CHAPTER VII

THEISM - ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-CULTURAL LIFE

Now that an analysis has been given of the diverse ways in which Theism has expressed itself in the six systems of Indian Philosophy, it may not be out of place to present the stand of the atheist in regard to the existence of God and the external world of appearance and to show how far the Theist has succeeded in presenting his viewpoint in the face of strong opposition by the atheist. It may not be also out of place to ascertain the impact created by theism that had established itself on a solid foundation on the socio-cultural life of the country. The Theist has immensely based his assertion on the principle of causality and has asserted that since every event has a cause or every phenomenon is related to some phenomenon preceding it, the relation of cause and effect is capable of being predicted in regard to the God and the created world of manifold richness. The atheist goes to the root of this problem and maintains that causality has no legs to stand upon and that causality is nothing but an imaginary relation existing between two phenomena. The atheist puts forward a number of arguments to establish his position. Firstly, he asserts that an effect is produced from what is not a cause. Secondly, an event is not produced at all or in other words, the very fact of origination does not take place at all. Thirdly, an effect is produced by itself, or
in other words, an event appears from what is identical with itself. Fourthly, an event happens from something which is not real. In furnishing a reply to this animadversion which tries to cut at the root of the principle of causality itself, the theist explains that in the eventuality of an event happening from what is not a cause nothing prevents an effect from appearing at all times. Moreover, if there is no cause to account for the genesis of an event at a particular point of time, the event may emerge at any other point of time earlier or later than the scheduled one. The Theist feels that the proposition of the atheist that an event happens by itself is equally untenable, since it virtually leads to the proposition of identity between the cause and its effect. If it is held that an event happens by itself, then the theist thinks the event would not occur at all. Moreover, the identity of a cause and its effect is an absurdity and it runs counter to the experience obtained through ordinary fruitful perception even. With this argument the Theist asserts that the opponent cannot escape the necessity of accepting causality in order to avoid the absurdity involved in the eternal non-existence or existence of an effect as also to explain the occasionalness of an event, which means that an effect is not produced at all times, but occasionally when the causes responsible for its genesis assemble and make the production of the event possible.
Explaining his argument further the Theist raises a storm controversy against the theory of natural origination and show that the theory of natural origination is incompatible with the occasionalness of an event. Occasionalness of an event means that an effect sometimes exists and sometimes it disappears. It is quite obvious that an occasional thing cannot be eternal or in other words, occasionalness cannot be predicted in relation to an object which is eternal. It is, therefore, to be admitted that occasionalness means the relation of an object which was non-existent before at a given point of time, but which has appeared at a subsequent point of time. The theory of natural origination, it is asserted by the Theist, fails to explain satisfactorily the occasionalness of a given phenomenon. Since the proposition of the atheist that events originate out of themselves is not tenable, postulation of God becomes necessary to explain the origination of the entire creation.

The Theist also advances a moral argument to establish the existence of God. The argument of the Theist may be put in the following form of Aristotelian syllogism:

All effects have causes.
The created world is an effect.
Therefore, the created world has a cause.

In his endeavour to find out this cause lying behind the genesis of the earthly creation the Theist arrives at the
supreme creator whom he names the God or the Isvara and whom he describes as the efficient cause of the world. This argument may also be put in another form of syllogistic reasoning:

All unconscious entities have some intelligent agent as their guiding force.
Religious merit or Adṛṣṭa is an unconscious principle.
Therefore, religious merit has for its guiding principle some intelligent agent.

In the endeavour to find out this intelligent agent also the Theist arrives at the supreme creator whom he names the God or the Isvara and whom he describes as the omniscient one. The Theist thinks that the combination of two things, the atom and the religious merit which also is an unconscious principle is effected only when both are guided by an intelligent agent. Since the ordinary individual does not have knowledge of the atom prior to the existence of the creation of the world, he cannot be put forward as this intelligent agent. Since human intelligent is not in a position to reach this height, a supernormal intelligence is to be postulated, and this, the Theist, affirms, makes the postulation of the supremely intelligent being known as God and his scheme necessary.
All Indian theistic philosophical systems assert that the supreme being is one and only one and affirm that there is no reason behind the postulation of plurality of Gods. Though the Vedic seer sings hallelujahs to a number of Vedic deities, each one of whom acquires significant prominence and appears as the most powerful deity in the whole of Gods, the polytheistic tendency itself dies down with the passage of time and in the later period of Vedic age the monotheistic tendency makes itself felt. This tendency receives a full-bodied form in the Upanisads of later date, where the Absolute Reality is declared as characterised by oneness. The Theist asserts that the concept of two or more Gods of unlimited powers is a contradiction in terms. If one God is not enough to bring the world order and to maintain the course of life running, postulation of many Gods would have become necessary. But before deciding on this issue one is to see whether all the Gods are equally omniscient and equally omnipotent. If they are not omniscient and omnipotent they cannot create the world order. If on the other hand, among all the Gods only one is the omniscient and omnipotent, then the necessity of extending recognition to one God as the supreme God or as the sovereign ruler in the kingdom of God is to be admitted, giving rise to the thesis that in the world of Gods, the action of Gods belonging to the second strata
is regulated by the command of the Supreme God, the God of the highest order, who in reality is described as the God or extremely important Ḩīṣvara. With this argument the orthodox systems of Indian Philosophy try to establish the proposition that the intelligent agent responsible for the creation of the universe is a unitary entity and that omniscience and omnipotence of God follow as necessary corollaries from his unitary character. It is asserted that the thesis of plurality of Gods cuts at the root of the concepts of omniscience and omnipotence and thus relegates the God to an inferior status.

It is interesting to note that against the animadversion of the heterodox schools of Philosophy trying to establish the non-existence of the Supreme Creator, the orthodox schools could declare and solemnly affirm that the profoundly surprising principle of God exists and that this principle is an unitary one. The theistic outlook of orthodox schools is so enchanting that the entire Indian literature, whether Secular or Religious, Moral or Philosophical, Political or Sociological of later date is permeated through and through by this attitude. It is equally surprising that the Indian social texture is based on the proposition that the God exists, and that he is
benevolent and benign and that in this world of existence it is the desire of God alone that is brought into consummation. It is extremely significant that the division of the people into four castes, the theory of divine origin of the monarch, the doctrine that expounders of different texts and teachers are to be honoured for all time to come - all these emanate from the firm belief in the supremely important principle of God. Though through the passage of time changes have appeared in the social texture of all countries, Indian social set up has remained more or less stagnant by accepting rigid caste system as valid and by following the principle that the venerable is to be given his due. It is not without reason, therefore, that the heterodox systems of Indian Philosophy have been looked down upon by the Indian thinkers, and inspite of the enchanging tenets of these systems they could not gain a firm footing in Indian soil.

The influence of the theories of Theism on Indian literary work is tremendous and is clearly perceptable to the discerning mind. The plots of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata have for their central characters divine personages and a number of Gods and sages take free part in them making the plots more complicated, but at the same time, extremely enchanting to Indian mind. And when we come to Purana literature we are surprised to find that the entire
literature is replete with Gods and that these Gods acquire profound magnitude and great importance through their power to exercise tremendous control over the nature and world. Our ancient Dramas and Texts also are full of nymphs and Gods and the authors betray their profound faith in the existence of the divine agency as also in the existence of the benign world-order. The authors suffer from the obsession that the God is good, - that the God delivers good to the mankind, - and that through the extremely benign order of the universe, which is regulated by the divine agency, - the sun shines, the earth revolves round its orbit, the moon appears and disappears, the ocean dances with glee, the rivers flow and the trees blossom forth in their full splendour. It is not without reason, therefore, that Bhagavadgītā of profound importance gives a clarion call to posterity to surrender all actions and possessions to the extremely beneficial principle of God, so that the ultimate objective of emancipation can be obtained in no time. When Arjuna surrenders all his possessions and actions to the Lord, he is lifted above the boundaries of ego and becomes able to realise his communion with the universe and thereby secures the delight of emancipation. The belief in God that influences profoundly our literary critics is responsible also for the emergence of the concept that
aesthetic experience is not an amusement, but a Yoga which is to be practiced with meticulous care for the purpose of attainment of liberation. It is affirmed that as the mind of the reader gets absorbed in the specimen of literary or dramatic art, he forgets his ego-consciousness and experiences his communion with the universe and thereby with its supreme creator the God, or the Isvara, as a result of which his ego-boundaries expand and the delight of enlightenment is experienced. This practice of obtaining aesthetic experience is technically known as the famous Kāvyā-Yoga of Indian aesthetics. As the Indian mind is permeated through and through by a profoundly theistic outlook and belief in the existence of God, orthodox systems of Indian Philosophy have been able to consolidate their position and to establish themselves on a firm footing in sharp contrast to the heterodox system which have slipped unfortunately into the realm of oblivion.