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CONTENTS

	Page	Page
Editorial		
Perpetuation of Backwardness	1	
Why Emulate Nehru?	3	
		Secular Humanist Declaration 4

Editorial

Perpetuation of Backwardness

Gujarat is seething with furious discontent of students over the reservation of seats for Scheduled and some backward caste in medical colleges. The upper caste and class students feel naturally sore over their intelligence and hard studies for examinations going to waste on account of premium being placed on the inability of a certain class of students to secure the necessary marks in examinations. Some time back a violent agitation was started in Bihar also when the State Government announced over 60 percent reserved seats for backward classes in Government posts, thus increasing at one stroke, the agony of middle class educated youth who are already suffering from acute unemployment. Economic distress has thus become universal phenomenon in India both among the highest and lower classes, backward tribes on the one hand and forward castes on the other. The Brahmin unemployed and the Harijan Bhangi unemployed are the worst sufferers in this respect, the former because of his circumstantial and man-made destitution and the latter because of his hereditary poverty. In between the two extremes, in every state right up from the Chief Minister to the office sepoy, the intermediate classes and castes are monopolizing all offices, posts and positions high and low and there is a concerted policy of deliberate exclusion of the Brahmin at the top of caste hierarchy and the Harijans at the lowest rung of the ladder from the list of backward castes and classes. Some years back, in the State of

Karnatak was enacted a law by the Government including even the wealthy landlordly and merchant castes of Lingayats and Wakkaligas in the list of backward classes, which was obviously a gross violation of the principle of all citizens being equal in the eyes of Law and therefore enjoying equal rights to the pursuit of avocation religion and happiness. Such ugly developments in the States have fully justified what Dr. Ambedkar, the life-long fighter for the rights and privileges of the untouchable classes now called Harijans after the fashion set up by Gandhiji said, that if linguistic states should come into existence, Karnataka would be dominated by Lingayats and Vakkaligas, Tamil Nadu by Chettis, Andhra by Reddies and Maharashtra by Marathas and that the Harijans and Brahmins would be the worst sufferers. Dr. Ambedkar no doubt stood for reservation of special benefits for the scheduled castes and tribes but he was sufficiently enlightened to declare that such reservations were to be a temporary phase and they would have to be abolished in course of time.

The Dominant Castes and Classes

The Hindu Society, it must be frankly admitted is caste — ridden and therefore no clearcut class divisions have appeared in the fabric of the Indian Society of which Hindus constitute the majority. With the granting of adult suffrage to the electors, it is no won-

der that elections tend to be fought on caste lines and electors' first choice is their casteman and in his absence, only a candidate belonging to some other caste. This leads to the domination of some caste with a large number of electors, in the political life of that particular region. Economically in every caste, there are the rich and the poor. Castewise, the Brahmin traditionally was most educated and yet poor and only during the British regime he could improve his economic position by serving under the rulers in different capacities. The intermediary classes like the Vaishyas and Kshatriyas were economically better than Brahmins but did not wield any appreciable influence in the ruling circles because of their educational backwardness. But with the passage of time, these intermediary classes began engaging themselves in intellectual pursuits and they looked forward to the time when they would oust the Brahmins from their special fields of clerkdom, teaching and legal professions. They could not do it successfully during the British regime which was not interested in any particular caste but they could do so, with a vengeance only after they captured all positions of political power and authority.

Abolish All Reservations

The present revolt of intermediate classes the Vaishyas, rich Agriculturists and Khatri classes must be extended to all reservations of seats in any field for any caste or class. Let the State Governments begin with the reservations made for backward castes so called, which are not economically or even socially backward at all such as Lingayats or Marathas, Reddies, Chetties and Nairs, only. After doing so the reservations for the depressed classes or Harijans may be abolished. The State Governments should begin with filling the Government posts with best qualified men, be they Brahmins or Harijans, so as to exploit the best talent of the country for the purpose of administration, which is being paralysed in every state by ill-qualified and semi-educated men belonging to intermediary castes and classes which have been invested with special privileges and prerogatives against the very spirit of the Constitution. Let these intermediate upper castes first show that they sincerely stand for an egalitarian Society and then only plead for abolition of reservations for the most-downtrodden castes of Harijans.

The malaise that is affecting the administration of the country is that of this caste spirit of interme-

diary classes. The ideologies and policies of all political parties are wrecked on the rock of this communalism and casteism of the dominating castes in every state. People who have the interests of the country at heart and whose hearts are wrenched at the pitiable sight of the mess that has been created in the administration of the country, should no longer mince matters. The Brahmin intellect is going abroad to seek an outlet for want of any scope in this country owing to Casteism of the dominant castes. The Harijans were instigated initially against the Brahmins by these very intermediary classes and now that their aim is fulfilled, they are now out to crush the Harijans. This game of the upper classes must be ruthlessly exposed.

Caste barriers today are making nonsense of all progressive ideologies such as Communism, Socialism and Humanism. It is not the reservations for Harijans that come in the way of exploiting the talent of the youth of the country, but the reservations of about seventy percent for well-to-do classes and castes, unheard of in any other country in the world developed or developing that prevents the country's talent being made available to the country.

Economic Backwardness the Criticism

Egalitarian democratic society should afford economic aid to the poorer sections of the society to get themselves duly qualified for employments and jobs and leave the students of such classes to put forth requisite efforts to stand the competition with other students. The sins of History cannot be now visited on descendants who had perhaps committed them. course of the last thirty three years of independence. There is neither rhyme nor reason in a system which denies any talented caste or class any opportunity to show its worth or usefulness, which has no compunction to put down the most downtrodden classes but which on the other hand, puts only some dominant caste or class in the State in a monopolistic position in respect of educational facilities, job opportunities trade and professional openings and scopes.

Let Gujarat Medicos set themselves thinking whether they should stop at abolition of admission facilities reserved for backward classes only or whether all kinds of reservations made for so called 'backward' classes in educational institutions, Government employment should go, in the best interests of the country and whether only merit and qualification must be given priority in such matters. The time has come for the youth to consider this question of such reser-

Way Emulate Nehru ?

Sir,

Recently on the 14th of November, on the birth day of Nehru, some Cong (I) leaders thought it fit to exhort the people to "emulate Nehru" scarcely realizing the dangerous implications and overtones thereof. For, if one were to literally emulate Nehru in his life, he should, following in his footsteps, produce a daughter, who is so enamoured of power, that she would have no compunctions against sending all her political opponents to jails, and a grand son, who would not care to misuse the apparatus of the state to float a largescale industrial concern for the benefit of himself and his family, and claim that his youth is his best qualification to take over the leadership of the country!

One fears that no Indian in his right mind, would willingly opt to so exploit the nation through his progeny, using his earlier sacrifices for the country, to justify it all. The fact is, that none Nehru's several sacrifices for India, would entitle his family members to behave in the high-handed manner they have been in dealing with the country, and in using the radio and other govt media, to inflate their public images, and the funds of the nation to promote their personal ambitions in life. So, Nehru cannot serve as an ideal for the Indian people to emulate, after seeing what all the members of his family had been doing, to perpetuate dynastic rule in the country.

Of course, some may argue that it is not Nehru's fault, and he cannot be blamed for what evils his kith and kin perpetrated after his death, when he had no longer any control over them. But, the fact is, that if he were a really far-seeing leader, he should have anticipated them, and taken precautions to prevent the same. There is good reason to think that had Nehru taken care during his life time, to prepare younger people outside his own family to take over the reigns of govt, instead of keeping them all at a distance, as he did, and not sown the seeds for Indira's emergence as a national leader, by making her congress president when he was alive, the country would not have been brought to this sad pass, in which we find people sheepishly looking to the Nehru family, to produce its future rulers. If the encouragement of servility among the people, had not been in Nehru's own

blood, in some dormant form, would it now take place in such an unabashed form, in the days of his progeny?

Further, Nehru was responsible for fostering "ministerial ostentation" as an irproachable phenomenon in post-independence India. Had he within his life time, checked ministers from using gigantic imported cars, palatial bungalows, and entailing huge expenditure on their maintenance and travel, it would have gone a long way in preventing politicians in free India, from taking to the path of luxury, complacency in redressing public hardships, nepotism and corruption, that has become quite common and virtually uncontrollable today.

It was openly said even when Nehru was alive, that what was being spent for his security and maintenance per annum, went far beyond what he could earn in his whole life time. So, far from Nehru sacrificing anything for the country in his later years, the

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A Secular Humanist Declaration

(This declaration was drafted by Dr. Paul Kurtz and endorsed by leading humanists from all parts of the world.—Ed.)

SECULAR humanism is a vital force in the contemporary world. It is now under unwarranted and intemperate attack from various quarters. This declaration defends only that form of secular humanism which is explicitly committed to democracy. It is opposed to all varieties of belief that seek supernatural sanction for their values or espouse rule by dictatorship.

Democratic secular humanism has been a powerful force in world culture. Its ideals can be traced to the philosophers, scientists, and poets of classical Greece and Rome, to ancient Chinese Confucian Society, to the Carvaka movement of India, and to other distinguished intellectual and moral traditions. Secularism and humanism were eclipsed in Europe during the Dark Ages, when religious piety eroded humankind's confidence in its own powers to solve human problems. They reappeared in force during the Renaissance with the reassertion of secular and humanist values in literature and the arts, again in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries with the development of modern science and a naturalistic view of the universe, and their influence can be found in the eighteenth century in the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment. Democratic secular humanism has creatively flowered in modern times with the growth of freedom and democracy.

Countless millions of thoughtful persons have espoused secular humanist ideals, have lived significant lives, and have contributed to the building of a more humane and democratic world. The modern secular humanist outlook has led to the application of science and technology to the improvement of the human condition. This has had a positive effect on reducing poverty, suffering, and disease in various parts of the world; in extending longevity; on improving transportation and communication, and in making the good life possible for more and more people. It has led to the emancipation of hundred of millions of people from the exercise of blind faith and fears of superstition and has contributed to their education and the enrichment of their lives. Secular humanism has provided an impetus for humans to solve their pro-

blems with intelligence and perseverance, to conquer geographic and social frontiers, and to extend the range of human exploration and adventure.

Regrettably, we are today faced with a variety of anti-secularist trends: the reappearance of dogmatic authoritarian religions; fundamentalist, literalist, and doctrinaire Christianity; a rapidly growing and uncompromising Moslem clericalism in the Middle East and Asia; the reassertion of orthodox authority by the Roman Catholic papal hierarchy; nationalistic religious Judaism; and the reversion to obscurantist religions in Asia. New cults of unreason as well as bizarre paranormal and occult beliefs, such as belief in astrology, reincarnation, and the mysterious power of alleged psychics, are growing in many Western societies. These disturbing developments follow in the wake of the emergence in the earlier part of the twentieth century of intolerant messianic and totalitarian quasi-religious movements, such as fascism and communism. These religious activists not only are responsible for much of the terror and violence in the world today but stand in the way of solutions to the world's most serious problems.

Paradoxically, some of the critics of secular humanism maintain that it is a dangerous philosophy. Some assert that it is "morally corrupting" because it is committed to individual freedom, others that it condones "injustice" because it defends democratic due process. We who support democratic secular humanism deny such charges, which are based upon mis-understanding and misinterpretation, and we seek to outline a set of principles that most of us share. Secular humanism is not a dogma or a creed. There are wide differences of opinion among secular humanists on many issues. Nevertheless, there is a loose consensus with respect to several propositions. We are apprehensive that modern civilization is threatened by forces antithetical to reason, democracy, and freedom. Many religious believers will no doubt share with us a belief in many secular humanist and democratic values, and we welcome their joining with us in the defence of these ideals.

1. **Free Inquiry.** The first principle of democratic secular humanism is its commitment to free inquiry. We oppose any tyranny over the mind of man, any efforts by ecclesiastical, political, ideological, or

social institutions to shackle free thought. In the past, such tyrannies have been directed by churches and states attempting to enforce the edicts of religious bigots. In the long struggle in the history of ideas, established institutions, both public and private, have attempted to censor inquiry, to impose orthodoxy on beliefs and values, and to excommunicate heretics and extirpate unbelievers. Today, the struggle for free inquiry has assumed new forms. Sectarian ideologies have become the new theologies that use political parties and governments in their mission to crush dissident opinion.

Free inquiry entails recognition of civil liberties as integral to its pursuit, that is, a free press; freedom of communication; the right to organize opposition parties and to join voluntary associations, and freedom to cultivate and publish the fruits of scientific, philosophical, artistic, literary, moral and religious freedom. Free inquiry requires that we tolerate diversity of opinion and that we respect the right of individuals to express their beliefs, however unpopular they may be, without social or legal prohibition or fear of sanctions. Though we may tolerate contrasting points of view, this does not mean that they are immune to critical scrutiny. The guiding premise of those who believe in free inquiry is that truth is more likely to be discovered if the opportunity exists for the free exchange of opposing opinions; the process of interchange is frequently as important as the result. This applies not only to science and to everyday life, but to politics, economics, morality, and religion.

2. Separation of Church and State. Because of their commitment to freedom, secular humanists believe in the principle of the separation of church and state. The lessons of history are clear: wherever one religion or ideology is established and given a dominant position in the state, minority opinions are in jeopardy. A pluralistic, open democratic society allows all points of view to be heard. Any effort to impose an exclusive conception of Truth, Piety, Virtue, or Justice upon the whole of society is a violation of free inquiry. Clerical authorities should not be permitted to legislate their own parochial views — whether moral, philosophical, political, educational, or social — for the rest of society.

Nor should tax revenues be exacted for the benefit or support of sectarian religious institutions. Individuals and voluntary associations should be free to

accept or not to accept any belief and to support these convictions with whatever resources they may have, without being compelled by taxation to contribute to those religious faiths with which they do not agree. Similarly, church properties should share in the burden of public revenues and should not be exempt from taxation. Compulsory religious oaths and prayers in public institutions (political or educational) are also a violation of the separation principle.

Today, nontheistic as well as theistic religions compete for attention. Regrettably, in communist countries, the power of the state is being used to impose an ideological doctrine on the society, without tolerating the expression of dissenting or heretical views. Here we see a modern secular version of the violation of the separation principle.

3. The Ideal of Freedom. There are many forms of totalitarianism in the modern world — secular and nonsecular — all of which we vigorously oppose. As democratic secularists, we consistently defend the ideal of freedom, not only freedom of conscience and belief from those ecclesiastical, political and economic interests that seek to repress them, but genuine political liberty, democratic decision-making based upon majority rule, and respect for minority rights and the rule of law. We stand not only for freedom from religious control but for freedom from jingoistic government control as well. We are for the defence of basic human rights, including the right to protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In our view, a free society should also encourage some measure of economic freedom, subject only to such restrictions as are necessary in the public interest. This means that individuals and groups should be able to compete in the marketplace, organize free trade unions, and carry on their occupations and careers without undue interference by centralized political control. The right to private property is a human right without which other rights are nugatory. Where it is necessary to limit any of these rights in a democracy, the limitation should be justified in terms of its consequences in strengthening the entire structure of human rights.

4. Ethics Based on Critical Intelligence: The moral views of secular humanism have been subjected to criticism by religious fundamentalist theists. The secular humanist recognizes the central role of morality in human life. Indeed, ethics was developed as a branch of human knowledge long before religio-

nists proclaimed their moral systems based upon divine authority. The field of ethics has had a distinguished list of thinkers contributing to its development: from Socrates, Democritus, Aristotle, Epicurus, and Epictetus, to Spinoza, Erasmus, Hume, Voltaire, Kant, Bentham, Mill, G.E. Moore, Bertrand Russell, John Dewey, and others. There is an influential philosophical tradition that maintains that ethics is an autonomous field of inquiry, that ethical judgments can be formulated independently of revealed religion, and that human beings can cultivate practical reason and wisdom and, by its application, achieve lives of virtue and excellence. Moreover, philosophers have emphasized the need to cultivate an appreciation for the requirements of social justice and for an individual's obligations and responsibilities toward others. Thus secularists deny that morality needs to be reduced from religious belief or that those who do not espouse a religious doctrine are immoral.

A. For secular humanists, ethical conduct is, or should be judged by critical reason, and their goal is to develop autonomous and responsible individuals, capable of making their own choices in life based upon an understanding of human behavior. Morality that is not God-based need not be antisocial, subjective, or promiscuous, nor need it lead to the breakdown of moral standards. Although we believe in tolerating diverse lifestyles and social manners, we do not think they are immune to criticism. Nor do we believe that any one church should impose its views of moral virtue and sin, sexual conduct, marriage, divorce, birth control, or abortion, or legislate them for the rest of society.

As secular humanists we believe in the central importance of the value of human happiness here and now. We are opposed to Absolutist morality, yet we maintain that objective standards emerge, and ethical values and principles may be discovered, in the course of ethical deliberation.

Secular humanist ethics maintains that it is possible for human beings to lead meaningful and wholesome lives for themselves and in service to their fellow human beings without the need of religious commandments or the benefit of clergy. They have been any number of distinguished secularists and humanists who have demonstrated moral principles in their personal lives and works: Portagoas, Lucretius, Epicurus, Spinoza, Hume, Thomas Paine, Diderot, Mark

Twain, George Eliot, John Stuart Mill, Ernest Renan, Charles Darwin, Thomas Edison, Clarence Darrow, Robert Ingersoll, Gilbert Murray, Albert Schweitzer, Albert Einstein, Max Born, Margaret Sanger, and Bertrand Russell, among others.

5. **Moral Education.** We believe that moral development should be cultivated in children and young adults. We do not believe that any particular sect can claim important values as their exclusive property; hence it is the duty of public education to deal with these values. Accordingly, we support moral education in the schools that is designed to develop an appreciation for moral virtues, intelligence, and the building of character. We wish to encourage wherever possible the growth of moral awareness and the capacity for free choice and an understanding of the consequences thereof. We do not think it is moral to baptize infants, to confirm adolescents, or to impose a religious creed on young people before they are able to consent. Although children should learn about the history of religious moral practices, these young minds should not be indoctrinated in a faith before they are mature enough to evaluate the merits for themselves. It should be noted that secular humanism is not so much a specific morality as it is a method for the explanation and discovery of rational moral principles.

6. **Religious Skepticism.** As secular humanists we are generally skeptical about supernatural claims. We recognize the importance of religious experience: that experience that redirects and gives meaning to the lives of human beings. We deny, however, that such experiences have anything to do with the supernatural. We are doubtful of traditional views of God and divinity. Symbolic and mythological interpretations of religion often serve as rationalizations for a sophisticated minority, leaving the bulk of mankind to flounder in theological confusion. We consider the universe to be a dynamic scene of natural forces that are most effectively understood by scientific inquiry. We are always open to the discovery of new possibilities and phenomena in nature. However, we find that traditional views of the existence of God either are meaningless, have not yet been demonstrated to be true, or are tyrannically exploitative. Secular humanists may be agnostics, atheists, rationalists, or skeptics, but they find insufficient evidence for the claim that some divine purpose exists for the universe. They reject the idea that God has intervened miraculously in history or revealed himself to a chosen few, or that

he can save or redeem sinners. They believe that men and women are free and are responsible for their own destinies and that they cannot look toward some transcendent being for salvation. We reject the divinity of Jesus, the divine mission of Moses, Mohammed; and other latter-day prophets and saints of the various sects and denominations. We do not accept as true the literal interpretation of the Old and New Testaments, the Koran, or other allegedly sacred religious documents, however important they may be as literature. Religions are pervasive sociological phenomena, and religious myths have long persisted in human history. In spite of the fact that human beings have found religions to be uplifting and a source of solace, we do not find their theological claims to be true. Religions have made negative as well as positive contributions toward the development of human civilization. Although they have helped to build hospitals and schools and, at their best, have encouraged the spirit of love and charity, many have also caused human suffering by being intolerant of those who did not accept their dogmas or creeds. Some religions have been fanatical and repressive, narrowing human hopes, limiting aspirations, and precipitating religious wars and violence. While religions have no doubt offered comfort to the bereaved and dying by holding forth the promise of an immortal life, they have also aroused morbid fear and dread. We have found no convincing evidence that there is a separable "soul" or that it exists before birth or survives death. We must therefore conclude that the ethical life can be lived without the illusions of immortality or reincarnation. Human beings can develop the self-confidence necessary to ameliorate the human condition and to lead meaningful, productive lives.

(Contd. from page No. 2)

vations in a broad spirit and rid the country of anti-tribal upper casteism, anti-Brahminism and dominant caste favouritism. Then only they could be said to have rendered genuine service to the nation and not otherwise.

Passing Away of A Great Patriot

M. C. Chagla has passed away. Literally he will be leaving a big void in the country in the field of unalloyed patriotism and genuine nationalism. By his liberality of outlook and breadth of vision, he has set an inspiring example of what an Indian Muslim Patriot should be and how he should behave in poli-

tical, social and religious life. He had imbibed all these laudable traits from his political and professional Guru M. A. Jinnah who unfortunately ended his career as Pakistan's founder leader.

Mr. Chagla was a humanitarian first and last. His advocacy of a common civil law for all Indians including Muslims was both of this humanitarian spirit which transcends all religious dogmas and fetishes. It was therefore in the fitness of things that this liberal-minded Muslim Statesman should have been entrusted with the task of defending India's stand on the issue of Kashmir at the Security Council during a crucial debate on this issue. He carried out his mission with brilliant success so as to earn the approval and encomiums from Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the early twenties, he was called to the Bar and was raised to the Bench in early forties. He was appointed the Chief Justice of India after the dawn of India's freedom. His famous judgement in Mundra case cost T.T. Krishnamachari his ministership at the Centre though he was a close friend of Nehru.

Chagla was called upon to serve the country as High Commissioner of India in England and as Union Education Minister and he filled these posts with eminent distinction.

His patriotism and nationalism were tested when he had to break away from his Jinnah on the issue of Pakistan. Till the end of his days, he remained a nationalist to his very core. He deprecated special attempts to appease Muslims as such on the part of the Government. Above all, he stood unflinchingly by the Fundamental Rights of the citizen declared by the Constitution and vehemently opposed authoritarian trends in Indian politics.

(Contd. from page No. 3)

country was sacrificing much of its money and its men, to humour him. As Nehru the PM himself did nothing to answer this charge, or reverse this trend, no wonder the State CMs and other ministers did not lag behind. Proudly strutting with a rose pinned to his coat, he expected the masses to look upon him as a deity. No wonder, his successors too behave in the same provocative fashion.

Looking back, one feels that it is during the first few decades of free India, namely in the Nehru era,

that many undesirable things such as those mentioned above, were allowed to take root, and Nehru is to blame for it all. Once the country's politicians had been thus set on the wrong track of ostentation, by Nehru during his life time, the trend had been well established for India's political field to be dominated by unabashed self-seekers. The way that Nehru had given the go-by to Gandhism, in the administration of the country, even while paying lip sympathy to it, is probably his greatest and most unforgivable crime, for, it is responsible for the many evils of today, and the alarming downfall in standards of public morality.

Doubtless, untill a new leader emerges in the country, who can put an end to the evils that Nehru

and Nehruism had given birth to, in every sphere of life in the country, (among which we can even count today's sky-rocketing inflation) there is no hope that we would not end up in chaos and ruin.

So, why ask people to emulate Nehru at this critical juncture of our history, even after coming to know, on what a bitter road he had set India on, in its very germinal state? Had free India, in its first years, been in the hands of a genuine Gandhian and not a pseudo Gandhian like Nehru, it would not have been tottering in its fourth decade overweighed by law and order problems and that of inflation, blackmarketing and corruption.

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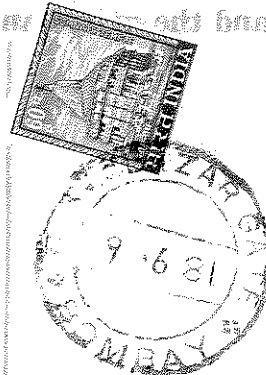
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