] human nature. Others are more appropriate to that specific place and time.

Every religious book supports virtues such as kindness to living things, nonviolence, cleanliness and goodwill. These are not exclusive to any book.

Besides these, in each scripture some virtues are mentioned which are more appropriate to the respective places and times. These virtues became useful in creating a new teaching among people who had so far been trapped in immorality and unhappiness, setting their conduct on a new path and thus providing happiness for them. [In response] to the Jews who adopted cruelty in the name of justice, Christianity taught love. To the Arabs who were splintered as many tribes, Islam taught unity. To the Hindus who were murdering in the name of karma, Buddhism taught nonviolence. The greatness in the new religions lay in creating new enlightenment and new happiness in their respective ages.

In the scriptures, common morals are mixed with special morals. Respect for the scriptures of a certain age was based on the usefulness of those special morals. That respect was passed on from generation to generation. Due to this respect, the virtues mentioned in the scriptures were praised. They were contemplated in the form of *sutras*. In practice, they became customs. Respect for them [the scriptures] led to faith [in the virtues], and [the virtues] thus became fixed, not lending any room for reform. This state of affairs suited those ages. It brought happiness to people. People got used to those virtues. Morality became possible and social unity, happiness and leisure ensued. Imagination grew and efforts became more prolonged. Civilization made one step forward. A new environment came to be.

In the new environment old duties are of no use. They were appropriate for the older times. They would not, however, be appropriate now. Because the old virtues are still in practice now, there happens to be no connection between people's conduct and the circumstances surrounding them, and as a result there is unhappiness. This in turn will give occasion for the rise of immorality.

The duties associated with caste and stages of life were useful in Hinduism in ancient times. But in the modern age they are coming in the way of the growth of happiness of the Hindus. They are causing immorality.

There will not be progress if we stick to old morals and customs because of the reverence we have for old texts. There will be unhappiness and immorality. When those who follow old ways come into conflict with civilized societies they will be defeated. Adherence to old customs and manners was the cause for the Hindus in a plentiful country to become enslaved later and become victims of poverty.

Therefore, to take an ancient text as authority is a characteristic of ignorance and barbarity. Human experience is an ever-fresh resource. Those things that record human experiences and ideas become books from time to time. Books are based on experiences, but experiences are not based on books. We must judge the contents of a book on the basis of experience, but the contents of a book do not determine experience. If there is a gap between an experience and the contents of a book, we must realize that the experience is valid and the doctrine in the book is false. Since they record past experiences, books can only be of assistance to life, but cannot legislate it.

To have too much faith in any book is a hindrance to progress. Because religious books are generally ancient, people think that they are wonderful, and they have immense devotion to and faith in them. As a consequence, the books are obstructing the progress of civilization. For the time and place of those texts, the authors of the books are knowledgeable. But to justify the contents of books today is either unwise or deceitful. To try to follow them and fall into unhappiness would be an act of ignorance.

There are some theists who, although they are free from their faith in and devotion to scriptures, think that there must be a God or original force to govern the affairs of the universe and that humans cannot defy it. Such a source is what they call God. That source is the cause of the creation, maintenance and dissolution of the universe. For this source they use the term Parabrahman, and think that the essence of the universe is Parabrahman. They think that it is that Parabrahman which creates everything in the universe and governs it. The essence of all men would also be that Parabrahman. Whoever accepts completely such an idea will have no doubt about the events of the universe. Besides, they would not attribute agency to themselves in the sense that they are doing something or knowing something, because, in their view, the “I” and the “You” do not exist separately as entities. All is Parabrahman.

However, no person can live in the world without assuming agency. To adopt such a doctrine [of no agency] is to commit suicide. As man has the natural desire to live, he tries to act in ways appropriate to that desire. He assumes agency and learns about things. He acquires food, clothing and living comforts. Thus, on the one hand, one has an interest to live and he makes the effort necessary toward that end; but, on the other hand, there is the doctrine about the origin of the universe and the corresponding feeling that a person cannot do anything by himself – these are swaying theists in this and that direction. To the extent they are acquiring knowledge of things with an interest in living, to that extent they would be opposing the theistic doctrine and adopting the atheistic point of view. To the extent that they are abandoning effort, becoming lazy, thinking all is God’s will and remaining idle, to that extent they would be adopting the theistic point of view. Since they talk about theism but practice atheism, they become deceitful.

Only because atheism has been in practice, the physical outlook has come into vogue at least to some degree and science has become available to people. Man has been able to understand nature and use [that knowledge] at least in some actions. He has been able to make rains fall. He has been able to prevent diseases and famines. He has been conducting research to become free from old age and death. He has been designing new plant species. Such researches can bear fruit only if man assumes agency and adopts the point of view, “I can know and I can achieve.” But to the extent that man believes that the universe is God’s will and that his effort and its results are under God’s control, to that extent science will not progress.

Man needs true knowledge about many things such as birth and death, the production of the embryo, poverty, blindness and lameness [deformities], accidents and disappointments, the sun and the moon, the change of seasons, plant and animal species, and crops and dairy. If a person wants to know about these, then he must assume agency and make effort, thinking, “I can know.” The belief that he or the world are mere instruments and are moved by something else must go. That means the belief that there is God as the source of the universe must go.

Although it has been clear thus that the belief in there being the source of the universe must go, doubts such as, “How can the universe be without a source? Shouldn’t there be a force to govern nature?” have continued to obsess the theists.

The idea of creation and its origin is dependent on causation [the principle of universal causation]. That is, man has been supposing that for every event there must be one or more causes. “Clouds are the cause of rain, water vapor is the cause of clouds, and water is the cause of water vapor” -- this way, people generally had the causal view that all the events of nature are bound by cause-and-effect relationships. Ever since the ancient age people have cultivated this causal point view. Science developed on this basis. The research that is taking place today is also mostly based on causality. That’s why, the question, “If every event has a cause, shouldn’t there be a cause for the universe too?” has occurred to man. Thus God became that which is supposed to be the cause of the world or of creation.

If we accept causation, then it looks like we must accept there being a cause of the universe. But must we accept causation? If we examine it carefully, then we can see that causation is a mistaken idea. Man may be able to know many things through causation. But there are two major objections to it. One is that it is beginningless, and the other is that humans have the freedom of the will.

In the cause-and-effect relationship, a cause of something becomes an effect of something else. Clouds are the cause of rain. But since they are formed because of water vapor, in the sequence of causes and effects, clouds in turn become an effect. Thus, there is a cause again for the water vapor. Similarly, the same thing can be the cause of something and the effect of something else. As we recognize this, we arrive, through causation, at the effect which is called the universe. Then the questions arise immediately as to what is the cause of the universe, and if we say it is a creator, then what is the cause of that creator. If we answer that it is something, then the question immediately arises as to what is the cause of that something. So, the theists say that the creator has no beginning. That means that it has no cause. Why not? Can there be anything without a cause? Is that not a defect in the law of cause-and-effect? If some event can have no cause, then why can’t we say that the visible universe has no cause? Why must we assume that there is an unseen cause for the visible universe and then call it beginningless? If we accept the notion of beginninglessness, then can we not stop the very idea of causation by saying that at every stage things are beginningless? Thus the idea of beginninglessness is indeed an obstacle in the way of the idea of causation.

If we question this way, there is an incongruity in the idea of ultimate cause. The idea of ultimate cause [or source] was formed through the causal point of view. In that same idea, we can’t have the idea of a source. A source requires another source [as its cause]. To claim beginninglessness as an exception is to betray the defect in the idea of universal causation. People have been covering up this defect in their arguments by using the idea of beginninglessness as a shelter whenever they needed it. The idea of beginninglessness is an incoherence in the idea of universal causation. If we discard it, then the idea of universal causation [as it has been employed by the theists] cannot remain. There is no room for the idea of an ultimate cause.

Human freedom is another objection to causation. If all the events in the world are bound by the relationship of cause-and-effect, present events must then be determined by past events, and future must be determined by the present. This seems to be correct if we look at it from the point of view of causation. But if we compare it with human experience, it is clearly false. Does any man act with the assumption that the present or the future is

determined? If we accept causation, then the very idea of a person making effort loses its meaning. If causation is true, then there is nothing that man can do. He is made to do everything]. He is being carried away in the stream of a series of causes and effects. This is what we must say. Those who would like to somehow preserve the theistic doctrine say that man is merely instrumental, that his conduct is based on God's will or his karma, and that he has no agency or freedom. But even in the very attempts that they make to support their argument their freedom is apparent. Man utilizes freedom to determine whether he has freedom or not.

Human freedom is a matter of moment-to-moment experience. If the future is already determined and there is no freedom, then there will be no need of medical treatment for a patient; there will be no meaning in moral preaching; and the arguments that are made to persuade others will become useless. Implied in all human effort is the idea that the future is not yet determined and that one can shape it according to his or her desires. Token utterances such as, "What shall be, will be," and "Things will happen as God wills them, or as karma destines them," betray sheer laziness. Civilized people reject such utterances. It is human to say freely that "I will shape my future in such and such a way."

One might object here, pointing out that if the body is composed of material substances, how can there be free will? Logically, there is no freedom. But shouldn't the doctrines formed by logic tally with experience? Where there is a gap between logic and experience, logic is mistaken. Experience is certain. Then we must examine the fallacies in the logical doctrine and expose them, but not brush aside experience. Logic can only assist experience; it cannot contradict it. If there is freedom in experience, and there is no freedom according to logic, then we must object to the logic. If we look at it this way, then we can conclude that because logic is based on the law of cause-and-effect, the doctrine that stems from it has this defect.

Free will can be observed in every man's conduct. A person forms certain desires without any cause. He determines his own conduct. Free will is evident in a person developing his thoughts. Fine arts are a proof of this. Because of this freedom, human beings are able to live in the midst of natural conditions. They understand the environment, they control it, and they transcend it. To be able to carry out these actions constitutes human freedom. That is why man is not merely his physical body; he is a free individuality with consciousness. Theists have proposed such a thing as the soul just to recognize such a free individuality and give it meaning. But there is no soul, as they would like to maintain, which will depart from the physical body. Freedom, however, is immediately experienced. Such a state cannot be known through the idea of [universal] causation.

If we examine it, we realize that the idea of causation is formed from a narrow point of view. If we observe the world from a gross point of view, then its events appear to be in cause-and-effect relationships. But if we go into the details and observe subtly, then this [causation] will not stand scrutiny. If we observe the behavior of atoms, 98 percent of the events appear to be related by the law of cause-and-effect. But one or two per cent behave freely without being bound by any such a law. So, the law of cause-and-effect appears to hold in the universe on the average, but it does not apply to all events. For something that applies to all events we must look elsewhere. That is freedom. On the average, this freedom appears to be bound to the law of cause-and-effect. That is the difference between the behavior of aggregates and the behavior of individuals.

There are no laws in nature. Man understands nature through his intellect. Then he supposes that there are some laws in nature; he attributes them to nature, and thus tries to

understand nature through them. He retains the laws to the extent that they conform to his experience. If they do not tally with his experience, he will modify them. If the law changes, it is only the manner in which he understands that has changed, but the natural state of affairs has not changed. People used to think in olden times that the sun and the stars orbited around the earth. They understood night and day and eclipses according to that law. They prepared almanacs and calculations. The law corresponded then with their experience. But as man's experiences multiplied, the phases of the moon, the details of the stellar regions and the differences among the seasons became better known. It was not possible to understand the new experiences in terms of the old theory. So, they then examined [further] and formulated the theory that instead of the sun orbiting around the earth, the earth orbits around the sun and that the sun is a star. With the help of this new theory people were able to understand geographical conditions more clearly than with the old theory. But with the change in the theory, actual day and night never changed. Nor did eclipses stop occurring. We understood day and night, eclipses, seasons and constellations in one way before. Now, we can understand the same more in detail in some other fashion. As human experience grows, the current theories change and new theories come in their place.

In the ancient age, people understood nature in terms of cause-and-effect, and knowledge progressed to some extent. As people had further experiences, there were many objections to the idea of [universal] causation. So, it had to be modified. People's new experiences showed that beginninglessness and freedom posed objections to the law of causation.

If the law of causation is changed, theism must be rejected. The ideas of first cause and a creator must go. So, some theists attempt somehow to preserve the old doctrine. They claim that man has no freedom. They are ready to involve themselves in sophistries, but they would not correct the mistakes in the law of causation. They claim that what exists does not exist and what does not exist does, and thus they stoop down to confusing logic.

Sophistry does not correspond with experience. Besides, not all theists would agree with sophistic arguments. There are many differences among theists in this regard. There are indeed bound to be differences of opinion whenever there is any attempt to justify falsehood.

Some other theists allow that individual freedom exists, yet they claim that there is a God who is the source of the universe. These ideas are contradictory. To what degree is God's will? And what is the extent to which man can make effort? Does God recede into a corner as human freedom in determining human life increases? If a person is independent and responsible because of his freedom, then what is the function of God?

In this context, theists propose the ideas of soul, the other world and karma, and try to justify their theories. But the soul is false. Therefore, their argument cannot stand.

If we examine the ideas of theists clearly, then it appears that they are supposing that circumstances are God. If so, then there would be an incessant struggle between God and the human individual. We would then have to admit that man is [trying to] subdue God for his own happiness. This, however, is contrary to the definition of God.

It has already been made clear that it is a human delusion to think that God is perceived, and also that the idea that God is personified love and benevolence originated in human wish fulfillment. Although ideas of such a God were brushed aside, the idea of God as the ultimate cause plunged theists into doubt even in the modern age. It is now evident

that the idea of ultimate cause is born out of the law of universal causation, and that it is mistaken. Thus, it is not possible to prove in any manner that there is God.

However, some say that, even if there is no God, and even if the idea of God is false, it is necessary for man's life, because human life and morality have so far been dependent on the idea of God. They fear that if we remove such supports, then man's life would become chaotic and we would be deprived of morality. They argue that, therefore, even though there is no God, because of the belief that there is a God and because of the fear that such a God would punish sinners, people would live virtuously; and that, on the other hand, if we reveal that there is no God, people would not hesitate to commit any atrocities. The theists claim that, therefore, human society needs the fear of God.

We must first find out what sin means. Every theistic society considers some deeds as sins and some others as virtues. What are considered as sins in one society may be considered virtues in another. In some societies killing of animals is a sin. In some other societies it is considered a virtue and they kill animals in the name of sacrifices [to God]. Furthermore, in the same society, if circumstances change, what are now considered virtues may become sins at another time. In the Vedic times, Brahmins, who were priests, used to eat meat. As time passed, it became a sin for Brahmins to eat meat.

If we thus examine, we can conclude that matters of sin and virtue are rules of conduct enjoined with a view to ensure social well-being, depending on the ideas then current in the respective societies. Virtue is whatever is conducive to social well-being and sin is what is not so conducive. Virtue and sin change according to time, place and one's role in society. The determination of sin and virtue are necessary for social construction. Action in accordance with virtue is considered morality and that in accordance with sin is considered immorality.

In order to act morally one must suppress selfishness and adopt the social outlook. In the past, to maintain morality, the fear of God became useful. Theists fear hell and hope for heaven. As they had the faith that sinners would go to hell and the virtuous would attain heaven, they were afraid of committing evil acts. So, in olden times, the fear of God became useful to keep people on the track of good behavior and make them moral by inculcating the social outlook in them. But as human knowledge developed and religious reformers continued to teach, the fear of God was subjected to criticism. The old fears were gone; the fear of God is no longer able to suppress selfishness and instill the social outlook.

As human civilization increases, social construction also progresses. To match this, moral behavior also must improve. Before, moral behavior occurred owing to the fear of God. But now, due to the development of science, belief in God can no longer be upheld. Nonetheless, morality has to be maintained. It is clear that in the civilized world, morality grows only because of the progress of society. We shall observe how this can happen.

In a civilized society, the political system is an important branch. If anyone nowadays is afraid of immorality, it is only due to his fear of legal punishment, and not due to the fear of God. In every civilized society, some moral rules are designed based on the circumstances of the time. These morals become laws. If the circumstances change, the laws also change. If a person does not behave in accordance with the laws, he will be subject to punishment. If people live in accordance with the political system, then they attain happiness.

All morals may not be in the form of laws. Some social customs are formulated. If a person transgresses a social customs, he is excommunicated by others in day-to-day life. He

who is condemned by society cannot move about in pride. Fear of God has helped people a great deal in turning away from immorality; at the present time, legal punishment and social excommunication help people escape immorality even more so.

In these contexts, fear of God, instead of helping social excommunication, is hindering it. An immoral person who has no faith in God cannot escape. His conduct becomes a target of criticism in the eyes of his fellow men. As soon as he steps on the wrong path, he is condemned. So, he cannot avoid conforming to social morality and customs. If there is also faith in God in a society, then it will let the violators of morality off saying, "His own karma will punish his sins." Then, because of this weakness in the theistic society, there is a possibility for the violators of morality to escape punishment.

The theistic beliefs that still remain to a small extent are the causes of the immorality that occurs in the modern world. Because there are such beliefs, some selfish people still commit atrocities, profess theistic doctrines in public, receive social honors, and escape social punishment for their atrocities. These selfish people spend some small portion of the profits they gain in the name of worship of God, appear to be devout and yet deceive others. Because theistic beliefs still exist among people, there is scope for such deception and misconduct. If atheistic ideas are adopted completely, selfish people cannot escape in the name of righteousness and devotion to God. As selfishness is socially reprehensible, society suppresses it everywhere. Thus even in the modern age, belief in God is causing immorality, and it is not making people moral. Only when fear of God is gone can there be greater morality in this civilized world.

In the modern world, political systems have become stronger. Social customs and manners have also developed. Still, terribly immoral acts such as slavery, war and exploitation are rampant. All these atrocities are committed only in the name of God. All those who are ready to commit misconduct pretend to obey God's commands and pray to Him. Isn't it because the belief in God still exists among people to some degree that these immoral deeds that are done in the name of God are still going uncensured by people? Society is letting these immoral people off without punishing them saying, "Isn't there God to punish them?" Unless belief in God is removed completely from people, society will not become strong; these immoral deeds will not cease. Theism is the cause of the immorality in modern civilization. With the disappearance of the belief in God morality will only increase and not decrease.

Thus, since there are doubts regarding scriptures, ultimate cause, and fear of sin, modern civilization has not been able to adopt atheism completely. If we examine, it becomes clear that these doubts have been hindering the progress of civilization, science and morality. Only when man abandons theism completely and adopts atheism totally, only then can he have a proper and true social outlook. Then he can attain happiness.

Since there was no possibility of verification in the ancient ages, people arranged their ways of living in accordance with the falsehoods of theism. As they were appropriate to those circumstances, people could temporarily attain some happiness thanks to the theistic religions. Just as even now some temporary benefits accrue to people in society because of falsehoods, the theistic religions too made men temporarily happy. However, as knowledge of things and experiences grew, the falsehoods were being exposed. Just as these falsehoods became socially reprehensible, the theistic religions too were subjected to reforms.

Although Charvaka realized the falsehoods of theism and taught atheism even in the ancient age, as scientific knowledge was meager in those days, people could not grasp it.

Thanks to the efforts of the religious reformers, atheism has been growing stronger in society along with the progress of civilization. Today, as scientific knowledge is widely prevalent, people are all able to grasp atheism. Immorality and unhappiness are inevitable in society as long as it does not accept atheism. In the modern age atheism has been growing strong because of social construction and physical science. Unlike ancient atheism, modern atheism is spreading through the whole of society.

MODERN ATHEISM

In olden times logic was the only basis on which one could know truth. As civilization progressed, man developed technology to make tools. Due to this technology, there has been a change in the way men grasped truth. Now their knowledge is mostly based on [improved] perceptual means and verification. The determination of truth thus has changed from logic to verification. Only because of this change, atheism has been spreading in modern society without differences of opinion.

The main difference between a theist and an atheist consists in recognizing individual freedom or not recognizing it. The atheist has freedom. Not that he will achieve everything he wants instantly. He too, like the theist, lives amidst circumstances. If his desires constitute only imaginary fine arts, then they have no concern with circumstances. But if they are concerning the acquisition of things such as food, clothing, health and power, those desires are tied to circumstances. In order to fulfill such desires, there must be a change in the conditions of the circumstances. Depending on the desire, the changes would be either minor or major.

Changes in the conditions of circumstances occur depending on the relationships between the elements within the circumstances and on their free behavior. Man grasps the changes in the conditions of his circumstances through his effort, and to satisfy his desires he then utilizes those changes and his abilities to shape his circumstances to his liking. Thus, to realize that man has the freedom to understand circumstances and turn them his way is what constitutes the atheistic outlook. That is the freedom of the atheist.

Since he recognizes such freedom, the atheist becomes responsible for the results of his actions. If his desire is not fulfilled, then it is certain that his effort is lacking. As man always desires to increase his happiness, in the event he does not achieve the desired result, the atheist reviews his point of view and method of effort and corrects his mistakes. Thus, every defeat contributes to the progress of knowledge and enhances the power of the individual. Since his power increases, there will be opportunities to achieve greater happiness. Thus, when there are conflicts between man and his circumstances, since the victories lead to his happiness and defeats give pointers to his [future] happiness, the life of the atheist is always joyful and optimistic. He will be the master of his circumstances. His life will be filled with desire and consciousness.

Furthermore, the atheist's practice alone demonstrates that the present and future states are not yet determined and that he can determine them through his effort. The more effort one makes, the better the result and the greater the happiness. Since the atheist has the freedom to make his own effort and improve his circumstances, he gains [favorable] results as well as happiness from his effort.

There is vast difference between the atheistic outlook emphasizing these features and the theistic point of view. Because of the belief that the course of the world is [determined by] God's will, man's freedom and effort become meaningless. It is as though the future has been determined without any human involvement. So, the theist will bear no responsibility for the results. Whether they are Materialist theists or Idealist theists, since their own doctrine shackles their feet, they become slaves deprived of responsibility.

Whether it is in regard to conduct or effort or consciousness or happiness, there is as much difference between the atheist and the theist as there is between a master and a slave. Atheism emphasizes freedom in man and makes him a person of action. However, since even an atheist is only a human being, he too needs all the human necessities such as food, clothing, health, dignity, truth, society and happiness. Acquiring these is easier with the atheistic attitude than with the theistic attitude. They contribute highly to human happiness.

TRUTH

It is a prime necessity for man to acquire accurate knowledge. In theism these truths are based on either analogy or logic. As belief has been misused, the theistic truths have been considered unverified eternal verities. The truths expressed in theology are of this sort.

In atheism, only those [ideas] that can stand verification are considered truths. As human experience changes, truths also can change. It is advisable to believe only those truths that have stood the test of verification. Since truth is determined only in this fashion, in atheism there is no room for ideas like God, soul and the other world. Just because they don't know the facts about some matters, the atheists don't give various names to them and pretend as if they know. They try to recognize their ignorance and remove it from moment to moment by grasping truth in a verified manner. If they find any discrepancy between the present states of affairs and past ones because of their new experience, they will not hesitate to change their old beliefs. They are not prejudiced in favor of any belief.

Since in the atheistic point of view knowledge of truth through verification has been developing this way, human happiness has been increasing. As the atheist's quest for truth grows, the things which were considered impossible before will now become possible. Death is frightening man. The theists understood death in terms of the soul and remained inactive without figuring out other means of avoiding it. But as the atheistic attitude became stronger, the outlook for truth grew and the belief that there is a soul declined. Atheists are able to explain death in terms of physical science. Besides, they are gaining the confidence that they can escape death.

Theism with its slavish mentality needed prayer. The theist's outlook for truth was based on his idea of God's creation and his conduct was based on the idea of God's will. So, he has been living irresponsibly. He doesn't think about things. Even if he does, if he confronts any obstacles, he immediately reconciles himself to them by saying that [everything] is God's will and thus stops thinking. He considers life to be a burden and dumps the burden of life on God. He has more peace in the satisfaction derived from reconciling himself [to life] in his mind rather than in the success achieved through his effort.

However much he reconciles himself to his circumstances, certain things still impede his daily necessities. He must confront bodily pain (Lit. "of his flesh and blood" - *raktamamsalakainanu*). He does endure that pain to a great degree. But when it exceeds a certain limit, since he has been used to the theistic attitude, he does not think of other ways of

dealing with his hardships, but prepares himself to pray to God. Instead of learning about the true nature of the adverse circumstances that he confronts and trying to avoid them, he prays to God to remove them and create favorable ones. The idea of prayer results from the fear of taking responsibility and a cowardliness to think. As it is possible to divert their minds to prayer, theists have little interest in finding out the truths about things.

In the way of prayer there is the hope that with little effort one can gain great benefit. Theists hope that with small vows and praises they can gain extraordinary strength and profit. Gambling and prayer belong to the same category. In gambling too there is no human effort. The gambler hopes to gain through the fortuitous concurrence of circumstances.

From the atheistic point of view, there is no prayer. The atheist looks to learn the nature of the circumstances surrounding him. He tries to act bravely and courageously in accordance with the truths he has grasped. He takes responsibility for the gains and losses that result from his action. When he incurs loss, he does not despair but thinks that it has occurred because of some defect in his effort, and he tries again to overcome it. Since the atheist is the master of his own life, he has no need to complain to others about the losses that he incurs. He takes responsibility for himself and corrects himself. In the theistic way, there is a way of complaining to others. That is prayer. There is no purpose to prayer other than reconciling one's mind to one's lot by believing that one's hardships will go away by complaining about them to God. As they are deceived by the hopes created by prayer, theists do not attempt to learn the truth and conditions of their circumstances. As they do not correct their mistakes, it is possible for them to make the same kind of mistakes several times in their lives. Thus, instead of there being a benefit, on the whole, there is only loss from prayer.

As atheism establishes an outlook for truth that can stand verification, we can divide men's ideas as those that are true and those that are only imagined. The behavior based on truth yields happiness. When we confront unhappiness, atheism provides us the freedom both to learn that only a defect in the theory we have regarding our life is the cause of it and then to correct that defect.

SOCIETY

Membership in society [*sabhyata*] improves man's strength. It alone leads to both social progress and progress in civilization. We need to practice morality to build society. In Idealist theism, some duties are proposed as divine commandments. Theists conduct themselves according to those morals out of their fear of God. Society was also constructed with the help of moral behavior.

By these means theists became moral in behavior. But there is a great defect in their moral behavior. Just because they exhibit it, we cannot say that theists have social awareness. They adopted morals only because they had the hope that through them they could earn God's love and attain heaven; but they did not adopt them with the attitude that their happiness would be improved by living together with their fellow men. Release is the aim of their life. Moral conduct became a stepping-stone to obtain release. Theists did not, however, recognize that society was necessary for human happiness or that morality was necessary for society. So, we can definitely say that social awareness does not exist in the theistic way. In theism, the idea that all men are brothers exists only because theists believe that God is the father of everyone, and not because they all have the feeling of brotherhood.

In atheism there is no illusion of otherworldly release. The atheist cannot but recognize that society is necessary for happiness in life, and that morality is necessary for the welfare of society. Since the atheist's efforts are directed only toward his happiness in this world, true social awareness exists only in atheism. It has been proven that moral conduct leads to happiness. That is why the atheist is a truly moral person. He is compelled to have a feeling of brotherhood toward his fellowmen as well as act with the twofold sincerity.

The atheist is egotistic because he thinks he is the master of his own life. This same egoism is the cause of his effort and progress in happiness. If he has no such egoism, then there will be no improvement in his life. But this egoism does not make an atheist selfish. Since a member of a society is always stronger than an [isolated] individual, the atheist, for the sake of increased happiness, must subordinate his egoism to social morality. Social progress can only result from the egoistic members of a society being bound by social moral laws and obligations [*maryadalaku*]. With that [social progress] individual happiness can also improve. In such a society, people are bound to cooperation. They dedicate their individuality to the welfare of society. Only then can true sacrifice and service of man occur. The atheists' egoism only contributes to the progress of society.

Because morality has been tied to release in the other world, not only is social outlook not enhanced, but other harm can also occur. Irrespective of the claims of the religious authorities or some others to the contrary, morals can never be divine commands. It was the religious authorities who formulated some morals suitable to the circumstances of their age and postulated them as divine commands. God-fearing ignorant people believed the words of the religious teachers and followed those morals obediently. Even though the circumstances of that time had changed after some time, the old morals still remained in practice. Theists did not have the courage or audacity to change the old morals to suit the new circumstances, because they had been enjoined as divine commands. To change them would be to transgress God's command. So they had the fear coupled with their belief that if they did change morals they would be subject to punishment in hell. Thus, as time went on, there came about a conflict between [contemporary] circumstances and the morals that had been dictated by theistic religion. Human desires got trampled in between the circumstances and the old morals. Unhappiness would result from going against circumstances; so people should only act according to the demands of circumstances. However, since in his mind he was bound to the old morals, this conformity to circumstances was also confused. He still had his old morals to openly profess. That is, as there was no relationship between words and deeds, twofold sincerity declined. Thus, as morals were bound to the desire for release, after some time they caused immorality and unhappiness and shattered society.

This problem of immorality confronted theists from age to age. In their attempt to solve this problem prophets had to sacrifice their entire lives by being regarded as enemies of the theistic religion. In their effort to adapt morals to different times and places there had even been bloodshed in the theistic world. Tying morals to the desire for release became the cause for immorality, unhappiness and bloodshed. Only because it had undergone such difficulties, theism became obstructive of social construction and was unable to quickly create progress in civilization.

From the atheistic point of view, morals and laws should only be concerned with society. As soon as atheists recognize that old laws don't suit new circumstances, they change the laws to suit the times. Whenever immorality, unhappiness or surreptitious behavior occur, they recognize that there is some defect in their morals and change them. That is why the problem of immorality cannot arise at all for the atheists. They do what they

say. And they speak of only what they do. There cannot be any conflict between circumstances and morals. If there is any surreptitious behavior or unhappiness, they have to change their morals or their behavior.

Since the atheist is a member [of a society] with social awareness, he does not base the changes that need to occur in moral conduct merely on his personal experiences, but on the experiences of the majority. He will not only be bound to the majority decision, but also recognizes his responsibility in seeing that every other member also adopt these decisions with the twofold sincerity. Thus, social awareness as well as the twofold sincerity is integral to the atheistic way.

HAPPINESS

In theism there is the belief that the other world, God and soul truly exist. Theists believe that the soul leaves the physical body after death. Corresponding to this belief, theists have a desire for release. This is the aim of their life. The desire for release is called spiritual contemplation. Their morals are formulated on the basis of their desire for release. They have come to have great enthusiasm for their morals. They have built huge temples and steeples. They have even sacrificed their lives. Theists did all these things only in order to attain their ideal of release, but not to gain food and clothing. Besides, their fine arts developed in the name of release. Stories, works of poetry, games, songs, sculptures, paintings – all had release as the subject matter. A variety of festivities, holidays and celebrations formed around the notion of God and supported these fine arts.

God and release are known to be false in atheism. People must, however, have an ideal in life. The same mankind which built temples and steeples in those days is adopting atheism today. So, there must be a place in atheism for such enthusiasm to blossom.

If we look at it from the point of view of verifiable truth, there is no hell or soul. So, an ideal of life must pertain to life [here]. Since theism had the ideal of release after death, human effort was misdirected in the name of spirituality; people neglected the affairs of life in this world and underwent hardships. The atheist ideal of life is not so. Attaining happiness is its ideal.

As man's ideas grow, there will be no limit to his happiness. In the ideal state of happiness people must not undergo any hardships. Food and clothing must be easily available. Climatic conditions must change according to one's desires. The body must always be completely healthy. There shouldn't be any old age or death. This is the atheist's ideal. This ideal relates to this world. It is something that can be achieved gradually through his own effort. Results can be noticed at every step forward. Happiness will continue to increase.

Thus, as the ideal of life was shifted from the other world to this world, the enthusiasm which man has had for the arts will also be in accordance with this ideal. The ways of humanity will become the subject matter for stories and works of poetry. Songs will praise the deeds of man. Painters will paint the beauty of nature.

This atheistic ideal is not something new. It is inherent in human nature. Although people talk about deceit because of their theistic beliefs, their deeds demonstrate the execution of atheistic ideals. The sacrifices that they used to make to worship God they are

now making for social happiness also. [Communities] are building medical departments and universities. The dedication and effort which used to be directed to achieving spiritual release are now found in the researches of physics. Alongside of the festivals remembering God, social feasts and celebrations of memorial days of great persons are on the increase. Besides, although theists denounce worldly pleasures in the name of contemplation of release or spiritual outlook, they do make various efforts to prolong their lives. The principles of health form a part of theism.

However, since the theist ideal of life pertains to the other world, theists are unable to strive openly and with twofold sincerity to achieve happiness in this world. They do not bravely confront the obstacles to their efforts when they occur; they remain quiet thinking that pleasures of worldly life are ephemeral while reconciling their minds with prayers to God. Thus, in theistic civilization, human comforts have not developed well.

Since the life-aim of the atheist is to acquire happiness in the present world, the effort he makes toward this end has twofold sincerity, dedication, bravery and courage. The opportunities to realize his ideal keep multiplying.

If the atheist's effort to carry out his ideal must bear fruit quickly, he needs the help of the strength of truth and the strength of his society. Inequality in a society is harmful to the society. So, the atheist's individual happiness is merged with social happiness. Society's happiness is his own happiness; social service is his duty.

Thus we can conclude that social service is absolutely essential to achieve human happiness. Only a person who strives for equality in society can love others and is worthy of being loved by them. Helping others, he receives their help. We call such relationship between the individual and [other members of a] society 'respect'. 'Respect' means the equality which society confers upon each individual [in relation to the others]. Others consider a respectable individual's life as their own. Since a person confers such respect to others, he is also able to receive it. If an individual wishes to claim his own rights, he must indeed recognize the rights of others. Thus, only through a respectable life one can attain happiness. Therefore, the atheist's life-aim is to live a respectable life.

In the Materialist theistic point of view there is no room for God, soul or the other world. Materialist theism recognizes only happiness in this world. To that extent, this point of view is the same as the atheistic outlook. But, since it bases human ideas and behavior on the various contexts of circumstance, it turned a person into someone who need not have the responsibility to be moral. The same shortcoming which exists in Idealist theism also exists here. As a consequence, in Materialist theism there is no place for individual respect and morality. These would only be qualities which would happen in people's lives depending on circumstances, but not something which people would consciously acquire. Thus, for the reason that Materialist theism does not recognize human freedom, there is a vast difference between that theism and atheism.

Thus, as atheism recognizes human freedom, it becomes practical. Unlike theism, its merit does not depend on logic, mysticism or something "unknown to speech or mind". Its merit lies in its being practical. Atheism is practice every step of the way. Only through practice does an idea become true. Laws become moral. False ideas and anachronistic laws are pushed aside through practice.

Only from the harmony between ideals, circumstances and effort can happiness result. The atheist recognizes that he has the freedom to change these three. Thus he lives ever

happily trying to achieve harmony among these three. If his desires are big, then he must sacrifice some of his other needs and persevere, fortify his effort, understand his circumstances better and harness them, and thus achieve his desires. Then there is more happiness to be found in the effort put out rather than in actually obtaining the end-result of it. On the other hand, if the strength of circumstances exceeds his ability [*tana balamunaku*] [to change them], then he must modify his desires themselves to suit the circumstances. Thus the atheist is happy either way. Moreover, there is no use in blaming circumstances or God. The responsibility, freedom and happiness are all his.

FIFTH CHAPTER

ATHEISM AND POLITICS

Politics play an important role in social construction. We do indeed need moral conduct for social construction. Morals can be divided into two kinds. The first kind is, if a person believes in theism totally, then he remains moral in accordance with his social customs. The second kind is, if he follows atheism completely, then he would be consciously moral. But from the current experience we can see that only in a few individuals has either one of them borne fruit. Theistic beliefs are of totally no avail when we have to maintain morality in society as a whole where there are millions of people. Yet we cannot leave the responsibility totally to the individual. The practical way between the two is politics.

Politics means keeping public conduct on the path of morality through governmental legislation. There may be no special rewards given to people for living in conformity to governmental law. Their only reward is to enjoy a peaceful life within the rule of the government. But the government punishes those who violate the law. Thus a political system preserves peace and morality in a society by keeping all the people under its rule faithful to and fearful of the law.

In regard to supporting morality, there are similarities and differences in a political system between theism, on the one side, and atheism, on the other. There is force involved in a political system just as in a theistic system. If a person commits immoral deeds, then, just as theism threatens him with punishment in hell, the government too imposes punishments such as imprisonment, execution and fines. That means in both the theistic and political systems, a fear from outside the individual, either of hell or of the government, coerces the individual into being moral. So, in respect of individual freedom being curtailed, there is a similarity between theistic and political systems. But God, heaven and hell are things which are not perceptible, but imagined. Prisons, execution stands, etc., in a political system, however, are perceptible. Although there are similarities between the two in terms of force, there is a difference between the theistic and political systems in respect of the means of punishment.

If we then compare a political system with the atheistic way, there is coercion in the political system. And there is freedom in atheism. That is the difference between the two. But just like in atheism, in the political system too all things are perceptible.

Thus, with respect to preserving morality, the controls in a theistic system are imperceptible, yet forceful. Controls in a political system are perceptible and forceful. Controls in an atheistic system are perceptible and voluntary.

As the affairs in the political system are perceptible, politics moved a step forward from theism to atheism. But since politics still involves forces, politics is a step behind atheism.

As every individual in it will live morally with social awareness, the atheistic social state in which peace and happiness flourish without governmental force is ideal indeed. But in this society, which is just now stepping out of the theistic traditions, a few may be moral for a length of time because of their self-discipline. But it is not feasible to wish that in the near future all the people will be moral for so long. So, if we want to keep people moral all

the time, then there must be some sort of government for some time. As long as there is government, some amount of coercion is inevitable.

In the first political systems kings used to be the heads of states. Believing that their kings were of divine origin, people of those times worshipped the kings and obeyed them. The kings generally used to be tyrants and used to coerce people according to their whims and fancies. But as the atheistic ideas developed among people, the desire for freedom also increased. With that, people revolted against the kings and transformed monarchies into democracies. As only the representatives elected by the people enacted laws, the use of force decreased in democracies. That means, just as the theistic way changed and moved towards politics as the atheistic outlook developed, in politics the authority of the kings declined and democracies flourished.

Theoretically, democracy is a great political trend. There must indeed be opportunities where people can satisfy their desires in a democratic rule, as it is the people who make the government run [in such a system]. People desire improvement in peace and happiness. Because they are selfish, some people may desire to have more living comforts than what others have, but since no one wishes to be inferior to anyone else, everyone agrees to [be allotted] equal respect and equal life opportunities in the whole of society. Since people are more or less the same in abilities and capabilities, they all agree to equality as a social rule. Like equality, they also desire that every individual has freedom. They do not tolerate coercion. So, in a democratic rule, peace, happiness, equality and freedom must flourish along with morality. But if we look at democracy in practice, the governmental systems, although democratic in name, are in effect inimical to morality, peace, happiness, equality and freedom. Why should there be such a conflict?

The greater the self-confidence among people that they can run their own government the more satisfactory will be their democracy. That means that self-confidence among people is the foundation of democracy. But to the extent that people hold on to theistic belief, to that extent there are also victims of a feeling of slavery. True to his belief, the theist does not take responsibility for his life. He shifts the responsibility for his conduct onto God's will, previous life, karma, destiny, fate, material circumstances, the course of nature, the state of society, and so on. Since life cannot continue through complete dependence, the theist makes only the effort necessary for a minimal living; he lives without any improvement in happiness and [his life is] constricted with meager satisfaction. When such theistic mentality keeps growing among people, democracies cannot progress. That is why, although they are democracies in name, in practice the governments become degraded into gang rules or sectarian governments, and eventually into dictatorships. It is no wonder that in the conduct of such degraded governments, force, inequality, immorality, unhappiness and nepotism become rampant. If we want to correct these [evils] and progress along the road of decent democracy, we must increase self-confidence among people. Self-confidence occurs as a result of atheism. So, atheism is necessary for democracy to flourish. If people lack the atheistic attitude, they would not cooperate in governmental affairs either because they are otherworldly-minded or because they lag behind due to their feeling of dependence. In those circumstances, there are just two ways to run a governmental system: one way is for those who are in governmental power to let the people who have been theistic remain as they have been and adopt dictatorship; or, as the second way, if we want to make the governmental system democratic, to introduce the atheistic outlook in people. Thus, if we want to make politics democratic, it is necessary to propagate atheism extensively. Democracy without atheism [eventually] degrades itself into a dictatorship.

Whether a dictatorship functions with the welfare of people in view or it operates nepotistically, a great amount of force is inevitable in such a rule. Moreover, it is highly probable that the dictatorship may return at any time to extreme nepotism and selfishness. That is why, at any time, democracy is the best political system.

Atheism is absolutely essential for the development of democracy. As democracy progresses through the atheistic outlook, peace, happiness, equality and morality will increase. Force will decrease. Self-confidence and self-discipline will grow and the moral society where government is not necessary will become closer to us.

