

VIVEKANANDA MISSION . .

BURMA

PROVINCIAL HINDU CONFERENCE

SESSION THE FOURTH, 1933

April 15th to April 17th.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

By

SRIMAT SWAMI NIRMALANANDAJI MAHARAJ

(President, Vivekananda Mission, Calcutta)



RANGOON.



SREEMAT SWAMI NIRMALANANDA MAHARAJ.
(Direct Disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Deva).

BURMA PROVINCIAL HINDU CONFERENCE

Fourth Session 1933

April 15th, 16th & 17th

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

OF

SWAMI NIRMALANANDAJI MAHARAJ

Salutation to Bhagavan Sri Ramkrishna!

You have, Sisters and Brothers of Burma, placed upon my shoulder a grave responsibility by making me to preside over the present session of the Burma Hindu Provincial Conference. The times are hard. Institutions are in a melting pot. And I am no politician. I neither understand the politics of the boundaries nor can I persuade myself to believe that a political system which recognises the full rights of man as a member of society, which aims at the welfare of all, and which therefore refuses to grant special favours and privileges to any particular group or community can be rightly expected from without. National constitution must be evolved from within the people, from within the nation itself; since superimposed benevolence cannot reconcile men to one another nor develop the highest and the best

within them. I am afraid, therefore, whether I shall be able to discharge my duties by the Conference which is held at a momentous time to the entire satisfaction of all who may be concerned in it. However, I offer to all my sincere thanks for the honour you have extended to an humble child of Sri Ramakrishna who came for the salvation of ourselves and emancipation of Humanity.

Danger Ahead

Sisters and Brothers, the times, as I have said, are indeed hard. We are on the threshold of a great transformation, a mighty revolution, so to speak. Burma, the Brahmadesha of the Puranas and the Vedas; Burma, the stronghold of the sons of Buddha the incarnation of our Vishnu; Burma which has ever been the Eastern Mouth-piece of the Great Virat of India to speak to the 'the Far-east'; Burma which has ever been the great 'Key-stone' of the magnificent edifice of Greater India comprising Ceylone, Java, Sumatra, Cambodia, China and Japan; that Burma is not simply threatened with a territorial dissociation from the scheme of the future administration of India. The whole of India is threatened with a cultural extinction under the dead weight of the modern, mechanical and commercial civilisation of the Occident built upon a 'Law of Progress' which works not by evolution but by destruction under the guidance of a disintegrating individualism.

The Blunder

Indeed, modern India is so full of what is termed 'Progress and Reform' that it would like to uproot the 'Family' and everything upon which the foundations of Hindu society and civilisation depend. The whole structure of Hindu society and civilisation is the direct product and outcome of the exercise of the communal principle of human life and conduct in the affairs of men and institutions. But that structure has been unremittingly, indiscriminately and unscrupulously attacked under the inspiration of the individualistic principle of social progress which forms the very foundation of the society and civilisation of the modern West. In fact the debate or rather conflict has already begun. The New is striving against the Old; the West against the East; Saxon Individualism against Indian Communalism. It is forgotten that man has as much a communalist personality as an individualist personality. In consequence, the individual should not be regarded except as forming an integral part of its community which is but an organic unity. If, therefore, in the place of the individualistic, —the mechanical principle of social progress, the communalistic or the evolutionary principle had been applied in the affairs of our people by those who had the making of India in their hands for more than a century and a half, then the blunder of introducing and enforcing the Western ideals of Individualism in a country whose whole

civilisation was built on communal ideals of life, would never have been made. For, the communal systems of India were a genuine product of the Soil, and not the outcome as in Europe of a theme of feudal life forming part of a gigantic military regime.

Consequences of Blunder

But the blunder, however mischievous it might be, has been committed. In consequence, the standards of the home, even the criteria of rearing our children have been undergoing a radical change, the leisure occupations of youth, always symptomatic of any age, have not only become frankly utilitarian or frivolous but have often been found to be beyond the borders of what was once considered as decorous, and our beliefs even in things which were accepted as axiomatic by the Past have been wholly undermined. Indeed, Hindu society which should have been a universal school by this time for mutual unfoldment and enrichment, has become an ignoble pillory for labouring spirits. Reciprocity amongst us is now almost an unknown quantity and co-operative commerce a feud to the knife.

Tackle the Revolution

In fact Hindu society is passing through a great transformation, a mighty revolution, both in its ideals and outlook on life. But it is important to bear in mind that a period of revolution affords opportunities as much for

social evolution and progress as for involution and retrogression. It all depends upon the nature and character of the guidance the thinking class of any cultural group, can give to the social and religious movements which engage the attention of the people in such a period. It is stupid to think that in such period of rapid transformation our religion, our morality, or our family should escape the criticisms which are being applied to all other institutions of the world. It is, therefore, not by seeking to shield the forms and institutions of Hinduism from criticism and attack; but by seeking to guide criticisms into right and rational channels that we can expect to develop our spirituality and best serve the society to advance thereby the cause of religion and humanity.

The Threefold Crisis

Indeed, unless the revolution which we are passing through, is given a rational guidance, there is every likelihood of Hinduism and the whole fabric of our civilisation reverting to a lower plane of intellectual, social and spiritual values. It is true that some attempts were made here and there to lift morality and religion to a higher social and rational plane by the works of different sects and communities of worshippers within the fold of Hinduism in their own way. But in the face of the spreading group-selfishness, caste clashes, and communal wars or sectarian conflicts, it is difficult to believe that the past attempts were successful in finding out values

which are adequate for a basis of harmonious human living together. We must face facts, however ugly they might appear. The way in which things are rapidly proceeding can, as the late Swami Vivekananda once observed, result either,—

First, in the combination of other castes than the Brahman to evolve a new religion like that of Buddhism in ancient time, or

Secondly, a new religion which is more adapted to the requirements of modern life, will come from the world outside to make a sweeping conquest of the children of the Soil, or

Thirdly, a radical irreligion and sheer atheism will soon become dominant amongst the more advanced classes of thinkers in our society while the rest will adopt either Christianity or Islam, to the extinction of Hindu civilisation.

The Ethics of the Gita

A great crisis, therefore, confronts us all as members of Hindu society from all points of view, namely, spiritual, social and political. The crisis has been brought about as much by the rapid development of Science and spread of Democracy amongst the nations of the world as by our failure to adapt our forms and institutions to the circumstances of the times, to the needs and conditions of modern civilisation. Adaptation is the progressive factor in human as well as in social evolution.

which are adequate for a basis of harmonious human living together. We must face facts, however ugly they might appear. The way in which things are rapidly proceeding can, as the late Swami Vivekananda once observed, result either,—

First, in the combination of other castes than the Brahman to evolve a new religion like that of Buddhism in ancient time, or

Secondly, a new religion which is more adapted to the requirements of modern life, will come from the world outside to make a sweeping conquest of the children of the Soil, or

Thirdly, a radical irreligion and sheer atheism will soon become dominant amongst the more advanced classes of thinkers in our society while the rest will adopt either Christianity or Islam, to the extinction of Hindu civilisation.

The Ethics of the Gita

A great crisis, therefore, confronts us all as members of Hindu society from all points of view, namely, spiritual, social and political. The crisis has been brought about as much by the rapid development of Science and spread of Democracy amongst the nations of the world as by our failure to adapt our forms and institutions to the circumstances of the times, to the needs and conditions of modern civilisation. Adaptation is the progressive factor in human as well as in social evolution.

Non-adaptation spells stagnation, deterioration and death. It is by adaptation to the exigencies of the successive ages,—Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali, by a dialectic process, that Hindu society and civilisation survived the revolutions of empires. For, what are the Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas and the Tantras but the re-statements of the eternal ideas and ideals of Hinduism teaching us the lines we have to follow in our adaptation to the demands of the modern times, to the newer conditions of our life. By “adaptation” I do not mean a blind surrender to the forces that be. By it I mean a controlling mastery over the existing forces in and around us,—using, utilising, and modifying or rejecting them, as the case may be, in the interest of the goal or ideal we all have in view. In adaptation to the newer conditions of life, it is the ideal or the goal that must be kept always in view. The moment we forget our goal, says an exponent of the Law of Progress, the moment we lose sight of our ideal, the vitalising principle of our social life, the purpose of our social activities, that very moment our society must be taken to have suffered a partial death, has become relatively non-living, or inorganic so to speak. If the forces and factors wherein we find ourselves, help us in the achievement of our goal, in the attainment of our ideal, we accept them, cherish them and make the best use of them. If they are partially helpful, we do not accept them in *toto*, but we try to modify them and take from them their good and reject what is evil in them.

But if they are found positively harmful, if they present an ideal of life and thought which is the very reverse of our own, well, in that case, there is no other alternative than an uncompromising warfare. And if, in the last resort, the victory is not ours, the very defeat itself would be of high moral discipline and of high spiritual glory". Indeed, this is the Hindu ethics as taught in the Grand Song of our Lord.

Revive Religious Ideal

Now it is agreed on all hands that India has a soul of its own, that Hindu society has a particular theme to follow, an ideal which may be called as the very breath of its life and which may well be denominated as the principle of its social progress. "Each nation," said the late Swami Vivekananda, "like each individual has one theme of life which is its centre, the principal note round which every other note comes to form the harmony. In one nation political power is its vitality as in England, artistic life in another. In India religious life forms the centre, the key-note as it were of the whole music of her national life; and if any nation attempts to throw off its national vitality, the direction which has become its own through the transmission of centuries, that nation dies, if it succeeds in the attempt. And, therefore, if you succeed in the attempt to throw off religion and take to pure politics or any other thing as your centre, the

vitality of your national life, the result will be that you will be extinct.”

Some Objections

But, have we been true to our ideals? Have we followed our own line of national activities? There has been placed before the people the political policy and programme of divorcing our national life from its spiritual basis, to dissociate religious motives and impulses from our national activities and to build the civilisation of India anew on secular lines and materialistic ideals. Indeed, the aspiration of modern India is to exalt the secular point of view, the secular conception of life as a national ideal. It is contended by the exponents of this view that an all powerful spiritual ideal would by its predominance bring in things and modes of life which would impede the growth of our national power and prosperity. Any emphasis, therefore, that would be laid on the spiritual ideal of the people in the re-constitution of Indian nationalism should be forthwith discountenanced.

Objections Examined

But the fear so expressed is simply precocious. The history of Buddhism in Ceylon, India and China, as observed a scholar in history, proves beyond doubt that for centuries before and after the Christian era the dynamic power of the forces of religion showed itself no less on the material side of national activities than on the purely

spiritual plane. The material advancement of India during the regime of Buddhism or Mahomedanism was forwarded not by the exaltation of the secular conception of life as the national ideal; but by bearing aloft the standard of religion while associating and regulating with it and by it the secular and material welfare and activities of the children of the Soil. The result was the growth of a unique and powerful civilisation, powerful for good in promoting the spiritual life among the people and powerful for good also in forwarding their best material interests." It is wrong, therefore, to take the problem of the advancement of religion and secular welfare of the people as two distinct problems essentially different from each other. They are but two aspects of one and the same problem of life and living.

Politics of Service Needed

Besides, the people of India nurtured for ages on spiritual traditions, cannot rightly work on purely secular and political lines like the people of the West. Really you cannot expect "the Ganges to flow back to her icy bed and begin a new course." Even that were possible for the Ganges, "it would be impossible for this country to give up her characteristic course of religious life and take up for herself a new career of politics or something else." This explains clearly how all our past attempts to educate, awaken and work up the masses through politics have miserably failed, how we have failed to adapt the

forms and institutions to the exigencies of modern times. It is high time, therefore, to return to the sources of our own being. If reform is needed in any sphere of our life, it must be done by and through the fundamental principles of religion. If we need politics, we must have the politics of service to humanity. Indeed, if we are to maximise co-operation between the different groups of our people in the attainment of our common ideal, the whole spirit of our political life must be changed. Instead of a politics of power and privilege, instead of setting before the people a pagan programme of self-interest, material satisfaction and brute force which permeate through and through the great fabric of Western civilisation, we must have a politics of service and worship of humanity. And the end must be sought, of course, through the unfoldment of the highest and the best in the people of all castes and communities within the society to begin with. Brahmanisation or levelling up of the down-trodden is predominantly a social ideal of the Hindus. All men are Shudras by birth. It is by the investiture with holy threads that they become the twice-born. When they are educated in the Vedic lores, they are known as the Vipras. But the Brahmana, socially speaking, is only he who knows Brahman.

Practical Vedanta

This elevation of the Depressed to the dignity of the Divinity, this spiritualisation of the secular and social

outlook on life of the people, is neither in conflict with the best traditions of Hinduism nor inconsistent with the highest ideals of patriotism that we can conceive of; for, the ends of life itself, in our view, being a life of service and worship, loyalty to humanity does not weaken one's loyalty to one's own country and society. It is in this way that religion and patriotism most wonderfully blend in the philosophy of Practical Vedanta which emphasises on the actual realisation of God in the embodied souls moving about us. Indeed, it is, to explain in the language of a Western scholar, "the one Brahma who is the Supreme Blissful experience and who appears in the form of Man with a life of mingled pleasure and pain. The Adwaita Vedanta posits one Universal Consciousness which polarises itself into static and dynamic, into subject and object as the positive and negative poles of one and the same reality. In Param Samvit this "I" (Aham) and "This (Idam) are indistinguishably mingled in the Supreme Unitary Experience." In Adwaita Vedanta, therefore, the Individual life and the World-life are rolled as it were in One. And so the Vedantists, when eating, drinking, or discharging any other function of life, they do so by believing and declaring, "That Thou Art", "That am I", "I am Brahma", "I am Shiva", "I am Bhairava". It is not merely the separate, the detached individual that acts and enjoys. It is the Supreme Brahma, the Supreme Shiva who does so in and through him. A man with such

mentality recognises that his life and the play of its activities are not things apart, to be held and pursued egotistically for its and his own separate sake, as though the enjoyment was something to be seized from life by his own unaided strength and with a sense of separateness; but his life and all its activities are conceived as part of the divine action in nature manifesting and operating in the form of man. He realises in the pulsing beat of his heart the rhythm which throbs through, and is the sign of, universal life. With the Adwaitin, therefore, to neglect or deny the needs of the body, of the society, and of every other thing and being in the universe, is to neglect and to deny that greater life of which it is but part and to falsify the Great Doctrine of the Unity of all, of the ultimate identity of Matter and Spirit and of God and Man.

The Four Noble Ends

Now it is clear from what has been said hereinbefore that the ultimate ideal which Hindu civilisation kept before itself, is essentially spiritual and empirically social. It is natural, therefore, that the basis of the Hindu society should be deliberately laid on the 'Cult of the Spirit', on the pursuit of the aims and purposes which are distinctly spiritual or religious. Indeed, the one object which the great builders of our society had before them was how to erect that kind of civilisation which would help in building up and maintaining an environment

for the easier unfoldment and expression of the highest and the noblest that is akin to Divinity in humanity. For man does not live for the bread alone, not for mere animal living, but for self-expression, for happiness (Sukham). Hindu psychologists hold that happiness which man seeks in and through his struggle for self-expression is fundamentally of two kinds. Of these the one is innate, increate, or non-derivative (Akritim) which is known by the name of 'Moksha' or the Bliss of Liberation both here and hereafter; and the other is artificial, created or derivative. It is known by the name of 'Kama' or 'Secular Pleasure,' the Third of the Four Noble Ends of Human life. By the word 'Kama' here is not meant 'Lust' in popular sense of the term; for the Lord described Himself in the Divine Song as 'Kama' which is not in opposition to 'Righteous conduct' (Dharma). As such it means and includes all forms of civic, political and social well-being.

Dharma or Order

But the attainment of either of the above two Ends is impossible without the acquirement of 'Dharma'. *Dharma* is that *Law* which holds together the physical and the social worlds in *order*. 'Law and Order' are, therefore, the implications of 'Dharma'. Without this 'Law and Order', as Sir John Woodroffe rightly interpretes, both the world and the society would fall into pieces. As such Dharma is opposed to *Adharma* or

Disorder which cannot possibly exist everywhere at one and the same time. It can exist only locally for the time being, since Order or Dharma must, from the very nature of things, re-assert itself, sooner or later. And in fact this is exactly what is meant when we say, "By the Grace of Lord, things will be all right; Righteousness will surely and ultimately prevail". But one thing which clearly emerges out of this is that the Law of Righteousness as implied and involved in the social application of Dharma is not any Law which is imposed from without. It is in the very nature of men to live harmoniously together in certain relations. And these are not arbitrarily imposed from without by any law-giver. They are the consequences of the working of a principle of Reason by which all men are distinguished from the rest of the animal world. This principle of Reason is held by the Hindus as the primary source of knowledge and final criterion. Vashista says, "Even a Shastra of purely human origin should be accepted, if it is conformable to reason. Anything else which is unreasonable even, though it be the word of the Rishi, should be rejected by one who follows reason. The word of a boy, if reasonable, should be accepted. Anything unreasonable should be rejected as of no more count than a blade of grass, even it be uttered by the Lotus-born (Brahma) himself. (Vide the Mumukshu Kanda, Book II, Chapter 18, vv. 2-3). So it is explained how a man of religion feels himself bound (by

Dharma), as it were to all beings; while the irreligious one is he who egotistically considers everything from his own narrow, limited self and interests without any regard for his fellowmen in the world at large. Indeed, all religions are agreed on the essentials of righteous conduct. All hold that selfishness in its widest sense is the root of all sin and crime. In fact, Dharma, conceived as such, is but the moral attitude of man towards his universe.

Artha or Economic Freedom

But man steeped in poverty cannot be expected to work along the lines of real *dharmā*, to follow the path of Righteous conduct without which the attainment of 'Kama' and 'Moksha' is well-nigh impossible. For, material conditions of life, taken as a whole, primarily determine the changes in human thought and habits of life. Indeed, the primary motive force in any social change is the system of economic production and distribution of wealth which obtains in a country at a given time. To its needs, all other forms of individual and collective life must adjust themselves whether consciously or unconsciously. It is with a view, therefore, to that Economic freedom (Arthamimansa) independent of which the achievement of the other ends is held well-nigh impossible for the most people, that mankind in this land of Jnanayoga and Karmayoga have been classified and organised on the basis of the economics of industry.

Indigenous Organisation

The importance of the classification of the human units for the purpose of conjoint action in the attainment of economic freedom is nowhere disputed. The classification of human units as illustrated by the system of castes in the country was originally based upon the differences of the people in their culture, talent, tendency and ability, that is upon the necessary division of labour in the economic complexities of the situation of things. You cannot do away with the industrial organisation of the people for the attainment of economic freedom. In the matter of social reconstruction we, it is true, can conceive of equality of rights, opportunities and liberties for all; but we surely cannot think of any equality of talents, functions or rewards. The attempt to abolish the industrial organisation from our society which is the necessary consequence of the classification of the people according to the nature of human industries, is, therefore, simply precocious. There must be a body of men as producers of raw materials; there must also be another body of men to work upon the raw materials into finished products which in the present mechanical age coincides with factory labour. In this way it can be demonstrated that we cannot do away with that class of people also who render expert services to the society and who have the special charge of the higher interests of culture on its spiritual side. Indeed, the fundamental economic classes of our society viz. the Sudras, the Vaisya, the Kshtriya, and the

Brahman, there must be in every well-organised human association of highly evolved character. It is in consequence of the economic organisation of our society according to the nature of human industries that Hindu society has not been a simple, un-evolved, homogeneous structure. In fact Hindu society is a highly evolved composite structure in consequence of its having had to take note of and allow for natural, cultural, traditional or functional differences among its members. Thus the highly evolved composite structure of Hindu society has been built up from the co-ordination of the different industrial groups on the basis of a natural unity in a communal brotherhood. It is held together by the whole organism obeying one law *i.e.*, by the allegiance of the component parts to a spiritual order of people who having renounced all profits and emoluments of the world were entrusted with the most sacred task of promoting Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. The economic organisation of Hindu society is, therefore, a marvellous institution to inspire the component groups to manage their own affairs in their own way, for the realisation of their personal, communal and common ends and ideals.

Communalism and Nationalism

But there are people who do not see eye to eye with us. First of all it is contended that three hundred millions of people divided into three hundred groups is fundamentally opposed to all principles of any united

action. The free play of communal pride and jealousies only breed dissensions and discords between the different groups. In consequence, the communal organisation of the Hindu society has been detrimental to the growth of Indian nationality. Differences being parent of antagonisms, the aim of collective moral progress in a people can only be reached when these differences are obliterated in the interest of a dead level of political unity. The doctrine of sameness, homogeneity and uniformity of beliefs and standards is, therefore, advocated as the one clue to an evolved moral life and social progress.

The Real Problem

But our friends forget that the real problem before the world is not to find ways and means either in the form of 'Class war' or any other thing for the transformation of things and beings into one homogeneous whole which is akin to universal dissolution; but for the co-ordination of the differences of races, religions and cultures and the like obtaining within the territorial limits of a country and to bring them as well under some ordered system of society where all the vital differences of race, religion and the like would be preserved only to make them helpful and contributory to the general good of the whole society and humanity.

The Principle of Nationality

And as regards the spirit of communal pride and its attendant evils, however gigantic they might be, in the

composite organisation as complained of, they are possible only so long as the industrial groups making up the whole structure are not informed and vitalised by a principle of common life, a common object of self-interest which is their cement and bond of union. And what is this cement and bond of union? It is no other than the Principle of Nationality. If sufficient care were taken by the exponents of Indian thoughts and leaders of public movement to bring home to the different component groups that they have two objects to pursue in their social life, viz., the special self-interest of the group and the general common interest of the whole society whereof they are but organs, then the free play of communal jealousies and the like would have long been suppressed for united action in a common cause. It is a truism to say that all organisation, industrial, political, social or religious are sure, in the long run, to produce evils of gigantic character if the units and parts of the institutions were not united to one another by the lively presence of some common object in which they were more or less interested. The argument that a communal scheme of life is contrary to the doctrine of evolution which means going forward and not backward, does not hold good in India amongst a people like the Hindus. And I, on the contrary, hold that evolution need not be identified with Darwinism. Europe from this point of view is still in the Stone Age in politics. A good deal of European civilisation with its barbarous weapons of destruction may well be described as retrograde. Indeed,

the civilisation of Europe cannot be termed as such an unqualified success that we should be ready to subvert the tried systems of India. Besides, any attempt at this by wholly ignoring the natural socialism of the Soil, will eventuate in discontentment, poverty and crime.

A Few Suggestions

In all gravity, therefore, Sisters and Brothers of Burma, I say that if India were to grow strong, survive in the struggle for existence, and fulfil her mission in the comity of nations, she will have to draw inspirations from the past history of her activities in the varied fields of her life and culture. The history of the cultural and social emancipation of France, Spain, Germany and Italy teaches the way we should follow in the assertion of our national individuality upon the environment. In the socio-religious reconstruction of India we shall have no doubt to take a firm stand on the threshold of the Scientific Present; but we will have to review as well the Past and forecast the Future. It is in this way by establishing an organic correlation with the Past and in friendly co-operation with the dominant Present that we shall have to give births to newer forms of life and institution. So a double conquest at every step we shall be making in the onward march of our social evolution.

Revive Religion—First Duty

Our *First* and foremost duty, therefore, is to restore religion in every act we do in the varied fields of our life.

For, activities divested of religious motives would be destitute of vision and enthusiasm for our people by reason of their being reduced as mere expediency. We have to bear in mind always that we shall have to confront a world of opposing forces with hope, courage and faith on the one hand, and with loyalty, goodwill and devotion to our fellow men on the other, if human life is to be harmoniously lived together. It is a mistake to suppose that religion is responsible for the social evils we happen to be surrounded with. "All the reformers," said Swami Vivekananda, "made the serious mistake of making religion accountable for all the horrors of priest-craft and degeneration and went to pull down the indestructible structure. And what was the result? Failure." It is high time for the religious leaders of our day to grasp in full the social significance of religion, drop their theological disputations, sink their petty sectarian differences and give religion the positive humanitarian trend which civilisation demands. They must combine and emphasise on the Universal aspects and values of religion which only exists for man and not man for religion.

Educate the Masses

The *Second* thing we have to do is to bring education to every home, even to those who are held by the bigots of the society as beyond the very pale of human intercourse. In the days of hoary antiquity the leading exponents of Hindu thought felt the necessity of educat-

ing every human being without exception. Even the distant "Chandal" had the right to education. In the Twenty-sixth Chapter of the Yayurveda it is enjoined that "the blissful Vedic knowledge should be imparted to all—the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Sudras, the Vaishyas and to the so-called 'untouchable, the "Charanas". Later on when the Vedas became a sealed book to the women and the Sudras downwards, the Epics were written, the Purans were compiled and the system of *Kathakata* was introduced for the education of the masses. Even ten years back the 'Pallis' of Bengal-villages teemed with primary schools or 'Pathsalas' where not only reading and writing were taught; but lessons on mathematics up to the standard of 'Shubhankari' were imparted to give to the people at large a workable education, the 'Tols' having been reserved for higher education. But where are those 'Pathsalas' now? Do the Primary schools set up under modern patronage fulfil the purpose? Can we not now form a Social Conscription so formulated whereby every educated Hindu must have to teach at least for an hour or two every day some five or seven boys or girls of the neighbourhood without fees? If some such scheme is evolved out then the problem of educating the masses will be solved in less than five years. The institution of 'Tols' should also be so reconstituted as to impart Scriptural knowledge to all classes of people within the Hindu fold. These reforms would not be very costly affairs if arrangements

are made to levy educational duties from our worthies on the occasions of festivals, marriages and Sradh-ceremonies in the families, the donors making it a point that they will contribute to the funds of those institutions only which have thrown their doors open for all earnest students whatever be their caste or creed within the Hindu fold.

A Movement for Artisan Class

Along with the imparting of literary and religious education, provisions should also be made for giving the artisan classes of the country a technical education to make them hold their own against the competitors in the markets. A movement for the workmen and artisan classes of the country whose forefathers planted with their own hands the seeds of Hindu civilisation into the soil of India, is indeed the crying need of the hour. Intellectuals and technical experts should come forward to help in the matter of ameliorating the material conditions of the Industrial classes along the lines of their traditional cultures with necessary variations of course to suit modern requirements. A mere creation of demands for indigenous goods in the market will not help the artisan classes; for capitals will combine to oust the artisan classes from the field of their own vocational activities.

Guard the "Family"

Thirdly, we must seek to impress upon the people by persistent propaganda work that each caste is good

and great in its own sphere. The system mitigates the rigours of competition and tends to solve in a greater degree the problems of unemployment and bread which press for immediate solution. But every attempt in a peaceful way should be made to do away with the privileges which attach to caste. In Europe the Individual is the social unit ; but in India it is the caste that happens to be the social unit, while the 'Family' is the communal unit of the society. So in returning to the sources of our own being, we must guard the 'Family' which is but a form of communal association against disruption by the introduction of the ideas and ideals of Individualism which is a disintegrating force. Europe is suffering from an excess of Individualism in matters of 'Family-life'. And we must take a lesson from it.

Woman and Society

Fourthly, the question of 'the Family' brings in the question of 'Women in Hindu Society'. But the question might be simplified by the interrogatories,—Has woman like man a primary, individual and responsible existence? Or—She as a reproductive medium, as a wife, mistress or mother of children, is merely a secondary personality with derivative responsibility? If woman is taken to represent a primary existence with all the responsibilities of a man in the family, she must be allowed to choose her own husband in her own way and to select her manner of living according to her own best wishes.

But if it is maintained that women in general deserve well of the social organism but they are not responsible people in the family, their responsibility being derived from the husband or from the children they bear to them, we open the door to all the abuses of the Past. Although the problem is a pressing one, it cannot be solved by man. The womankind should be sufficiently educated to solve their problem in their own way. We men, as Swamiji said, really cannot decide things for them. But the question is whether woman is really endowed with a derivative personality and consequently with no responsibility of her own in the scheme of Hindu civilisation? From the life-history of Gargi, Maitri, Lila, Lilavati, Madalasa and a host of others, it is clearly seen that women in ancient period were recognised as leaders of thought and movements. Not only was a woman recognised as the Goddess of Learning but the daughter of Rishi Ambhirna was recognised by the ancient as the revealer of the Great Devi Sukta of the Rigveda (Vide Rik. V Mandal 10, Sukta 125). Indeed, it was really fitting that a woman should proclaim to the world the Divine Motherhood on which Sri Ramakrishna laid so much stress. The Hymn says "I am the Sovereign Queen, the Treasury of all Treasures; the chief object of worship whose all-pervading self all Devatas manifest, whose birthplace is in the midst of the casual waters; who breathing forth gives form to all created worlds and yet extends beyond them, so vast I am in greatness."

Guard the Family—The Communal Unit

Fifthly, Family is the cradle of civilisation. It has furnished the very ideals which the Hindus in the past strove to realise in their wider social life. But the requirements of the Family for the good birth and proper rearing of children are sacrificed now-a-days for education, business and industry. This must be immediately guarded against. For without good family the flame of spirituality could not be kept burning in the world. Indeed, in proportion as the 'Family' is permeated by unselfish love and so made pure and stable, the flame of spirituality will mount higher.

Caste or the Social Unit

Sixthly, from the Communal unit we come to the Social unit in the scheme of Hindu Civilisation. When the Mahomedans first came to India, there were sixty crores of Hindus here. At that time the constitution of the society was so flexible and elastic that not only the Hindus took to sea voyages but carried trade to distant lands and climes. Yet they did not lose their caste. But their number dwindled into twenty crores towards the close of the Mahomedan regime. And with the dominance of Christian Imperialism here, a further two crores of Hindus adopted the faith and social polity of their rulers.

The process of conversion of the Hindus into other faiths still continues in other different parts of India..

The *first* thing we have to do is to strengthen the hands of the Hindu missionaries to enable them to work in these places of conversion and *secondly* provisions should effectively be made to take back into the Hindu fold those who left their mother-religion by Shudhi, initiation and the like as prescribed in the Shastras. If a woman of any caste could be purified by a Brahman worshipper in *Kulachar* to sit with him in the religious congregation with an equal status, I, for myself, find no reason why in the ordinary social affairs, a member of our society who once out of folly or pressure left his religion, should not be taken back into our fold, if he or she really wanted to come back. So far my knowledge goes Hinduism does not condemn any body to eternal damnation here or herein-after.

Untouchability

Seventhly, the removal of untouchability which has been eating into the vitals of the society. By the removal of untouchability, is not meant the fusion and assimilation of all castes into a homogeneous whole, into a uniformity of standards and beliefs. It simply means the removal of untouchability by a mere accident of birth which stands against their getting the same privileges in public places which the caste-Hindus get. Not only the public tanks and wells should be thrown open to their use; but also the temple-gates should be kept open for their offering worship to the presiding deities therein.

It is unfortunate that people should be attributing political motives behind these sundry reforms of purely social character; but it shows that the possessing class enjoying certain privileges from the prolonged indifference of the people who lost all sense of corporate life under alien predominance would not surrender so easily. Indeed, as Harold Laski says, "the history of things like franchise, education, administration of justice, the laws of inheritance, of, that is to say, privilege in general, is not the history of its voluntary surrender in the West." "Had the people of England," remarked the late Mr. Gladstone, "obeyed the precept to exchew violence and maintain order, the liberties of this country would never have been obtained." The question of Temple-entry is not a question of the influence of gems, mantrams or medicinal herbs that it should be beyond the pale of human reason to solve it impartially for the enforcement in a peaceful way of social justice. Those who say it are mere enemies of social progress. The Institution of Maths and Temples are but the embodiments of the religious life of the Hindus. They are co-ordinate in importance with Hinduism itself. Only through the suitable organisation can the religious life of the people express itself and be developed in the mass of individuals. So matters should not be left where they are. The whole society must take the question up; for, a cancer in one part of the social structure is sure to bring disease in other parts of the organism. In short, Hinduism must be Hinduised.

Concluding Remarks

Indeed, Sisters and Brothers, it is for the Hinduisation of Hinduism that Bhagvan Sri Ramakrishna came to the earth. Deeds always count for more than professions in human life. Sri Ramakrishna by his own *sadhana* has proven to the world that not only every religion is true and, therefore, there is no occasion for sectarian quarrels; but he also demonstrated in his life that every individual soul was an expression of an inward Divinity. And to him no *paria* was untouchable. He himself had cleansed the most filthy place by his long matted hairs to kill the egoism in him, if there were a bit of it, to stand in his way to the realisation of Brahma in everything. The Hindu daily declares, "I am the Deva and non other. I am Brahma who is beyond all grief. I am a form of Sacchidananda whose nature is purity and liberty to an eternity." And yet we, in our daily practice, follow the 'religion of the kitchen.' Sri Ramakrishna taught us that so long we keep this 'Don't touchism' in our practical life, we remain bound hand and foot by the shackles of *Avidya* without the cutting asunder of which by *Vidyasakti* or the powers of knowledge, we cannot attain to freedom. This is true as in the spiritual world as it is in the social world. Now that India is entering upon a new stage of social evolution, a stage of awakened social consciousness, of higher social and ethical ideals, the antiquated authoritarian control which sprang from the suppression of one group by

another in the growing complexities of social life, cannot be maintained. Hinduism must find a new basis for its social control. That new basis lies in the rational like-mindedness, the intelligent purpose and will of individuals. It must seek its unity not through coercive authority but through the sympathetic understanding and intelligent purpose of the whole people forming the bulk of the population.
