

Indian Social Reform

1914

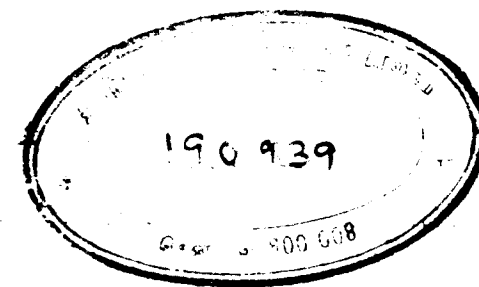
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Introduction.

BY

(The Hon'ble Rao Bahadur Ramanbhai Mahipatram Nilkanth, B.A., L.L.B.
Vakil, Ahmedabad).

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The object of this compilation is to collect and publish in a series of handy volumes noteworthy pronouncements on Social Reform, including addresses delivered at the Social Conferences held in different parts of the country and original papers on several subjects relating to Social Reform. The compilation would thus form a sequel to the very valuable work published by Mr. C. Y. Chintamani in 1901 under the title of "Indian Social Reform." Mr. Chintamani's work ended with the heavy and irreparable loss which the cause of Social Reform suffered by the death of the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade whose mighty genius and towering personality were a source of untold strength and inspiration to the cause. It is time that Social Reform literature, subsequent to that event, should be brought together from scattered ends and have its strength focussed.

The different problems of Social Reform have no doubt already been discussed at length in several treatises and addresses. But, the question of Social Reform is a permanent one, and its problems and their progress always require examination, discussion and dissertation. It will, therefore, never do to rest content with what has already been said on the subject, and a publication like the present one has its justification not only in the eminent thoughts which it preserves, but also in the record of changing phases of society which it presents and in the perennial interest in the building of the nation which it emphasises.

The unreasoning opposition with which the Social Reform movement was met at one time has now generally disappeared; and, though wild and rabid attacks against Social Reform and Social Reformers are still in evidence now and then, such hostility has become rather exceptional and it meets with no approval from the body of the thinking public. The reactionary movement, which led a section of Indians to invent casuistic arguments in defence of every evil custom prevailing in Indian Society, has become practically defunct, and educated people have generally ceased to take interest in the mysticism which attributed esoteric wisdom to the most pernicious of Social practices.

But, while the Social Reform movement has arrived at a stage when it has not to contend with Antipathy, it has to be on its guard that antipathy is not succeeded by apathy, as is the fate of various public causes in this country. And in the case of Social Reform, in the absence of an adequate propaganda, apathy is likely to come from two sources: first, from the unenlightened and orthodox people who, when they find themselves confronted with the new forces of civilization, resign themselves to fate and continue to pursue their old ways with absolute indifference to what surrounds them; and secondly, from the easy going educated people who, while they adopt such reformed ways in social matters as promote their comfort, convenience and domestic happiness and lead to no trials and troubles, are unwilling to endanger the even tenor of their lives by labouring on the determination of the principles of Social Reform or by exercising themselves in attempting to disseminate those principles for the sake of national elevation. Apathy of both these kinds is a great peril, greater in some respects even than antipathy, for, while antipathy would put the Social Reform movement on its mettle and call forth all its assertive energy, apathy would lull it into a false sense of security and would at the same time drive deeper the national degeneration by engendering a spirit of toleration for what is known to be evil and untrue. To

combat with this danger of apathy is another reason why Social Reform topics should be discussed continually from various stand-points and why the literature of such discussion should be sent out to the public in a collective form.

As remarked above, an adequate propaganda of Social Reform is a great necessity. It is necessary, in order to send out the message of Social Reform over the whole length and breadth of the country, to instil its principles into the minds of the people, and to clearly define the line of conduct to be pursued in achieving the reformation in view. The last of these objects must be given its due importance, for though active opposition to the principles of Social Reform has dwindled down to very small proportions, there still remain objections to some of the methods and measures advocated by the Social Reform movement. These objections are urged with varying degrees of desire to promote reform, but, they may be dealt with as proceeding from a genuine solicitude for remedying evils, the element of captiousness originating from unwillingness to take action being disregarded for this purpose. The raising of the age of marriage, the education of women, the abolition of polygamy, the curtailment of marriage expenses, these and some other measures of Social Reform have passed beyond the stage of controversy, and no objections worth the name have to be dealt with in determining the line of

conduct to be pursued in these matters. But, there are subjects such as those of foreign travel, widow re-marriage, marriages between castes and sub-castes, the elevation of the depressed classes etc., where objections as to measures and methods are urged by some of those who are generally in sympathy with the Social Reform movement and who would like to see these questions also dealt with in the programme of the movement. Of course, those who have objections to anything whatever being done in these matters do not belong to this class. Those who maintain that the Hindus should never go beyond the seas, that the present lot of widows in Indian Society is all that is desirable, that marriages should continue to be restricted within the fold of castes and sub-castes as at present, and that the depressed classes should not be brought out of their present low and despised condition and should be preserved as they are, so that they may continue to render the lowest order of services to the other classes, are no well-wishers of India, however much they may boast of their patriotism. The only way of dealing with their objections is to place before them ideals of liberty and progress, and to impress upon their minds the principle that all members and all sections of a society have equal rights of being allowed to obtain happiness, and that the society, in which some members and some sections deny to other members and other sections the opportunity of attaining to happiness in life which they themselves

enjoy, cannot wield itself into a nation and cannot possess that righteousness which exalteth a nation. If the incalculable mischief wrought by caste fails to appeal to them so far that they would not even look at the havoc which is being created by restrictions on marriages between castes and sub-castes, at the wide spread frauds and abductions which the paucity of brides is producing in several castes and sub-castes, and at the stern fate of extinction which, owing to this situation, is looming over these castes and sub-castes, love of their country is, indeed, the one thing which is required to be instilled in their minds.

The objections of the first mentioned class of objectors to the measures and methods alluded to above require to be met by a continuous output of literature on Social Reform discussing in detail all the *pros and cons* of the subject, and pointing out how particular methods are indispensable and how particular measures are the ones most likely to accomplish the reform in view. This would remove misunderstanding of the problems wherever it exists and would make the position clear to all thinking men. It would bring home to them the conviction that if the social, economic and political well-being of the nation makes it absolutely necessary that an increasing number of Indians should, from time to time, visit foreign civilized countries, there ought to be

no social impediments whatever in the way of such journeys; the conviction that, if the grave injustice done to widows condemning them to a life of misery and driving them to paths of shame and sinfulness sullies the moral life of the nation and clouds its ideals of liberty, equality and justice, it is absolutely necessary that the condition of widows should be ameliorated by allowing them freedom to marry and providing them with means of education and self-help; the conviction that, if the growth of the Indian nation to robust manhood and robust womanhood is not to be stultified, it is absolutely necessary that the water-tight compartments into which castes and sub-castes have chained down broken fragments of society should give way and make room for harmonious assimilation; the conviction that, if it is unrighteous as well as impolitic to brand a fifth part of the population with the stigma of untouchableness and to drive them out of the pale of society, it is absolutely necessary that the hand of brotherhood and fellow-citizenship should be held forth to those that are called the depressed classes, that their up-lifting should be the common concern of Indian Society, and that instead of such a large

bulk of the people being cast out as wastrels, their life and their energy should be brought to blend with the national life and national energy of India.

If this publication would provide a nucleus for the extensive literature on Social Reform that is so urgently necessary, Messrs. M. R. Krishna Rao & Co. would have the satisfaction of having rendered an eminent service to this noble and sacred cause.

AHMEDABAD. }
26-1-1914. } RAMANBHAI MAHIPATRAM NILKANTH.



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Pandit Ramachar Sharma M. A.,

Sahityacharya.

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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

AT

THE INDIAN NATIONAL
SOCIAL CONFERENCE,

held at

Banbipore in 1912.

For some centuries we have not been what we ought to be. We have always been praising our own past and condemning others indiscriminately instead of condemning our own folly and appreciating others' merits. We have been boasting of India's plenty and temperate climate or admiring our innocent illiterate brethren instead of condemning our dirty towns with their hellish drains and dust or our villages with malarious pools and rotting wells, inhabited

by myriads of men and women not knowing the ordinary laws of health and day by day forgetting the use of the plough and of the spindle through their swelling caste pride. We have been calling others Mlechhas while we should better apply the title to ourselves. Illiterate gaolers of our wives, slaves to mediæval customs, prisoners of our plague-stricken homes, neglecting all our ancestral science and philosophy, adopting ignorant mysticism and evil fashions from foreigners, unable to assimilate modern knowledge even after contact with Europeans for centuries, are we the persons fit to call others Mlechhas? We should rather admire those who are to-day far ahead of us in love of liberty, in devotion to knowledge and in enterprising habits, in short, in all that is comprised under the two terms morality and wisdom. We should learn these qualities from the advanced moderns as well as from our own distant ancestors.

The evils that beset us are quite mediæval. They are neither ancient as many lovers of antiquity allege nor characteristic of the advanced moderns as some who pretend to espouse the cause of advancement boldly declare. The *Manu-samhita* calls illiterate men wooden elephants

and stuffed beasts and elsewhere immoral persons are said to be mere brutes. Let us awake therefore and drive away illiteracy and immorality from this country if it is our motherland and we are its children. Forgetting that morality is the true religion and science is the real education, we are under the cover of religion committing gross immoralities, sacrificing our tender boys and girls, the hopes of the communities, to the demonesses of early marriage, purda life, caste rigidity and social extravagance. Under the pretext of acquiring knowledge we are wasting the country's money by crores and are ruining our cultured hereditary brain in gathering lore that will enable us to have an ancient or modern native or foreign word for a domestic article or will make us adepts in table-turning and ghost-invocations or will prepare us for the grand task of extorting *dakshinas* from the weary pilgrims coming in borrowed shawls from a debt-impooverished home. Our ordinary men and women are unhealthy and illiterate. Our Graduates and Pandits are still more unhealthy, impractical, superstitious and bent upon useless learning and hairsplitting discussions. Even our so called reformers are busy with spreading the fashion of the janeu-thread among their lowly brethren or are in search of passages

for or against idolatry in the divine books and waste the best part of the young student's time in learning methods of Homa and prayer or in learning by rote a portion of the scriptures.

Our highest men, I mean our Sadhus, are averse to learning and lead a life too well-known to require comment. Once more I say therefore, let us be up and doing, let us be progressive, let us abolish the purdah and allow our women to enjoy heaven's own free air. Let us educate our boys and girls, imparting to them sound knowledge of facts, and drive away ignorance, superstition and love of the empty from the land. Let us remove the compulsion of celibacy from our widows and sadhus and avoid thereby the heinous crimes (including infanticide, suicide and what not) daily increasing in the land. Let us confront the caste-boycott and wander over the earth in pursuit of truth and wealth. Let us stop early and senile marriages and give a chance of healthy growth and loving life to our progeny. Let us try to discourage mendicancy and utilise the hordes of able-bodied men and women saved thus from a vagabond life for the daily increasing needs of labour. The purdah indolence, early marriage, caste rigidity, toleration of immorality and mendicancy, celibacy

under compulsion of any adult member of the society and want of a sound system of mass education are the stigmas of our society. Health, wealth, knowledge, nationality or any other noble object of human aspiration is utterly impossible for us unless the leaders of the country wash away these stigmas. Neither the Government which are already sufficiently busy with protecting the country from internal and external troubles and have to steer clear between the conflicting factions of so many popular sects most of which put forth a religious protest against any reform, nor the masses vegetating in ignorance and superstition can be blamed for all this. That our society is still where Europe was some 10 centuries ago or Japan was half a century back is decidedly the fault of the leaders of the society who are in their political, religious and scholastic schemes wasting crores of their country's money. The masses are obedient to your call. Yearly your Societies, Companies, Conferences, Samajas, Mandalas and other public or semi-public bodies are consuming countless money of the fated land. With that money you could start mills or theatres, purchase ships to facilitate foreign voyage or organise lectures on mystic subjects, establish Universities of the Oxford—Cambridge type or found institutions

teaching you peasant's songs and worthless pedantry, make parks and dining rooms or build useless monuments. But the choice of our leaders has mostly been on the wrong side and the nation has no prospect before it so far as social and educational matters are concerned.

Let us study our problems a little more closely and see whether there is any plea for what you are omitting or committing. Against all that is needed to-day for the advancement of the country in order to bring it up to the international standard of social, moral and intellectual life, there are protests from two distinct sides—from the sastric and from the rational. The problems that are before us will themselves when closely studied expose the emptiness of those protests. Let us take the purda first. Seclusion of women is condemned by your sastras which say

† *Arakshitagruheruddhah Kamambruthyapta
bandhubhik !*

*Athmanamathmanayasthu Raksheyustha
ssurakshithah !!*

† అరక్షితగృహేర్ముద్ధాః కామంభ్రుత్యాప్తా
బంధుభిః !

ఆత్మనామాత్మనాయస్త రక్షయిష్యంతే సతతః !

In India the accursed purda was due to dastardly violence on women prevailing in a disturbed period of the country's history. To-day—blessed be your enlightened rulers—you have person, property and honour as safe as at any time or in any country. What is then the use of the purda? It is degenerating your progeny into very unhealthy, consumptive, asthmatic, unheroic and useless men and women. It has made marriage a loveless ceremonial—mockery—resulting in endless misery. Some of you will laugh and say 'well we are free from suffragettes and are quite happy with our shy women'. These men, it appears, are blind to their own miseries and are contented with a sight of other's flaws. They will have cripples for their sons for fear of having to train a boy stronger than themselves, live with consumptive women spoiling the air they breathe rather than with heroic consorts fit to rule an empire. All violence is to be condemned whether from men or from women. But for fear of violence no one is entitled to keep in captivity any fellow being. If one commits a violence, throw him into a prison. But because any strong man may commit theft any day, should we have all strong men in prison or should we cease to produce strong boys? Can any one contend that the

fair sex are more capable of committing any immorality or violence than their husbands or brothers. Scrutinize your own conduct and ask your conscience and you will see that you men are certainly more liable, at least in freedom according to your own hypothesis, to anything that you expect from a woman and that she has greater reasons, if your arguments are followed, to keep you in purda than you to keep her in purda. We just lock up our wife, the natural guard of our morality, and do what we like while she ought to be as free in her movements to see what you are doing as you to see her in all her behaviour. Let her be your own permanent companion and you will save your own and her own morality and health. But let her live away in seclusion while you are roving in cities, and you will destroy your own and her own morality and health. Purda life entails so much expense and trouble that married students, traders, travellers and others cannot live with their wives and thereby victimise themselves and their wives to temptations which no human being can withstand. In pre-Mahomedan times we have almost no trace of purda here. We find Dushyanta freely courting Sakuntala and Sita going to the forest with her husband. There was no salic law in the land

and we see in the Raghuvamsa the Queen of Agnivarna ruling his kingdom after his death with his permission in a council of elders.

† *Meelyhsardhamstharavirasachivyh hemasimhasanastha!*
Rajneerajyam vidivadasishath bharthuravya
hatagnya !!

We have in Brihadaranyaka an account of Gargi holding debates with Yajnavalkya in a public assembly in this very land of purda (Behar). In this very land where purda is to-day more observed than anywhere in India we had male and female students studying together in the Magadha Universities as in the west to-day. Our great poet Bhavabhuti says:—

‡ *Sisuthvamva sthreenam bhavatu nanubandyasi*
jagatah !
Gunam poojasthanam gunishu nacha linjam
nacha rayaha !!

† మొదలై సార్థంకర్తవ్యమై హేమసింహాసనస్థాః
 రాజ్యం విదివదాసిథ భర్తృవ్యాధాత్మభావైః
 ‡ సుత్యంవా స్త్రీశాంకరం ననబంధ్యాది బంధైః
 గుణాంపూజాస్థానం గుణిషుచరణిం నచరణయః

Even in your religious worships you have images of Gaurishankar, Radhakrishna and Sitarama although you would not allow your own wives' photos to be seen by the world. Your own ancestors, your own religious guides, your own brethren even of to-day in the Southern India have nothing to do with the purda. But you are dipping a palanquin with your poor old wife fluttering in it into water for fear of the public gaze falling upon her or making your women travel inside suffocating *canals*. What a strange perverseness and what a fall ! Our brethren have a ceremony called *Kanyani-rikshana* (observing the girl before marriage). But what is the real meaning of the ceremony to-day ? No one sees a fingertip of the bride, if there be a bride at all, in the moving pile of clothes, and in one instance a poor neighbour of mine was married to a mortar while many other bridegrooms have been married to males. I am not one of those who condemn pilgrimage or temples altogether, for, when going to temples or during a pilgrimage, our women have a chance to taste the bliss of freedom. But I wonder why our brethren, often allowing their women to travel with sadhus and pandas of dubious morality or thrusting them into the den of a sanctuary, do not walk with their wives and

sisters openly in the maidans. The great Bhaktas might forget anything else in their Bhakti. But have they forgotten the Rasa where Gopas and Gopis danced freely as if in a modern ball-dance ? Sri Krishna did not dance with a thousand Gopies as alleged. Any one who knows life would think it impossible and absurd in any human society. Really couples of Gopas and Gopis danced in the Rasa if Rasa means anything real. But, whatever it be, does it indicate the existence of any purda here ? I ask those who decry modern Europe whether it brings the modern Indians or the modern Europeans nearer to the ancient Indians. You will see if you have your eyes open that, not only in this respect of having no purda but in many others, old India and modern Europe are almost similar and it is no wonder. Old India was the best country of its day and Modern Europe is the best country of to-day.

Early marriage is closely connected with the purda in its origin and in its career. By early marriage we mean generally the infant marriage of both the sexes. That is lamentable of course. But there is a more limited meaning in which it is understood in Behar and U. P. It is marriage of boys within 10 to girls of 18 to

40. Owing to the existence of such horrible practices leading to polygamy, suicide, feticide and many other evils, it would be better for us to study the whole question of marriage. It is well-known that India had weddings where a grown up man courted a woman, compare Sakuntala and Dushyanta, or where a girl in puberty had a Swayamvara choosing her own husband publicly. The medical authorities of the East say that there ought to be no marriage before 16 of a girl and before 25 of a man. Manus recommends marriage of girls over 12 and of men over 30 ordinarily

† *Thrimśedvarsho vakethkanyam hrudhyam dīcā-
dasevarshikeem.*

and does not hold parents responsible if they do not marry their girls up till 3rd year of their puberty. Yajnavalkya's text on the subject is explained by Vijnaneswara as implying an examination of the bride and the bridegroom whether they have attained manhood or womanhood before actual marriage. Under the Vedic Sutras consummation is a part and the most essential part of marriage and is compulsory on the fourth day after ceremonial wedding. The

† శ్రీమద్రామాయణం పంచమోధ్యాయః పంచమోధ్యాయః పంచమోధ్యాయః పంచమోధ్యాయః

very recognition of the Gandharva as an important kind of marriage logically implies that consummation is essential to marriage, that neither infant marriage is a marriage nor infant widows are widows. When this was the meaning of marriage, the products of Indian marriages were heroes like Bharata after whom the country is named, inventors or discoverers like Charaka and Arya Bhata and philosophers like the illustrious Buddha or Krishna. But if we see what absurdities are going on to-day and what atrocities are being perpetrated to-day under the sacred name of marriage in this holy birthplace of the greatest of the world's Dharma, in the cradle of science and philosophy, we are simply astounded. We have here mock marriages between boys of 6 and girls of twenty, rarely, even between men of thirty and old girls of forty with grey hair and sometimes between old lads of 80 and girls of 4 or 5. This would dumbfounder any civilized man but there is much more in our blessed land than this to-day. Men have been married to cats and trees, girls are married to idols and pipals, nay, men have been married to mortars or even to a creature of their own sex. I know a case in which, a boy of 10 was married to an old bachelor of 80. But the fraud was discovered the next day and

when the venerable bridegroom or rather boy-groom demanded his bride, his brother-in-law wiped off the red paint from his brother-bride's head and applying it with his own hand to his infant sister's forehead offered her to the old fellow. This fellow did not like to take home such a tender girl and she was left with her brothers. A few years after, her so-called husband (who had really married her brother) died and the girl now of 35 still lives unmarried almost as a harlot to the eternal disgrace and shame of her own and her sham husband's village and Tamsa. But remember that tyranny brings its own punishment, howsoever tender and weak our victims are. You have made marriage a mockery or a trade. You maintain contradictions like infant widows against all the Sastras and common sense. You are shaving your widows to make them look ugly. Some of you give them not a single drop of water on an Ekadasi day even in the terrible summer, committing thus outright murder in many instances. To conceal all this tyranny, you keep your women in purda and ignorance. But the result has been that your boys are dying a premature death sometimes through decay and sometimes by suicide at the hopeless life that they see before them and your widows by hun-

dreds and thousands are secretly or openly taking to evil life and the land is seething with real or concealed polygamy, polyandry, adultery, whoredom and many other moral evils inevitable under parda and infant marriage. In many cases those who are against widow-marriage have been detected leading their pregnant widows to holy places and leaving them in haunts of sin or deserting them somehow. Today we, the children of the poor benighted Bharatavarsha, shudder at the very name of widow-marriage or inter-marriage, forgetting Manusamhita which says

+ *Akshamalavasishlena samyukthadhama yonijal*
Sarangemandapalena jagamabhyarha neeyataam!!

and not caring to keep up in mind that Satyavati, the deserted wife of Parasara, was remarried to Sanatan, Bhishma's father, and was the source of the continued existence of the proud lunar race of Kshatriyas. Divorce and remarriage like many other philanthropic

† అక్షమాలావశిష్టేన సంయుక్తాధమా యోనిజా |

సారంగేమండపాలేన జగమభ్యరహ నీయాతామ్ ||

institutions are more liberally sanctioned by our Dharmasastras than even by modern European codes.

‡ *Nashte mrute pravrajite kleebeche patite patow !*
Panchaswapsu nareenam patiranyo vidheeyate !!

Some of the so-called Pandits have gratuitously presumed that in this verse *Patow* archaic for classic *Patau* means a betrothed and not a real husband. But mere archaism does not imply difference of meaning. These two radical evils—parda and loveless mock marriage—have contributed to the decay of the Indian communities much more than anything else, if we except only one thing—I mean the caste rigidity to which we come.

Caste has had a strange history and has had a very baneful influence upon our life in comparatively recent ages. It has been hinted above that it is connected with the degeneration of marriage in the country. Forced prohibition of intermarriage means retardation of love marriage, and unless we are ready to stamp

‡ నష్టే మృతే ప్రవ్రాజితే క్లీబేచ పతితే పతౌ !

పంచస్వాపసు నారేణాం పతిరన్యో విధేయతే !

out love (*Shringar* or *Adhiras*), the noblest emotion altogether from our communities and are prepared to replace it by the couple of emotions called *Hasya* and *Bibhatsa* as we have almost done by this time, it is simply impossible to maintain it. Viswamitra, Parasara, Dushyanta, Santanu, Vasishtha and others could not maintain it nor did they see any need of maintaining it. Caste which has prevented us from preserving an international standard of morality and owing to which we cannot see the world while the whole world can thrust itself into our country and which, combined with other religious superstitions, led to the fall of India—as Count Okuma truly remarks somewhere, this Caste, the great curse of this fated land and the pride of our communities was originally nothing but varna (colour distinction) as the Indian word indicates. In the pre-Vedic age the Aryans outside India were all white (*Arya* or *Hansa* Varna). Then in the early Vedic age, coming to India, they had to face the Dasa Varna or the blacks (*Yo dasam varnam adharam Guahakah*, Rigveda). Later on in the same age owing to a difference of profession combined perhaps with influence of other border tribes, we had the white Brahmans (the learned Aryans from North-West), the Red Kshatriyas (warlike races from

South-West), the yellow Vaisyas (a mercantile tribe from North-East) as indicated in the Purushasukta, in the Brahmanas and in the Puranas. Thus the four Varnas (colours) arose, but all along intermarriage and interdining went on among them as among the Kelts, the Goths, the Jews and the Slavs in Europe. So late as in the times of Pandavas, we find a pilot girl (Satyavati) becoming the legal spouse of a proud lunar race king, and Brahmanas eating *Bhat* at the hands of Yudhis-thira in his yajnas. A degeneration appears to be setting in before Siddhartha, the great Buddha. But that great philosopher of Behar, the greatest of all the founders of religions, tried to stem the current of degeneration. By refuting Theism, psychism, caste, priests and revelation, by recognizing perception and inference as the only valid modes of evidence and by establishing morality as the only real Dharma, the great prophet of Behar through his Dharma regenerated directly over one-third of the earth's population and through the distant influence of that Dharma, almost the whole world. Glory to the great man that among the oriental nations only one that cherished his teachings has become a successful rival of the great western Aryans. But after Skandagupta, or

at the latest after Harsha, the nation built by Krishna and Buddha succumbed to its own senility and to the torrents of invasions from outside, and the medieval mystics began to engross its attention with whatever is false in a cypher Brahman and other abstractions, or allegories, strange myths of transmutations, superfine rituals and rigidities, deities or devils existing only in words, etc. In short, the nation was torn by these men into factions and reduced to slavery—physical, intellectual and moral—from which even the recent so-called reformers themselves have not yet risen, and instead of or along with the castes or sects have arisen samajes fighting with one another for vacuous abstractions and myths.

To-day, India is in a strange plight. All appears to be confusion, whatever castes or sects be, whether good or evil, they have lost all reality and only shadows or hypocrisies are haunting us and intervening between stern truth and ourselves. Accepting the most rigorous definition of caste, we ask : Are those Brahmans, or Kshatriyas or Vaishyas who openly drink in brothels and eat *Usina* rice and empty bottles of soda and lemonade and marry their widows? Are those Brahmans who eat puri, mithai at

individually waste hundreds and thousands in feeding sadhus and Brahmanas and give a good "dakshina" for a "Vyavastha". Certainly the course pursued so far by this conference and its leaders will not do. The orthodoxy are strong. They can employ all the four policies—Sama, Dana, Bheda and Danda. They can authoritatively reconcile any patitas by the Prayaschitta or Suddhi method. They can gratify Pandas and priests and mahants with donations. They can win over men and women by their pliant religious tricks and temptations of offers of Swarga and Punarjanma compensating all loss of this short life. Ultimately, they can punish the greatest man by calling him a Patita or Mlecha and lo! being unable to marry in India or move in any of the castes, like the German Emperor before the Pope, the proud fellow falls at the feet of an Indian pope and has to undergo a mock ritual of Sanataniya-prayaschitta or Arya suddhi. What can you do, my poor conferentists? No one can accept your Suddhi. You cannot waste money in temple donations. No orthodox man or woman can mix with you without losing orthodoxy. You cannot outcaste the orthodoxy. All this is your weakness. But there is one strength in you, stick to that and you are winners in the

great fight. Heroism, theoretical and practical, that is your great strength to-day, and has been the great strength of the reformers from the Great Buddha down to a humble member of this conference. This heroism is partially realised. Now, let us try to perfect it as far as practicable. Let us found a society of Indians or of men if you like. Those who forsake the medieval religions must be enlightened men and they cannot join a church again whether it be of a Dayanand or of a Ram Mohan Roy or even of greater and older prophets. *Medievalism* once forsaken leads naturally and permanently only to science and philosophy or to supervision and not to conversion, to anthroposophy and not to theosophy. Leave conversionists, therefore, and organize a national human society which shall give shelter to all the outcastes, where there will be no sectarianism, no purda, no loveless mock marriages, and no caste difference, where, irrespective of all mystic distinction, every one will eat what he likes so long as he does not violate medical laws, where both the sexes will work together freely so long as they do not violate laws of chastity, where an Amundsen or a Peary having lived on the dog's flesh in the

polar regions will be as welcome as a *swapaki* Pandit. This organization of social freedom will successfully cope with the boycott scheme of the orthodoxy. Found a Geographical Society with ships allowing foreign journeys free of cost to those unable to pay their fares and thousands of the most orthodox persons will go to the most distant corners of this planet. That will in a year break the caste fetters. Have clean and cheap social dining rooms in every town and at every Railway station and what remains of the caste-shadow disappears at once. It is the Christian or Mahomedan tinge and costliness of the hotels and restaurants that is preventing them from being utilised by the orthodoxy; I can assure you as a very orthodox man whom the orthodoxy has yet ever failed to boycott. Have some self-control and self-respect. Don't dine with those who do not dine with you. My relatives once told me that non-observance of Purda in my family was not desirable and the very next month when I visited them and they pressed me to take food cooked by their wives, I told them plainly that the parda women are consumptive and might be leprous even—who knows?—and often do not bathe for months and that hence I did not like to eat food cooked by them. This

was a sound rebuff. But the course requires strength. I had to cook my own food in a garden and that cannot be done by Hotel eating College graduates. They are compelled to eat food cooked by Purda women of their orthodox brethren who hold them to be patitas. You come back from England and waste your money in Hotels or eat everywhere without self-control and lo! the orthodoxy hold you very low and point their fingers at you. They say to their sheep—this is the lot of those who go to Europe, well, lads, do you wish to be patitas? That is not the way of regenerating your country. Unless you show even by a few examples that the most orthodox men can go to Europe, sea-voyage cannot gain favour of the orthodoxy. I am going to Europe very soon and will show you how to remain orthodox even after that and perfectly reconcile the orthodoxy with sea-voyage. Even when I come back from Russia or from America, I shall not allow a purda woman or an *usina* eating Brahman to touch the food, my wife or my brother or I myself am cooking for my use and you will see my patent orthodoxy will not be denied by the best Brahmans and thenceforth the most orthodox people will go to Europe only if you pay their fare. Self-control, consistent logic,

fearlessness, non-sectarianism and open-fistedness in social and educational matters ought to be our watchwords and in a few years we shall constitute the orthodoxy and all else will be confessed to be heretical. The orthodoxy can refrain from whatever is not up to their false ideal while you eat whatever is placed before you even if it is against your true ideal. They have their philosophies while you have only theosophies. They can boycott you while you cannot boycott them. Their sects—Vaishnavas, Saktas, Saivas (and even Jainas and Vaishnavas among the Agrawalas) can interdine and intermarry while your reformers even are advertising for Srivastavya or Arya or Brahmo boys for their widows. They are spending crores in Jagannatha Yatras or Veda Vidyalyas or sectarian missions or Dharmasalas or prayer temples while you are not spending a farthing on cheap ships, on social missions, on mass education and on social *asramas*. How can you then hope for a victory in this fight between our infant society only a day old yet and the veteran orthodoxy aged at least 1,500 years in this country? Let the infant and its patriarchs be holier and more self-controlled than the veteran rival. Let it be more logical, more liberal and more unmystic and then and

then only it will be victorious. The course I recommend is austere and costly. Perhaps it will be unpopular among the reformers as well as in the orthodoxy. Both will ridicule me as they are already doing. When I cook my food in a garden I am laughed at by the reformers and when I allow my *Bhat* to be touched by a Gauda or a Maharashtra, I am laughed at by the orthodoxy. When I talk of going to Europe or walk out with a hat on to protect my head from the sun with my wife on a city road, the whole orthodoxy including Pandits, graduates and coolies stare at me and when my dhoti and wrapper are seen and I refrain from joining parties of sweets and pastries, all reformers are compelled to laugh at me. Almost the whole Indian world—sanatanis and reformers Brahmos and Aryas, Sadhus and Bhaktas—burst into a laughter or feel disgusted when they hear of my *Paramartha* Philosophy. But I bear all this. My aim is to reconcile orthodoxy and reform, sea-voyage abroad and *swapaka* at home, the most orthodox philosophy and the most up-to-date science and I must steadily go on uniting in myself both reform and orthodoxy—leading my brethren to harmony and love. The stern laws of the Sarvatman whose service is our chief aim must help us in the long run.

II

Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar,
M. A., Ph. D., K. C. I. E.,

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

The Bombay Social Conference
held at Bombay in 1912.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was only about ten days ago that the "Social Reformer" Mr. K. Natrajan wrote to me asking me to take the Chair on the present occasion. I had then returned from Indore after an operation for cataract in the eyes that I had and was fully occupied and my first impulse was to write to Mr. K. Natrajan to say that I could do nothing of the kind that he asked me to do, but it was a request from a

great Social reformer who had been working so disinterestedly in the cause that it would have been quite ungracious on my part not to listen to his word and I accepted his request, his very peremptory order. Gentlemen, during the last three years that I have been blind, I have often asked myself why it was that I lived, because, if a man lives he ought to do something and if I was not able to do anything in consequence of the loss of eye-sight, certainly there was no reason why I should exist in this world. Well, in accordance with the request of Mr. K. Natrajan, I at once made up my mind to come down to Bombay on this occasion (Cheers) and so I am here. (Renewed cheers).

I thank you all for the great honour you have done me by electing me your Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, when the intelligent Hindu first came across western civilization and was educated in the Government schools and collegiate institutions, the question naturally rose in his mind why it was that his country should be in such a low position in the scale of nations and he had not to go far away to find a reply. The reply consisted in the social arrangement or social system that kept all our women ignorant and uneducated, which

led to the absence of any idea of corporate interest as distinguished from individual interest and also prevented the growth of national sentiment. This reply led to endeavours being made for the introduction of social reform. Social reform is earlier in time than political reform. In the year 1848 was established the first girls' school in Bombay by the Members of the Students' Literary and Scientific Society. At that time there was no sort of political agitation. That agitation began at the time of the renewal of the Charter of the East India Company in 1852 ; so that social reform is prior to political reform and the object of the social reformers was to endeavour to elevate the condition and the degraded position of women. After the political agitation had begun sometime, that agitation and the agitation for social reform went on independently of each other but a very great impetus was given to political thought and political action when the Indian National Congress was established in 1884. Then the enthusiasm for the Congress was so great amongst our people that they forgot almost everything about social reform and it was after some time that social reform also came to be tacked on to it as the very tail-a-tail, however, which the National Congress did

not quite like and often wanted to cast away. Well, that relationship went on for some time and now it is felt that social reform should be entirely independent of political thought and political action. Hitherto, social reform came in the train of political reform. This year an attempt is made to separate it from political reform to make it run on its own course independently of political reform. Hence it is that we meet here for this Provincial Social Reform Conference. Now what is the object of Social Reform ? The object is to improve our present condition so far as the social arrangement of our society is concerned. The question is ' Has the condition of things in this respect been remedied from most ancient times, to this day ? ' and ' Have the customs, which we consider so ruinous to our country, existed from time immemorial ? Well, if one examines the Scriptures of the country, one will find that those ancient ancestors of ours in remote times were far more guided by reason than we have been in later times. In later times we have been allowing ourselves to be drifted away by any circumstances whatever without bestowing a thought as to where we are going. We are going to perdition and we never care for it and the result is what you find at the present day.

For instance, in the case of female education, there is no question that in olden days women were educated. In the list of teachers in the Rig Veda we find the names of Gargi, Sulabha-maitri. There is no question that women in olden days were not kept ignorant. The proper sphere of the woman has always been considered I suppose, not only by us but by the world generally, to be the home and that idea was carried to its extreme and the domestic sphere became only the culinary sphere and women were confined to the cooking place, the dining hall and the oven. Under these circumstances it was thought 'what was the use of education for persons whose activities were confined only to cooking?' Hence education went out of use entirely and there was thus a drifting away from our old ideal into making our women our cooks. The same took place in the case of early marriage. There is no question that the old Smritikars laid down the rules about our domestic rights. They laid down that a woman to be married should have reached the age of womanhood, and that she should not be a child. I must allude here to another aspect of womanhood, and that is that everywhere in the world the chastity of a woman is thought to be the precious jewel that must be preserved with the

greatest possible care. Considerations about this sometimes led to extravagance and people did not care where the considerations led them to. Things went on until the people were landed into absurdity and consequently it was laid down that women should be married after they had arrived at puberty, but it was found that some girls went wrong and hence came the bugbear of the son of an unmarried girl and it led to the marriages of girls before they arrived at puberty. Now this sort of extravagance went on until the girls of the age of 6, 7 or 4 were married and people did not care that these girls became widows before they became wives. Things went on in their own course until the education of girls and everything concerning the girls was rendered impossible. So then here we drifted away from our old idea of marrying girls when they were of a very tender age. There are other Smritikars who do not lay down any specific age of the girls to be married.

In this manner they lay down that a girl should be married before she arrives at womanhood. There is also a similar drifting away in the case of widow-marriage. There are

sions in the Rig Veda to the prevalence of the practice of widow-marriage.

There can be no question that it once existed. Woman's chastity is considered a very valuable jewel and consequently it was said to be very good thing that she should be married only once and consequently the custom of widow-marriage which prevailed became discredited. Even in the time of the Amarkosh there was the practice of the marriage of widows.

So the custom did prevail, but in consequence of the false notion about female chastity, it fell gradually into discredit and the effect of that was the prohibition of widow-marriage. ^{the} came a stream of thinkers in that way ^{cooks.} they did not care where they were going ^{marriage} it one result of that was the corruption of ^{Smritik} corruption of the Indian Society. If ^{tie right} girls are left unmarried, to be sure, to ^{be mar} them to remain perfectly chaste is to ^{woman} et something that is more than human. ^{I must} the present day among us there are women ^{hood,} the ^{the ch} are allowed to remain without husbands ^{precio} among them are those that happened to ^e their husbands they had married when

they were five years old. So that the absurdity of the situation did not strike anybody—not only simply the absurdity but also the immorality and the corruption in the Indian Society. So also there is a drifting away in the case of castes. In old times there was what was called 'Varnashram'. In the times of the Bhagwatgita Bhagawan Krishna says:—

'Four castes I have brought into being in consequence of the division of labour. I have assigned to one the occupation of one caste, another the occupation of another caste and so on.' So that they were orders and not castes. These orders were exchanged in old times; a man belonging to one order could become a member of another order. There is an instance of a Rishi in the Scriptures. He was a man of low birth who entered the compound where the Rishis were performing their sacrifices, and when they were angry with him (the learned speaker here gives a dialogue between the Rishis and the interloper culminating in the admission of the latter into the fold of the Brahmins)

Gradually these orders became castes. The first idea of the human being was 'I am

separate of all and my family is separate of the families of everybody else and so my family and the family of my friend are also separate and so my caste is separate of the caste of the another man.' This sentiment grew and it became stronger and stronger until now we have got, I do not know how many castes—I think more than 4000 or 5000. What becomes of the nation with so many communities separate of one another possessing conflicting interests and so on? Hence, therefore, we have been drifting away and the drifting away sometimes becomes ridiculous also. The 'Upanayan' ceremony is performed and then the boy is taught the Vedas. The 'Upanayan' ceremony makes the boy go to his 'Guru' to learn the Vedas. He learns the Vedas for 36 years and then he becomes 'Snatak'. That is to say his 'Sodmunj' is performed. 'Sodmunj' ceremony is performed at the end of 12 years or of 24 years or of 36 years after he learns the Vedas at the house of his 'Guru'. Now the 'Sodmunj' ceremony is performed on the fourth day of the 'Munj' ceremony, that is, the boy is supposed to have learned all the Vedas in four days and he is made a 'Snatak'. There he has finished learning the Vedas. He now goes into the world simply performing certain

substitutes of the ceremony. The real ceremonies have gone. Their carcasses have remained. What is now performed is not the old sacred ceremony. So drifting is the rule in our Society; it ought to have been exercised but it was not exercised. When such was the result, when such was the state of things, the educated Hindu conceived the idea of bringing about social reform. Then the question came. 'How to bring about social reform? We would not stand persecution or excommunication.' Then various devices were thought of. Some people thought we should go on holding discussions with 'Pundits and Swamis.' Some people thought of social reform to be tried in the case of widow remarriages in this Presidency in the year 1870 after the first widow marriage was performed in 1869. Well, we held on that occasion oral controversy for a number of days and what was the result? Nothing at all. We came to the conclusion that we should strive to conciliate the orthodox people so as to bring them over to our side; but we found it was not possible. Because even if you put the Shastras before the orthodox people, they have got their own contrivances to defeat our ends. One of their contrivances was to say that this social reform would do for another day but not in the

present Kaliyuga. Another contrivance was to say 'If fifty families guarantee that they would stand by me, I shall certainly join the widow-marriage movement. Fifty families must agree to stand by me.' Now what is there to compel the fifty families to stand by this man? Will a Judge of the High Court compel a man if he makes an agreement to carry out the contract? So that it was found impossible that such a thing could be done. Various contrivances of that sort were thought of. To contend with this difficulty, one's attention should be called to those lines of Tukaram which mean that "you should, first of all, pay great attention to the satisfaction of your conscience that what you are going to do is an excellent thing and a salutary thing. Always go on; do not look backward to see if there is anybody following you; do not look backward. You should gird up your loins on the strength of your resolution and mind and go on and should not wait for others to follow you." These lines of Tukaram were not before us then. The work done during the last 30 or 40 years is by no means contemptible. First of all the attention of the social reformers was turned towards female education. Gujarathi and Marathi schools for girls were opened by the Students' Literary and

Scientific Society. The work that the Society did was very good. That Society lives to this day. An account of what the Society does was before us in a meeting recently. I was the Marathi Secretary of that Society from 1865 to 1870 in connection with its three schools. I continued in that office for that period. It was only when I was transferred to Poona that I had to give up the schools in charge of my successor. Parsis subsequently took away their schools and the Gujarathis also took away their schools. And the poor Marathas were left to pull on with the work as best they could. Recently a gentleman like Mr. Vaidya (Cheers) has been working in connection with these schools. (Hear, hear.) Well, other institutions in other parts of the country were established and we thought of giving English education also to the girls. Then the agitation against female education was very strong. One of the newspapers in Poona said contemptible things about us, but in spite of them we went on. In this connection I must mention the names of the late Mr. Shunkarrao Pandit and the late Mr. Justice Ranade. (Hear, hear.) With their help we started the Girls' High School in Poona. (Hear, hear.) That high school has given you a lady doctor who is working at Kolhapur.

(Cheers.) We have given you another lady doctor who is working in Bombay. The girls of that institution have found occupation somewhere. (Cheers.) If you want good people to grace a family, that must be done by bringing the children up in a proper fashion. In Gujara-th, there is a provision for female education in the Laxmi School at Ahmedabad ; there. Gujrathi girls have been taught and two of them have become B. A. 's (Hear, hear.) So we have been progressing. Some people may call us lip-reformers but these lip-reformers have done something at any rate. They have educated girls up to the B. A. standard. (Cheers.) The thing is going on and will certainly result in something very desirable. Next, at present our girls attend colleges—the colleges of boys and there has been started the idea for colleges for ladies. At present the girls are taught at colleges intended for boys. Thus female education has advanced to this extent. Now as to early marriages. In my days girls were married when they were children ; so also the boys were married when they were little boys. I do not know whether there is any amongst you here who was married when he was 12 years of age. If there is none, I am one. (Laughter) I was married when I was 11 years of age. (Renewed

laughter) This practice of marrying boys at an early age has gone out of use and at present in the Fergusson College, according to the report that always gives the ages at which young men in the college are married, you find that before the age of 20 there are very few young men who were married. As to the girls there is a rule, because men will not keep them unmarried—they have not the courage to withstand the Shastras. However, as proper husbands are not available, girls are being kept unmarried till a pretty grown-up age till about 13 or 14 and so on. There are instances of girls remaining unmarried at 20 and just as I spoke of a country instance in my own case in my family there was another case where the girl was married after she had arrived at the age of puberty. So that we have gone on in this respect, but still I ask the attention of social reformers to this question in particular that they should pay more attention to raise the marriageable age of girls. Look down upon one who marries his girl whose age is under 14. Create a sort of public opinion amongst us and make men ashamed if they married their girls at a tender age. Then again widow marriage. No doubt widow-marriage is progressing. It has been progressive. But it is certainly a pro-

pulous observation. But the real loosening of the bonds of caste has been brought about in a manner which one would not think of; it is brought about by the great passion for travelling abroad. One of the items in the programme of the social reformer was to help travelling to foreign countries. I suppose this practice is growing nowadays. One who finds himself in possession of Rs. 1,000 at once runs to Europe. What does he do about his caste? So many people go and come back; how do they manage about their castes? That was the question put to me when I was myself returning from Europe by one of the passengers. What will you do when you go back about your caste? The question is 'How do they manage about their castes?' Well, they leave their castes at Appolo pier or Ballard pier when they go to England; they give up their castes there and all the Hindus, Parsis and Englishmen dine together. When they return to the Appolo pier they resume the caste again and they become the good Kokanastha of Bombay, the good Saraswats of Bombay and the good Prabhus of Bombay. It is true that in one thing they do not give up caste after they leave the Appolo pier; they do not eat the forbidden food, the prohibited food. By eating prohibited food

the Hindu is made to lose his caste. It is said that several Hindus became Christians in Goa as loaves and breads were thrown in wells; when the water of the wells was drunk by them they became converts and the other Hindus would have nothing to do with them and they necessarily became Christians. So that they were made Christians by loaves and breads being thrown into the wells. Well, eating the prohibited food was the way of losing caste in olden times 200 years ago. There is nothing of the sort now. You can use all prohibited food or you may drink water from a well into which loaves of bread were thrown and yet you remain a Brahmin and so on. Now the Brahmins, Saraswats and Prabhus when they come back from England observe all caste restrictions. They set themselves right according to the wishes of caste. Now we have got Parishads' (Conference) for different castes. We have the Hindu 'Parishad' and the Mahomedan 'Parishada.' Amongst Hindus there are the Jain 'Parishad' the Lingayat 'Parishad' the Saraswat 'Parishad' and the Brahmin 'Parishad.' There are even Mahar and Mang 'Parishads.' There are any number of 'Parishads.' I do not know whether there is a Bhangi 'Parishad'! (Laughter.) These

'Parishads' are not helpful in abolishing castes. I think 'Parishads' make men proud of the castes to which they belong and consequently their regards are limited to their own castes and they are not disposed to do anything for other castes. Consequently these 'Parishads' I do condemn. It is said that through 'Parishads' efforts have to be made for the sake of nationality. I think these efforts are like the efforts of the drowning man to catch the last straw. By means of these 'Parishads' India will be thrown back and the cause of the social reform will be thrown centuries back. Just as the Jews, Catholics and Protestants unite in a public cause though their religious differences are ever so keen, the caste is something that the Hindu cannot give up and it is almost in the blood of the Hindu that they should forget that there are different castes in public matters and so we go on in that way. If you attach any importance to castes, it will throw back our cause for centuries and progress of social reform will be hopeless. Those men who go to England give up caste by eating and drinking and again they resume caste. What can we do to do away with castes effectively? I think it is possible by means of inter-marriages between separate castes. There should be inter-

marriages and that is the sure way of fusing castes together. Mere eating together is certainly not the remedy. Eating together we do with Europeans and with other communities. What will promote the gradual loosening of the bonds of castes will be the inter-marriages between different castes. What a great obstacle has the Government of India put in our way and the Judges of the High Court have put in our way? The rule of the Shastras allow marriages of Brahmins of men of (Laughter) higher castes with girls of lower castes. High Court Judges will not help us in making such marriages. We appeal to the Legislature and the Legislature says 'No!' Now what a remarkable circumstance? It is that in 1856 when there was an agitation in favour of social reform and when there were very few people agitating for widow marriage the Government of India passed an Act legislating for widow marriages and when so many wished that there should be inter-caste marriages, the Government step in and say 'No, you shan't have inter-caste marriages.' They practically plucked off our wings, tied our hands and feet and discouraged social reform. This the Government of India never did before; and now-a-days, for the first time, after its reformed

constitution and its reformed Councils it did this. (Laughter.) So this inter-caste marriage is the only way to loosen the bonds of caste. The very fact that we have held our Conference to-day shows that there is no cause for disappointment—no cause for despondency. But we must meet often times together in order to discuss all these matters and to see where we are and to go forward and not to stand. In this way we should advance the cause of social reform. Educate our ladies ; make them much more useful than they have been for the last 20 centuries. Loosen the bonds of caste not by dining together but by inter-caste marriages. There are different customs in different castes. Each caste forms a distinct community having different tastes and different modes of cooking so that the girl of one caste married in the family of other caste, would find it difficult to get on, or the man of that caste will find it difficult to go on with the girl whose manners are so entirely different from his own ; consequently there ought to be communication through different communities so that all the castes may become alike and also their modes of eating and cooking food may be alike. Preparation for inter-caste marriages should be made gradually by greater inter-communica-

tion and intercourse between different castes so as to liken the manners of them all to one another and so as to bring their mode of living in harmony with those of each other. This is the way of loosening the bonds of castes and there lies our hope for our future advancement. Then we come to the raising of the general standard of morality. Raise also the union between different castes. Then only you will arrive at your goal ; otherwise time must come when we shall sink lower and lower until Europeans will crush us out of this world, thrust us out of South Africa and other places. We have got also to note other things. Social reform depends on moral reform and moral reform depends on domestic reform. I say that social reform must be attained and that is the only way we shall be able to improve our condition. (Cheers).

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice J. Sadasiva Iyer.

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE 14th MADRAS

Provincial Social Conference

held at Kumbakonam in 1912.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I begin my address permit me to pay my tribute to my revered teacher Dewan Bahadur Ragoonatha Rao who recently shuffled off his mortal coil. Less than 20 days ago, I saw him last in the residence which he characteristically called *Gopala Vilas* (as the house belonging to his master) and he gave me his final blessings as he felt that the Lord wanted him for His work in other spheres. He directed me to

continue his work in the cause of Social Reform to the best of my poor abilities and energy and his last words to me were concerned with his life-long activity in the cause of the welfare of his fellow-creatures. I know that I am not fit to bend the bow of Ulysses. As Ramayana says, I can only trust to the Lord to give me the necessary energy and perseverance. My eternal gratitude is due to the noble philanthropic and pious Jiva who, from the flame of devotion to the universal parent burning in his large heart, was pleased to light a small spark of the same devotion even in my cold atheistical heart in my younger days when I was Secretary of the Triplicane Literary Society and he was its President. I had fondly hoped against hope that he might be permitted by the Lord to bless this meeting with his physical presence. But that was not to be. I am sure that some of you at least would not consider me superstitious when I express my belief that though he has lost his physical body and the use of the physical sense doors, he is watching over the assembly in his higher immaterial *Koshas* with even greater interest and enthusiasm than when clogged with his vehicle of clay.

Though this meeting is called the meeting of

the Madras Provincial Social Conference, it is very clear that we are not met here to consider any other reforms except those which are necessary to effect improvements in Hindu Society. I do not believe that a single Muhammeden or Christian gentleman or lady is going to take any prominent part in our deliberations. I know that certain Brahmo gentlemen have been and are supporting this movement but these Brahmo gentlemen have, I believe, not yet irrecoverably cut themselves off from the Hindu Society and many of them are even anxious not to be treated as persons outside the pale of the Hindu community. A European lady like Miss Tennant might assist us as a sympathetic outsider in organising and directing our forces, in encouraging and exhorting us but such individuals have not yet been recognised by us as part of our community entitled to give a really valuable vote in our deliberations.

2. You all know that we have had a lot of controversy in the papers as to who is a Hindu. My own definition is "He is a Hindu who (if a major) believes in the Sanskrit Vedas as infallible revelation and he also is a Hindu who (if a minor) is a member of the family of such a Hindu." But you might ask whether Brahmos

who do not believe in the Vedas as Divine Revelation are not Hindus. I must frankly tell you, gentlemen, that in my opinion they cannot be strictly called Hindus. You might talk even atheism on the basis of the Vedas and you may explain the meaning of the Vedic passages according to any of the numerous schools including the school of Swami Dayanand Saraswati and yet remain a Hindu. You may not be able to understand the Vedas as the depressed classes, yea, even 99% of the so-called Brahmins are unable to understand them but if you acknowledge the fundamental doctrine that you are bound by the Vedas as containing the highest wisdom or the highest principles for the guidance of the conduct, you are entitled to call yourself a Hindu. Of course, you may become greater than a Hindu when you pass beyond all verbal revelation and are able to hold direct communion with God in the seventh Samadhi, but if you want to call yourself a Hindu, I think you must be a believer in the Sanskrit Vedas.

3. But you might say "Are there not many educated men who are treated as Hindus for census and other purposes who really do not believe in the infallibility of the Vedas?" Yes. But a few of them are cowards or hypocrites

and the rest are persons who honestly believe that they are entitled to be called Hindus because they were born of parents who were popularly acknowledged as Hindus. I think that there must be many adults in this assembly who do not believe in the divine authority of the Vedas; but so long as they are not bold enough to (if Brahmins) remove their holy thread and deny the authority of the Vedas like our veteran reformer Rao Bahadur Viresalingam Pantulu or so long as they honestly call themselves Hindus and wish to associate in Hindu society and follow most of the practices which are generally understood to be ordained by the Vedas, we, as practical men, treat them gladly as Hindus for the purposes of the deliberations of this social conference which I might again repeat, is really a Hindu social conference and not an Indian social conference. This social conference thus differs from a political conference like the National Congress or the provincial political conferences which are really conferences intended for the political advancement of all India.

4. Do not misunderstand me, gentlemen; for I do not mean to say that the Brahmos, Agnostics and others who feel themselves entitled to take part in this conference are either cowards

or hypocrites. Most of them conscientiously believe that their belief or non-belief has nothing whatever to do with their right to be members of Hindu society. Some of them also believe that it is not immoral to act in the spirit of compromise which led Lord Morley to refuse to modify the Partition of Bengal till his Council reform proposals had been carried through. I take it, gentlemen, that this assembly consists of persons who so believe themselves entitled to the name of the Hindus, though, in my opinion, a few of them may not be entitled to call themselves so. We are not going to prevent them from taking part in this conference and especially persons like me cannot with any face ask them to go out as several orthodox Hindus believe that I myself am not entitled to be called as a Theosophist. I have forfeited my right to use the name of a Hindu even though I might believe fully in the Divine revelation of the Sanskrit Vedas.

5. This assembly being thus composed of persons who believe themselves entitled to the names of Hindus though their opinions, (especially as to the authority of the various Hindu religious books) might differ very considerably from each other, we have ventured to meet in

brotherly consultation in order to arrive at some practical conclusions in respect of the reforms needed in the society. Because, when evils have become very numerous and crying, a large consensus of opinion that they should be remedied is possible even among those who hold different religious views and who act on the basis of differing authorities. In the realms of conscience and intuition and in those principles which are the foundations of all religions, there is much larger agreement among mankind than is ordinarily supposed and hence when evils have become so crying as to shook these higher foundations of human conduct, the practical common sense of mankind finds itself obliged to come to a practical unanimity as regards the next steps to be taken on the part of progress.

6. In respect of the several resolutions which are to be proposed in this Conference, I do not believe that it is likely that the conscience and intuition of the large majority of us would differ as to their advisability. It is only when we begin to argue about the reasons for our opinions and for our conclusions that numerous divisions will show themselves. Some would base reforms upon the conclusions of western physical science, others on reason, others like the Arya

samajists on the Vedas alone; others like myself on the Shastra as a whole. Yet others on the patriotic argument as to the benefit which our Mother India will derive from these reforms; and so on and so forth. I take it that all these diverse arguments will be freely allowed to be used by the speakers in this assembly. I myself as I hinted above, will base them solely upon the Shastras which do not exclude human reason but only such reason should work as the handmaid of and not in antagonism to Vedic revelations. I am clear in my own mind that no social reform worth the name can be brought about except when founded on religious reform. The Aryasamajists and the Brahmasamajists and Prarthanasamajists have been able to take practical steps in social reform because their activity began in religious reform. On this question, I shall stop with a quotation.

“What then gave Islam its mighty strength? It could only have been the strength of spirit. As for Hinduism, its venerable figures go back in history until it is lost in shades of antiquity. We have not the same historic data of the rise and growth of the Hindu people. But we know that here too, the religion came first, the nation followed. The religion of the Vedas made people.

A people cannot invent, create or develop a religion. It is the religion that invents, creates and develops the people. If, then, we desire national growth as every living healthy people must do, let us see to it that we neglect not the one thing needful—the strengthening of the spirit. We all know what is meant by a spiritless people. It is a people, half-dead, lacking buoyancy, emotion, patriotism, loyalty, self sacrifice and all other noble qualities. We want more life, stronger vitality. Our life can only develop as our faith grows. However fine the body, however cultured the mind, the uplifting force is the strength of the spirit. We need more faith in God, more confidence in each other. The religious faith is linked indissolubly with faith in our neighbours, our nationality and our future. Sports and schools are helpless and hopeless without this spiritual strength, like a motor car without petrol or an airship without gas. The machine may be sound, the bodily and mental equipment may be good, but the driving power, the uplifting force is not there. A nation without religious faith is a tantalising puzzle, always aiming at something which it never reaches. And how to obtain this faith? Only personal attributes can evoke faith. In so far as man relies on philosophies, theories,

systems, doctrines or mystic generalisations, he cannot advance. In so far as man conceives of God as force or substance or anything other than personal, the reliance he can place in the Divine Being will be less than that which he places in a person. It will be the reliance he places in law or in the properties of matter, always liable to error, always subject to a breakdown in the crises of severe strain. In short, the strength of a nation rests, not upon wealth, climate, racial history, geographical circumstances ("Punya-bhoomi or Karmabhoomi") or chance, not upon the ebb and flow of political tides, not upon physical training, force of arms, efficiency of the navy, and not upon education put upon the clearness of its spiritual vision of a Personal God." (and, I will add) of the duty of trying to understand the commands given by our Heavenly Father in His merciful Revelation and of obeying implicitly after understanding.

Of course, the usual objection is made that the Shastras are numerous, that their interpretations are much more numerous and that they all differ from one another, but as my teacher, our venerable townsman the late Dewan Bahadur Ragunath Rao has taught me, the Shastras themselves lay down that while the Vedas are

infallible, the Smritis, Itihasas, Puranas, commentaries, individual reason and individual mental satisfaction are not infallible and are only authorities in ever lessening degree; the Shastras further state (see the Taittiriya Upanishad) that the opinions and the conduct in conformity with such opinions of selfless philanthropic people who understand the Vedas and other Shastras are guides for ordinary humanity, whenever there is a doubt as to Dharma. No doubt the interpretations of the Shastras and commentaries differ just as interpretations and commentaries of our courts of justice and of our text writers on statute-law differ. But nobody on that account wants to burn all our statute law books. No Christian wants to throw away the Bible because the commentators differ, or because the higher criticism has established that different portions of the Bible were written on different dates and are of different authority. No society has ever yet been built upon a purely rationalistic basis because the characteristic of the ratiocinative faculty is to divide and not to unite. The mind is a useful and indispensable horse but it should not be allowed the free power to hold its own reins. Have our Sanskrit-knowing graduates spent 1100th of the time and energy in the higher criticism of our Smritis, Itihasas,

and Puranas that the Western scholars have devoted to the higher criticism of the Bible, though the Bible is not at all more valuable as a repository of spiritual truths than are our Shastras, and though it contains proportionately not at all a lower quantum of absurdities and forgeries than our Shastras? We know that the Bible, notwithstanding the well-directed attacks of the higher criticism, has not at all lost its ground as a valuable guide in the affairs and activities of practical human life. Why, then, should we be afraid to bring that same spirit of higher criticism to bear upon our sacred works so as to purify them of the forgeries which have crept into them and so as to bring out their inner meaning and spirit? I do not say that the task is an easy one, but is it not our duty to brace ourselves up to its fulfilment in order that we may separate the essential spirit from the non-essential letter and apply such spirit in the cause of social reform? Our venerable countryman Dewan Bahadur Ragunatha Row is one of those in whom the spirit of higher criticism seems to have been born without requiring to be cultivated with effort as is shown by his edition of the Srimad Bhagavatam. I need not repeat, gentlemen, that his interpretation of the Shastras is accepted and followed by me because I have

found his interpretation to be most in accordance with their spirit. According to such interpretation almost everyone of the reforms mentioned in our programme is Shashtra and the present practices of the society in connection with these subjects are unshastraic. As to custom being greater than the Shastras, there is the most unshastraic doctrine I have ever come across. Blind belief in customs is due to that enemy of man residing in his called Tamoguna, "That profound tendency to subdue potentiality to routine which pursues all successful effort in a complex civilisation is, at secret, an unrelenting warfare with all proposals to raise disconcerting questions of principle. Life implies decay and renewal." A society must be perpetually on the alert to discard superseded methods and to detect the importance and significance of new studies and new ways of approach. It should rehandle all fundamental conceptions and revise them. It should begin, from time to time, from the beginning and build from the foundation. It should raise fresh crops by turning over the old soil. It should be constantly vigilant on the frontiers of knowledge. It should be on its guard against knowledge becoming dead and petrified. It should not idolize custom as such idolatry tends to paralyse and kill society. Custom might for a

time be idolised as the protective frame work and shell of society but we should never confuse bones and tissues with the soul. But it is said that the Shastras themselves say that "Immemorial custom is transcendental law". Gentlemen, this sentence is the translation of $\frac{1}{4}$ of a sloka, i.e. sloka 108 in chapter 1 of Manusmriti. "Immemorial custom is transcendental law, approved in the sacred scripture, and in the codes of divine legislators". While the correct translation is that the Achara approved in the Vedas and in the Smritis is transcendental law, the usual quotation stops with the mistranslation, "immemorial custom is transcendental law" and it is on the strength of this mistranslation that it is said that custom opposed to the Vedas and to the practice of good men, if immemorial, is also good law. In the other Smritis like Yagnavalkya and Goutama, *Sadachara* or *Sishtachara* is laid down as good law (and not that all customs are good law) the meaning of *Sishtas* being the 7 Rishis, who remain at the end of each Manvantra in order to teach the law to the coming human race. That learned Hindu lawyer Mr. J. C. Ghose in his chapter on "Customs" in Hindu law has conclusively established that customs opposed to the Vedas and Smritis should not be followed. All immoral customs, like the prostitution of Deva-

dasis, plural adoption by Devadasis, the right of sons to demand partition from their father during his life-time and before he has become a Vana-prastha or Sannyasin, the right to divide property against a widowed mother's consent, the right of virgin widow (whose marriage has not been consummated) to inherit her so-called husband's property and to drive her aged mother-in-law to a suit for maintenance, all these unshastraic customs have been upheld by courts owing to this misinterpretation of the text of the Smriti. In an old case, the then Sadar Court Pandit clearly laid down the legal *Futwas*, that a girl widow whose marriage has not been consummated had not become one in Pinda, Gothra, and Snathaka with her deceased husband and hence was not entitled to inherit her husband's property. But that *Futwa* was not approved by the court. The Travancore High Court several years ago saw the gross injustice of this judicial decision and got over it by inventing the doctrine that amongst all the widows in a joint Hindu family and undivided coparcenary the right of management vests in the eldest widow.

Gentlemen, is it not clear that there can be only one correct way of interpretation for the

Shastras? Can anybody honestly say that the Shastra is different for Bombay, for Madras or for Bengal? *Sadachara* or shortly "*Acharya*" does not mean any custom but approved custom. Even as regards conquered countries, Manu says (Chap. 7) that the king should try to establish Aryan laws there. Other laws and customs might be followed only when they are not opposed to the Sruti and Smriti. In some castes, as Maine says, the father-in-law begets to his son, a son on his own daughter-in-law. Are we to perpetuate that custom? In other castes, divorces are either free or are allowed on payment of a few rupees to the husband or wife or some relation of the husband or wife. Are we to perpetuate these customs? This deification of custom whether good or bad, whether approved or unapproved must be demolished.

It may be said that if bad customs have been perpetuated by wrong judicial decisions, why should not the Judges reform the society by over-ruling the said incorrect decisions? I must frankly tell you, gentlemen, that it is almost absolutely impossible to do so now. Even Their Lordships of the Privy Council will find themselves unable to do so. In a recent decision of the Privy Council of February 1912, Their

Lordships say, "So far as a woman's acquisition of property by inheritance is concerned, (that is, whether she has got an absolute right of disposal over it) the matter is not clearly concluded by authority." Do you think that, when even the Privy Council considers that it is concluded by authority, it is possible for a single Judge of the High Court, even though he combines in himself the learning of Sir V. Bhashyam Iyengar and Sir A. Mukherjee with the burning desire for reforms of Mahadev Govind Ranade and Sir N. Chandavarkar, or whether even the division bench or even a full bench of any High Court, could turn the current of decisions and pronounce as unshastraic, customs which have been established as law by Privy Council decisions? I myself think that the law, which lays down that a Hindu lady inheriting her husband's or son's property is not entitled to absolute ownership in such property, is opposed to the Shastra. But do you think it is possible for even the Privy Council to now alter the course of these judicial decisions in those provinces of India where a long course of decisions has established such a rule? Again, I believe there can be no hereditary right in any office connected with public or charitable trusts and that the institutions of hereditary servants including the service of hereditary dancing girls

in temples are all unshastraic. In Bombay, the High Court have recognised the priestly office in village and families as hereditary and compelled the family to employ a particular priest, because the priest's ancestors officiated for particular families. Chandavarkar, J., in a recent case, says to the enlightened sentiment of the present day, "It does indeed seem unfair and oppressive that a man should be compelled by law to receive religious ministrations from another person who is not of his choice and that simply because that has been the course of the relations of both for generations and the ground of hereditary rights. But if a Hindu wishes to remain a Hindu and have the benefit of his religion, he must take its burden also when that burden is annexed to the benefit by the Hindu law on the ground of custom." With the greatest deference to that learned Judge, I must say that no such burden is really imposed by Hindu law on any person that he should get priestly ministrations only from the son of his father's Priest. When I was in Madura as Munsif, I was unable to have my cows taken out for grazing by any other cowherd except one bad man, who claimed that by partition among the cowherds' families, he had the right to graze the cows kept in particular houses including my house

in that particular street. Can the tyranny of custom go further?

As I said before, gentlemen, it is impossible by judicial interpretation to hereafter modify the current of judicial decisions of the Hindu Law where they are opposed to the Shastras. It is impossible, for instance, in Madras, to bring in a sister as a heir before the remote Dayadi 14 degrees removed, though, in Bombay, even a step-sister comes in before the paternal uncle. All that a judge of reforming tendencies could now do is to take care that the unprogressive decisions, which have already settled the principles in connection with particular branches of the Hindu law, are restricted to these particular branches and are not extended by ingenious analogical arguments to other branches of the Hindu law, so as to make these other branches also to become illiberal and unprogressive. But, as I might be permitted to repeat, the judicial tribunals have become so bound down by precedents that it is impracticable for them to effect any reforms worth the name hereafter by a new course of decisions. The most practical way out of all these difficulties is, therefore, in my humble opinion, (a) to have the right Hindu Law settled by an authorised Commission of experts, and, (b)

to allow every adult male Hindu at his option to declare that he and his descendants in the male line will thereafter follow the Hindu law as declared by that Commission and to give validity to such declaration by legislative enactment. The Commission need not invent any new interpretations for texts of Hindu law. The correct interpretations of some texts will be found to prevail in Madras, of other texts in Bengal, yet others in Bombay and so on. The task of the Commissioners will not be (I am convinced) as difficult as is hastily supposed to be. You might, however, say "why should we appeal to the legislature for the reforming of our society? Why not obtain the opinion of our Matadhipathis and our Pandits and act according to their opinions?" Whatever I might have been in my younger days, I have learnt wisdom enough not to denounce our Matadhipathis and Pandits as mere anachronisms, not only useless for reform but a danger to reform. Some friends pointed out to me what they called the fiasco of the recent Conjeevaram Parishad, which was begun under the auspices of our respected countryman Dr. Subramania Aiyar and which was presided over by our tactful and good Professor Mr. Rangachariar. In my younger days, Dewan Bahadur Ragunatha Row tried his best to persuade an

influential Madhwa Matadhipathi to give an impartial hearing to his (the Dewan Bahadur's) arguments in favour of reform. He also tried to influence several orthodox pandits in our noble cause. But he failed and gave up the task as hopeless. But Dr. Subramania Aiyar considered (and in my humble opinion rightly) that the time had come to make another effort, not with the Matadhipathis, whose peculiar duties have become much more important than their spiritual and who are usually surrounded and influenced by bigoted agents and Karyasthars, but with learned Pandits, whose very learning, if it was really of any depth, ought to have made them liberal-minded. Many of my friends thought that nothing would come out of the Conference and when the assembly, as at first constituted, dissolved, they, as usual, said "I told you so." My own opinion is, gentlemen, that the Conference has done great good. It was necessary at first to take in every pandit believed by the people to be entitled to take part in the Conference and then, by an object lesson, it was shown that some of the pandits had notions too antiquated for this age and that they were logic-chipping obscurantists who wanted merely to show off their learning by interminable and inconsequential talk. The necessary shaking

was given to the Parishad by the tactful Chairman and those unpractical Pandits were properly dropped. The other Pandits acquitted themselves very well and the opinions of the majority as to the rules laid down by the Shastras in the matter of marriage after puberty and the readmission of those who have gone on sea voyage must strengthen the hands of reformers in their missionary work of educating the masses. Of course, their opinions are not binding upon anybody and you might very well say that the car of reform has not proceeded any appreciable distance as a result of this Conference. I think you are right in such a view. While I admit that such Parishads are doing and will do great good, their work of education is too slow for the pressing needs of India. As was said recently by a great and good writer, (now passed to a better world by the sinking of the *Titanic*) "Social problems to-day demand untiring watchfulness and swift resolution. Neglect or pusillanimity spells disaster." Hence I would suggest that we must appeal to the legislature to help those who are prepared to follow the rules laid down as Shastras for them by an assembly of pandits and of learned men convened (under the style of a Royal Commission or a Legal Committee) by the ruling power. I would suggest that a Committee of 37

persons consisting of 12 orthodox pandits who are learned men selected for their learning and character from all the Indian Provinces, 12 laymen known for their public spirit and impartiality and 12 Lawyers and Judges including ex-Judges like Dr. Gurudas Bannerjea, Mr. Chandar Madhub Ghose, Sir Subramania Aiyar, Messrs Mukerjee, Chandavarkar and Sankaran-Nair, Jagadish Chunder Ghosh, Golo Chander Sirkar etc., presided over by a symyathetic European officer, should be appointed to consider and come to a conclusion as to what is the Shashtra or Hindu Law in all questions of inheritance, marriage and Achara and whatever conclusions are arrived at by not less than 25 members of the Commission, those conclusions should be embodied in a legislative enactment binding for all time on all Hindus who declare their willingness to follow it and on all their discendants. This Commission might have to sit for several years, the members who fall off by death or otherwise being renewed from time to time till the whole field of Hindu law is exhausted.

I have till now dealt with general subjects and I will finish with a few words on each of four or five practical matters. One question

is the elevation of the depressed classes. Just as that great writer, Norman Angell, is appealing with some success not on humanitarian and unselfish considerations but on the score of purely selfish commercial interests to all the nations of the world to give up the committing of human murder in the name of war, so I would appeal to the so-called higher classes of Hinduism to work unselfishly in self-sacrifice (which is ultimately self-help and self-preservation) in raising up and educating the depressed classes. You have heard what the distressed coal-miners were able to do in Great Britain recently when they had learnt the lesson of combination and co-operation. They realised the giant's strength which they possessed and they used it even to such an extent that they were about to smash society and to paralyse all the industries and activities which depended upon a regular supply of coal, including the national naval activities and the great railway systems. When our depressed classes wake up gradually by the influence of universal elementary education and of the Pax Brittanica and realise their giant's strength, it is to be hoped that they will remember that there were, in all ages, a few philanthropic souls among the higher classes who tried to help their despised brethren to raise themselves. I make this appeal therefore

even to the selfish nature in us to do our duty in this matter. in order that we and our descendants may not, in our turn, be oppressed by those whom we have been oppressing; for I am quite sure that, if and when the depressed classes choose and are able to combine, they can smash the Hindu society, knock the bottom out of Hindu civilisation by their mere passive united opposition. Many of them have half-awakened from their long sleep and are half-dreaming of better days for their community and of the sympathetic love (in the future at least) of the depressing classes. May their dreams become true. If not, (to adopt Lowell's lines)

" Ah, if they awaken

God shield us all then

If this dream rudely shaken

Shall cheat them again. "

Of course, the universal ruin caused by their fury against society, if their dream is falsified, must affect them also; but those who have been so long oppressed do not, in their blind fury, stop to inquire whether ultimately their own ruin will not also be brought about by their indiscriminate attack upon the other classes of Hindu Society. When the higher classes of Hindu society have

forgotten that we are "all members of one another" and that Humanity is greater than caste, why should the lower classes, when their turn comes and when they feel their strength, remember that old saying? Then, we have the drink question. The drink demon is making headway in our land. There is very little use in trying to fight it by questions in the Legislative Councils and by asking for the insertion of amending provisions in the legislative enactments. I do not say that Acts of the Legislature are absolutely ineffectual in the promotion of morality. You will forgive my repeating that they go very little way to make them moral. In Great Britain, the drink Rakshasa, who was supposed to be unconquerable, is being made to relax his grip over an increasing proportion of the population by the noble efforts of the workers and preachers who are much more sleeplessly energetic than the workers on the political platforms. Have we got in India a similar band of selfless preachers and workers in this cause of temperance or even a party who care as much for promotion of temperance as for political reform? Even in my limited judicial experience in criminal matters, I have found that many murderers fortify themselves with drink in order to deaden their higher feelings before they

commit their hellish deeds. The preaching of temperance should, however, be done by enthusiastic old men, as young men are apt to lose their heads, unless in the immediate presence of elderly men whom they reverence and respect and they are apt to indulge in foolish and intemperate words against Government and indulge in personalities.

I shall next shortly deal with the danger looming on the horizon from the awakening of our ladies, who have till now formed the depressed sex in our distressful country. The revolt of the Panchamas is not, perhaps, such a pressing danger, not so much in the near future as the revolt of our ladies, which, in my opinion, seems to have already commenced. A few girls have begun to refuse marriage before they complete their education. Two or three others refuse to recognise their husbands to whom they were tied by their parents in the days of their girlhood. There is no blaming them as there would be no use in blaming the depressed classes when they revolt, which God forbid. We, men, must begin to make willing sacrifices, must voluntarily allow our ladies some more freedom of choice and movement in this transition stage, if we wish to avoid a very disastrous explosion. Religious and

moral education, education in self-sacrificing duty and energetic action in the spirit of such dutiful self-sacrifice are the indispensable means to prevent this last danger.

Then, there is a minor social reform which can be brought about easily and practically and which may be divided under three heads.

a. Inter-marriages between the divisions of the same caste.

b. Commensality between the divisions of the same caste.

c. The bringing about of uniformity in Acharyams including the making of all other castes conform to the practice of the Tengalai Vaisnavas, who do not allow their widows to be periodically under the hands of barbers. The first object does not require any legislation at all and I am glad that marriage between sub-castes are becoming more common. The second commensality is necessary to promote brotherhood. There is no use saying that taking food at the same table is not necessary for brotherhood. Hospitality, invitations of relations, caste dinners, all become meaningless, if commensality is not a

factor in promoting the spirit of brotherhood. Even gregarious animals and crows feel this truth. The taking of food has two aspects (1) pleasure to the palate and (2) the strengthening of the life in all its aspects, physical, mental and spiritual. If we eat solitarily for sensual gratification alone, it is sin. If we eat flesh together or drink wine together for the same sensual gratification, the sin is greater. I will not and do not recommend commensality merely in order that we might see each other enjoy the delicious pleasures of forbidden foods or drinks; but, it has always been the Shashtra that food taken in company with holy men, nay, even food, left as remnants by them after eating, and food taken in communion by co-devotees after dedication to God, do produce high spiritual effect. The modern Sri Vaishnavas who carry the principle of preserving magnetic purity in food to absurd lengths must and do admit the efficacy of communion in food taken in the presence of God in temples without distinction of caste or creed. The same principle is rigidly observed in the temple of Jagannath at Puri. Why should Sri Krishna

have taken the simple food offered in love by saint Vidura of low birth in preference to rich food prepared by the high caste Duryodhana, if the taking of food is a perfectly indifferent operation? I would therefore advocate communion in food among all sub-castes in the name of brotherhood and I will go even further and advocate on rare occasions the taking of pure food together by all castes (including the depressed classes) in God's holy name without distinction of class, creed or sex, provided those who join in that communion admit the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of Man. The third question about community of Acharams is a very extensive subject, but so far as the cruel custom of compelling our widows to submit to the barber's razor is concerned, I have found that many of our ladies have already revolted against the custom and provided that we, men, do not stupidly believe that women themselves are against the discontinuance of the practice, provided we have understood the amiable nature of ladies who always like a little pressure to be used by those who love them even in respect of

matters which they (the ladies) know to be right but are afraid to practice through fear of Mrs. Grundy, this last reform would make much more progress than it is now doing. Gentleman, I have been long enough and I will end with a short prayer.

“ May the Lord guide our Conference in such a manner that the fruit of our deliberations might promote Dharma or Righteousness and put down Adharma or Unrighteousness in our Sacred Land to however humble an extent.”

Mr. Ganga Prasad,
Deputy Collector.

RESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

United Provinces Social Conference
held at Cawnpore in 1912.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I can hardly find suitable words to thank you for the high honour that you have bestowed on me by asking me to preside at this Conference. I sincerely wish that your choice had fallen on some gentleman better fitted for the task and I crave your indulgence for any shortcomings that you may find in me or in my work.

The Royal Visit.

The greatest and happiest event of the year has been the visit to this country of the Most Gracious Majesties, the King-Emperor and the Queen Empress,—an event which called forth an unparalleled outburst of enthusiasm and manifestation of genuine loyalty throughout the length and breadth of this vast country. Every social reformer must feel grateful for the Royal boon of a gift of 50 lakhs of rupees for education. For, it is on the spread of education more than on anything else that the progress of social reform depends.

Two Losses.

The year has not been without its losses. The cruel hand of Death has snatched away from us, in the prime of their lives, two of the staunchest friends of social reform in these provinces. The whole country is mourning the loss of Sroti Shanker Lal of Bijnor and the Hon. Rai Ramanuja Dyal Bahadur of Meerut. The former was not only the President, but the life and soul of the Child Widow Remarriage Society, which having been started in 1901 brought about up to 1910 no less than 155 Widow Remarriages

among high caste Hindus, viz., 55 among Brahmans, 50 among Vaishyas, 24 among Khattris and 26 among Kayasthas. Being a practical reformer, he had himself married a widowed girl and his whole life was dedicated to the advancement of this difficult and noble cause. His death has created a breach in the ranks of practical workers for social reform which it will be hardly possible to fill up. The Hon. Rai Ramanuja Dayal Bahadur was Joint Secretary of the Vaishya Maha Sabha, Secretary of the Vaishya Orphanage, and President of the Hindu Kanya Pathashala, Meerut. He was indeed the most public spirited man of Meerut, and there was hardly a public institution in Meerut with which he was not intimately connected and to which he did not cheerfully lend his helping hand.

Shastras and Reform.

Gentlemen, before I venture on a brief survey of the work of social reform in these provinces, I would refer to a trite remark that social reform, at least among the Hindus, is to a great extent a question of revival of ancient institutions. In order to explain the force of this remark, I will not appeal to your reverence for antiquity. For, if an institution is old, it does

not necessarily follow that it is good; I would refer you to the evidence of history. It is a historical fact that, when our ancestors, the Aryans, came to and settled in this land as a conquering and civilising race, they brought with them a much higher degree of civilisation than the aborigines possessed. The latter were for some time at war with the Aryans. But they gradually yielded and adopted the language and religion of their civilised conquerors. The fusion of the two races commenced and went on for a long time. It is now admitted by all scholars that there existed at that time no hereditary castes. The four fold division of Society into Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Sudras, was based on merits and not on birth, and the above four classes were professional, not hereditary. The countless minor sub-sections into which each principal caste is now divided were then quite unknown. Inter-marriage among the four classes was allowed subject to the rule of hypergamy. Persons of Sudra-parentage or of non-Aryan descent could rise to the highest position in society. Several of the Vedic Rishis were Sudra by birth. The author of *Aitareya Brahmana*, one of the four Brahmanas which, next to the Vedas, are books of the highest antiquity and sanctity, was *Mahadasa Aitareya*

of Sudra parentage, as his very name and designation would show. The state of society of that age is depicted in the Vedas and other ancient books, and you will find it singularly free from that social evil, the existence of which in our present society we all so much deplore; no wonder that, under such healthy conditions, the ancient Aryans occupied a most prominent position among the nations of the world, and wrote one of the brightest chapters in the history of ancient civilisation.

In subsequent times, there were inroads of Scythian and other barbaric tribes into India. Two races can hardly come into close contact without materially influencing each other for good or for evil. The great historian Sir William Hunter thus describes their influence on the institutions of Hindus in his *Indian Empire*:

“The Scythic inroads and the ancient Naga and the so-called aboriginal tribes, have, however, not merely left behind remnants of races in individual districts. They have affected the character of the whole population, and profoundly influenced the religious beliefs and domestic institutions of India. In the Veda we see highly developed communities of the Aryan stock,

worshipping bright and friendly gods, honouring woman, and assigning to her an important position in the family life. Husband and wife were the *Dampati* or joint rulers of the Indo-Aryan household. Traditions of the freedom of woman among the ancient Aryan settlers survive in the *Swayamvara* or maiden's own choice of a husband in the epic poems.

"The curtain of Vedic and post-Vedic literature falls upon the scene before the 55th century B. C. When the curtain rises on the domestic and religious life of medieval India, in the Puranas, about the 10th century A. D., a vast change had taken place. The people were no longer sharply divided into civilised Aryans and rude non-Aryans but into castes of a great mixed population.....The position of women had also altered for the worse. Husband and wife were no longer joint rulers of the household. The maiden's own choice had fallen into disuse, or survived only as a court pageant, the custom of child marriage had grown up. The widow had been condemned to a life of privation, or had been taught the merit of extinguishing her existence on her husband's funeral pile."

Sir William Hunter continues :—" Orthodox

Hindus are unfortunately in the habit of claiming the authority of the Veda for their medieval institutions for the evil as well as for the good. As a matter of fact, these medieval institutions which form the basis of modern Hinduism are the joint product of non-Aryan darkness and of Aryan light. The Scythic and Naga and the so-called aboriginal races with their indifference to human suffering, their polyandric households, and their worship of fear and blood, have left their mark deep in the Hindu Law Codes, in the terrorising of the Hindu religion, and in the degradation of woman. English scholarship has shown that the worst feature of Hinduism, widow-burning, had no authority in the Veda. When it is equally well understood that the other dark features of Hinduism also rest, not upon the Vedic scriptures, but are the result of a human compromise between Aryan civilisation and non-Aryan barbarism, the task of the Indian reformer will be half accomplished. It is with a true instinct that the great religious movements of India in our day reject the authority of medieval Hinduism and appeal back to the Veda. For, the Veda represents the religious conceptions and tribal customs of the Aryans in India before those conceptions and customs were modified by compromises with lower races.

society, and it is, in my opinion, the ugliest feature also. Restrictions in interdining are among the least important evils of this pernicious system, though they are perhaps the first to catch a foreigner's eye. And these restrictions are gradually disappearing, although the stir caused by the social dinner that took place at Benares two years ago in connection with the Social Conference, and the controversy raised over it, in which even some Arya Samajists from whom a more reasonable and liberal attitude of mind might have been expected, took up the cudgels on behalf of orthodoxy, it would show how hard these prejudices die. But there is no doubt that they are fast slackening, and are bound to die out sooner, or later.

The Marriage Problem.

It is in respect of inter-marriage that caste imposes serious restrictions. Indeed, it would be no exaggeration if I were to describe the present castes and sub-castes as so many marriage guilds. For, as a liberal Hindu, you can interdine with Hindus of other castes, and may mix or associate with them in any other way; but, when it comes to marriage, you must go to your own caste. The consequences are serious. There are

so many petty sub-divisions in each caste absolutely refusing to intermarry with one other that the field of selection for a bride or bridegroom becomes exceedingly narrow. Many girls have thus to be given to unsuitable husbands, and this difficulty sometimes drives even educated men to betrothe or marry their girls at an early age. An indirect stimulus is thus given to early marriage.

Here I may note how serious a problem the caste is. It is sometimes lightly imagined that, under the influence of western education, caste is at last disappearing. This is a very erroneous and superficial view of the matter. So far as the essential feature of caste as a marriage guild is concerned, it shows no signs of weakening as yet. Indeed a perusal of Sir Herbert Risley's Census Report of 1901 would show that new castes and sub-castes are still forming. I have not sufficient time to describe the causes. They are the same which have split up the community into numberless castes existing at present, *viz.*, differences of race, religious beliefs, customs, occupations and even loyalty. The natural desire of some lower castes to better their position by claiming to be branches of higher castes, also leads to formation of new castes. Sir Herbert

Risley gives several instances of these, and I shall later on quote one of them. This is a most serious problem for the Hindus. How is this fateful process of disintegration, going on so long in Hindu society, to be checked and reversed? One method recommended to you by successive Social Conferences is the fusion of subcastes belonging to the same principal caste. The attainment of this object is not easy, but it is perfectly feasible, and can be safely commended to even the most orthodox Hindus. For, no religious book of the Hindus, not even the later compositions which sanction four hereditary castes, recognize these numerous sub-divisions. It is satisfactory to note that since 1908 the Kayastha Conference has adopted a resolution recommending inter-marriage among the sub-castes of Kayasthas. For some time there has been a growing desire to unite the Bengali Kayasthas also,—a desire which has found visible expression in an invitation to Babu Sarada Charan Mitra to preside at the Educational Conference of the Kayasthas now sitting at Fyzabad. The Vaishya Conference has recommended the amalgamation of Kadim and Bajshahi Agarvalas, two sects of the great Agarval community and I am glad to state that this was carried into reality during the last year in the

marriage of Babu Damodar Singh, a young pleader of Meerut with the daughter of Babulal Govilla, a Japan-returned gentleman. There was much opposition by some members of the two sub-castes; but I think the storm is now over.

A permanent Sabha with Lala Kedarnath of Meerut as Secretary has been formed to encourage such inter-marriages. At present its scope is limited to the Agarval community. But a good modest beginning has been made which may serve as an example to other castes and sub-castes.

Mr. Basu's Bill.

I cannot close this subject without expressing regret at the defeat of the Hon. Mr. Bhupendra Nath Basu's Bill for amending, Act III of 1872, the object of which was to promote inter marriages among Hindus. But the manner in which it was received by the majority of thoughtful and educated Hindus and the controversy raised over it in the press inspire a hope that, if a similar Bill with certain necessary modifications is again brought forward after some time, it may meet with better success.

Foreign Travel.

The question of sea-voyage or foreign travel falls under this head. For it is the fear of loss of caste which deters Hindus from crossing the sea. The question is, I think, being gradually solved and seldom causes trouble in these provinces. In the western districts at least, even Brahmans and Vaishyas who are strict vegetarians have returned from England and been freely admitted into their castes, sometimes even without the formality of a Prayaschitta. During the year under review, quite a sensation was created by the Chaudharies of the Agarwals of Benares having excommunicated Babu Govind Das and some other leading members of their community for having dined with Babu Lakshmi Chand, M.A., an Agarwal of Benares, who had just returned from England after receiving technical education. Benares is the chief centre of orthodoxy, and it is no wonder if the local Chaudharies of Agarwals did not move with the times. The result was a civil suit for damages for defamation brought by B. Govind Das against B. Bishambhar Das, in which the question of sea voyage was keenly contested, and well threshed out. Babu Srish Chandra Basu, Rai Bahadur, Sub-judge, who is himself a good Sanskrit

scholar, gave an elaborate judgment decreeing the suit. I am informed that an appeal against the decision is pending before the High Court of Allahabad. As the matter is *sub-judice*, I refrain from making any comments.

The Depressed Classes.

The question of depressed classes is a most important one. The circular issued by the Hon. Mr. E. A. Gait, C.I.E., Census Commissioner, about the untouchables being classed separately from Hindus served as an eye-opener to the Hindus, and awoke them to the need of showing better treatment to these unfortunate classes. Even the most orthodox and conservative men among the Hindus came forward to claim them as their own, though it may be only nominally ; and at least thoughtful men realised more vividly than ever how unjustly these millions of men had been treated. I need not debate on the disabilities and social tyranny to which not only the untouchables but many other castes which come under depressed classes are subjected. They are well known to you all. The most curious thing is that hatred towards them is materially diminished when the same persons become converts to Mahomedanism or Christianity. A more

glaring instance of inconsistency and self-condemnation of the Hindus could hardly be imagined. There is no community on the face of the earth which thus degrades and keeps down a great body of its adherents. The number of untouchables in India, according to the Census of 1901 was 45,699,260, *ie.* about $1/7$ of the entire population! With other depressed castes not classed as untouchables, the proportion would be still larger. What is to be said of a community, of which so many millions are treated as worse than out castes and are denied all opportunities of improving their position? Excepting a few criminal tribes all these classes follow useful professions. Most of the mechanic arts and industries are in their hands. By degrading these men, we have also degraded these arts and industries.

It is a happy sign of the times that the Hindus are at last gradually awakening to a sense of their responsibilities in the matter. In Bombay, there is a depressed classes mission. In the Punjab, the Arya Samajists have purified or reclaimed thousands of Ods, Menghs and Rohtiyas some of whom were regarded as untouchables. But, in many cases, all that was done was to make these men go through a purificatory

ceremony in the midst of a vast assemblage and to have some food or drink distributed from their hands to all who were present. This is useful in securing for these classes a social status which they do not possess, but it does not go very far. What is more important is to elevate them morally and intellectually. Schools should be opened where their children can receive some elementary education, besides a training in some village industry. Night schools should be opened for adult men who could be taught reading and writing in their leisure hours. This is done by the depressed classes mission in Bombay. Recently a few Arya Samajists in the Punjab have also opened schools of this sort. But more work of this nature is required. The Arya Samaj in the United Provinces have not yet paid the same attention to this important matter as their sister Samajs in the Punjab where caste has not the same vigour as here. Yet something is being done by them. For instance, during the last year, the Arya Samaj at Phalonda in the Meerut district opened a school for Chamars and other depressed classes. The School gets an aid from the District Board, Meerut, and is doing good work under the management of Lala Kishori Lal.

The Salvation Army has undertaken the extremely difficult and noble task of reclaiming the criminal tribes, like Doms, Beriahs, Sansiyas and Haburas, who are professional thieves and robbers. The work was started only about three years ago at the invitation of our present Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Hewett K. C. S. I., C. I. E., and there are already five settlements for criminal tribes in these provinces with about 2,300 inmates including men, women and children. One of them is the Dom settlement at Gorakhpur where there are 260 Doms at present. Only those who have some experience of the hardened natures and confirmed thievish proclivities of these men can form an idea of the firmness and tact, patience and watchfulness required in handling them. It is interesting and elevating to see how officers of the Salvation Army mix with these moral lepers whose touch is a pollution for an ordinary Hindu, how they enter into their joys and sorrows, and thus help in softening their nature and raising their morals. Christian missions have been the pioneers of social reform in several matters, especially in elevating the depressed classes. But this old attempt at reforming these criminal tribes, though it is perhaps yet in an experimental stage, surpasses all. No words of praise can be too

high for such a noble work. Would our educated Hindus who want to elevate the depressed classes take a leaf out of their book in this matter, and make organised efforts for elevating the state and ameliorating the intellectual and moral condition of these unfortunate millions!

Education of Women.

Female education may well be said to have passed the controversial stage. We do not now meet with active opposition from any quarter. The great enemies to contend with are the apathy and indifference of the masses and lack of sufficient zeal among the educated; while want of female teachers is a serious hindrance in work. As the Director of Public Instruction remarks in his report on public instruction for the last year, 'the cry goes up from all quarters that teachers cannot be had, and that, without them, it is useless to open schools.' I think under the circumstances District Boards would do well to transfer superannuated teachers to girls' schools when extensions are to be given to them. And 'even retired old male teachers of vernacular schools would be of some use for private girls' schools, when female teachers are not available. This would of course be only a make-shift to keep

the work going and the necessity of producing female teachers should never be lost sight of. The idea of training widows for the duties of school mistresses has been frequently suggested, but little has been done to turn it into a reality. The idea is an excellent one, and would serve many useful purposes. Besides supplying the keenly felt demand for female teachers, it would greatly help in ameliorating the lot of those widows who would not or cannot remarry. Their public duties would leave them little time to think of their private sorrows, and their life would be not so cheerless and dull as it now is.

The Kanya Mahavidyalaya of Jullander which is perhaps the best institution of its sort in Northern India, has recently opened a widows' hostel with the above object. There are widows' homes in several provinces. I am informed that three exist in these provinces, at Agra, Jhansi, and Shahjahanpur respectively, all being managed by the Local Arya Samajs. It is not known how they are working. Thousands of widows from all parts of the country go to Benares to end their days, and thereby obtain final bliss according to their faith. It is notorious how many of them are led astray, and fall victims to temptations of which there is no lack in such

places. A widows' home at Benares, in which widows could be given religious and secular education would be a great boon to these unfortunate persons, and if properly managed and supervised, it would be of great service to the country. Benares can boast of many rich and charitably disposed citizens. Will any of them, or any reform society take up the idea?

Remarriage of Widows.

The remarriage of widows is a most difficult problem as there is still a strong feeling against it among the orthodox Hindus. The draft resolution to be submitted before you is a moderate one, for it recommends chiefly the marriage of virgin widows, *i. e.* of girls who were nominally married and became widows before their marriages could be consummated. Whatever difference of opinion there may be about the remarriage of other widows, all ancient Hindu legislators are agreed that the remarriage of such girls should be allowed. Indeed some of them would not call it as remarriage as the girl is properly speaking a virgin. Narada says:—'A girl who, though married has not cohabited with her husband, deserves to be married again, for she is just like a virgin.' According to the view

held by these authcritics, a marriage is not completed unless and until the ceremony of consummation proper has taken place.

Manu says:—

‘If a girl has not cohabited with her husband though she has been to his house, and becomes a widow, she deserves to be re-married to a second husband.’

Thus, whether such girls are to be called virgins, as Narada opines, or widows, as *Manu* says, there is difference of opinion as to the question that they should be married again. There can thus be no earthly reason why our orthodox brethren should oppose even the marriage of these virgin widows, except that among Hindus custom behind custom has dethroned both reason and ancient tradition. Gentlemen, the number of such widows must be very large. According to the census of 1901, there were in our own province no less than 28,951 widows under 15 years age; of these 25,851 were among Hindus. A very large proportion of these who were over 15 years at the time of the census must have become widows when they were virgins. The number of widows under 20 was

90,439 including 80,667 Hindus. The total number of widows was 3,933,988, including 3,427,052 Hindus. How terrible are these figures considering that the total female population of the provinces was 23,074,840 including 19,665,400 Hindus? It shows that every one woman out of 6 is a widow. I need hardly describe the wretchedness of an average widow's life in India, or spell of the numerous crimes of miscarriage, infanticides and abandonment of children, which are daily witnessed in our courts and are a necessary consequence of enforced widowhood.

It is a noteworthy point that, while some educational high-caste men are trying to encourage widow re-marriage, there is a counter tendency visible in many lower castes. It will surprise many of you, but it is a fact of which you will find ample corroboration, if you look into Sir Herbert Risley's Census of India Report of 1901. The reason is that the practice of widow remarriage among Hindus has come to be looked upon as a badge of low birth, and its absence, as a mark of respectability. For, it is only in high castes that widow marriage is prohibited. When a body of men belonging to any of the so-called lower castes get on in life, acquire wealth and position, they are naturally anxious to see their

social status raised. But, in a caste-bound community like the Hindus, they cannot hope to secure this, so long as they are supposed to belong to a low caste. They accordingly set up a claim to belong to some higher caste by imitating their social practices and even their evils and cut themselves off from such of their own community as do not imitate these practices. As Sir H. Risley says, 'The first step is to abstain from intermarriage with people who practise the forbidden thing, and thus to form a sub-caste which adopts a high-sounding name derived from some famous locality like Ayodhya or Kanouj. Thus the Amadhia or Ayodhya Kurmis of Behar and Kannaujia Kurmis of the United Provinces, pride themselves on prohibiting the re-marriage of widows and are endeavouring to establish a shadowy title to be recognised as some variety of Kshattriyas. Far be it from me to say anything disparagingly of these men, who are only trying to obtain that status which is unjustly denied to them by the arbitrary system of castes. My object is only to give an instance as to how this pernicious system breeds itself and propagates the evil by formation of new castes and sub-castes, and secondly how the notion that enforced widowhood is a mark of respectability leads to its adoption by the lower castes who

have hitherto been free from it. It is for the leading men among the higher castes to consider how long they will stick to this evil and to set an example to others. I need hardly say that the contagion of their example has already affected the Indian Mahomedans, many of whom especially those belonging to the higher grades, shun the practice of widow remarriage though there is no question about its being permitted by their religion.

There is no doubt that a slow but steady advance is being made in popularising this difficult but necessary reform. It is hoped that the noble work which was begun by late lamented Srotri Shankar will continue to be carried on by his son P. Jagadish Datta, by his Sabha, and by his successor in office.

Parda.

The question of relaxation of *Prada* is, I think, being gradually solved. Those of you who paid a visit to the exhibition held last year at Allahabad must have noticed with satisfaction how many Indian ladies of respectable families of all classes were to be seen moving about freely much like their European sisters. Among

the advantages to be derived from such exhibitions, the relaxation of *Parda* is, I think, no inconsiderable one from the standpoint of social reformers.

Early Marriage.

The question of early marriage is another which has, I think, passed the debatable stage. Very few persons will be found who will come forward to support it by arguments or ancient authority. *Shushruta*, a medical work of the highest authority in Sanskrit, which is also a sacred work of the Hindus, fixes the minimum marriageable age for boys at 25 and for girls at 16; and it says:—

“If a man who has not attained the age of 25 beget a child on a girl of under 16, either there will be no delivery or if there is, the child will not live long and even if it lives, it will be physically weak. Therefore, child-bearing on young girls should be avoided.”

What a sad change from those ancient ideals to the present state! According to the census of 1901, there were in these provinces no less than 44,585 married children of five years of

age and under; the number of those between five and ten came to 492,627; between 10 and 15 to 20,92,733. The total number of married children of 15 and under came to 26,30,945. The results have been disastrous, as we know, to our cost. The large infant mortality in our country, the physical degeneracy of our young men and women, and the premature death among them, the early age at which our energies are exhausted,—these are stern facts which bear sad testimony to the ruin, this early marriage has brought about.

There are no doubt evident signs of a growing desire among our countrymen to raise the marriageable age. This reform occupies an important place in the programme of all caste conferences, which are doing good work in educating the public opinion against this evil and some other connected evils, *e. g.*, the practice of extravagant expenditure in marriages, giving of large dowries. Recently the Hindu Marriage Reform League has been started with the sole object of bringing about these reforms, by Miss Carrie A. Tennant, an American lady. It has its centre in Calcutta but there are several branches in these provinces including one in this very city. There are also other agencies at

work. The Arya Samaj have started *Gurukulas* to revive the ancient system of *Brahmacharya* and the parents of students admitted into these institution are pledged not to marry them until they have attained the age of 25. The C. H. College Benares, refuses to admit married boys to the school departments. There are similar restrictions in the hostel attached to the D. A. High School in Dehra Dun, which would I think be a good plan, and would materially help the cause of reform, if the managers and conductors of other private or aided schools can see their way to raising the fees in the case of married boys seeking admission into their school.

Temperance and Social Purity.

In the third and the last class, the chief subjects for your consideration are temperance and social purity. There may be some other subjects which will be submitted to you in the forms of resolutions. I have, however, already taken so much of your time that I must leave them alone. But, in this connection, I cannot omit to mention a notable victory achieved this year through the Arya Samaj, ~~Naini Tal~~, in the case of social purity, *viz.*, the pledge taken by the *Nayaks* of district Naini Tal, to marry their

girls instead of allowing them to lead a life of shame which has become an established custom in their caste. If the *Nayaks* are true to their pledge, the results should be far-reaching; for it was this caste which had supplied public women to a good many districts in these provinces.

Conclusion.

These are the principal reforms, gentlemen, which you will be called upon to discuss. They are, as I remarked, no innovations, or blind imitations of foreign ideals. We only ask you to revive the true old ideals of our own *Shastras*,—the ideals of the ancient Aryans before the same got corrupted by the influence of Scythian and other barbaric tribes. You have only to apply boldly the surgeon's knife to the deformities or excrescences that have grown on the social body. The later transformations in the ideals were not necessary links in the evolution of those ideals, but were only accidental accretions. Remove them and you restore your social institutions to their pristine purity. These are the national lines of reform and they are also perfectly rational. It is thus that revival is not antagonistic to reform. But, gentlemen, revival

does not necessarily mean the restoration of past institutions in the exact forms in which they existed in old times. Nor should it be supposed for a moment that I am averse to change where and so far as change is necessary.

Change is the universal law of nature and a society which does not or cannot adapt itself to changing environments, is bound to perish. Our Rishis never looked upon the customs and usages of society as immutable and they changed them whenever that was deemed necessary. If you compare the different *Smritis*, you will find many instances of a usage being sanctioned in one age and declared obsolete in another. It is only the fundamental principles of religions and morality (which are also the basis of society) that are eternal and immutable, not the forms and usages which must change with changing times. To reform, as the very word signifies, is to change the form, sometimes the mere outward form though the old ideal may remain the same. Change we must, whether we will or not. What is desirable is that we should change for the better, keeping in view the true old ideals which have stood our ancestors in good stead in ancient times.

One word more, gentlemen, and I shall have done. It is said that the Social Conference is not a working body. The remark is in one way correct, though this Conference serves other useful purposes. In any case, the actual work of carrying out the reforms that we advocate, must be left to other agencies that are more in touch with the masses. For example, much has to be left to caste conferences; the idea of caste has such a deep hold on the average Hindu that most people can be easily influenced through their caste association rather than through any other agency. It should, however, never be forgotten that these caste associations, if left alone, indirectly tend to strengthen or perpetuate that narrow sectarian spirit, that feeling of exclusiveness which is the very essence of caste and which is the bane of Hindu society. I should not be understood to say anything, disparaging of these societies, which mean well and are doing useful work in many ways in their respective spheres. But, the fact that I have stated is to my mind undeniable. The Social Conference at which we are assembled to day, where all men irrespective of their caste or creed can meet on a common platform and compare notes with one another, offers a wholesome corrective to the unfortunate tendency mentioned above. Most

more, because I know that my views as to the proper method of social reform are not probably the views of the majority of the earnest and high-minded men who are interested in social reform. As I said in the last Provincial Conference at Kumbakonam, I take it that this conference is intended only to promote social reform among Hindus and not among the followers of the other religions. I go upon the basis of the Hindu Shastras in this matter, because I believe religion to be the foundation of every fruitful activity. All religions were no doubt supposed to be in a dying state about 40 years ago; but, we now know that none of the great religions has died, nor is there any likelihood of their becoming extinct till they are merged in the higher Universal religion from which they have sprung. When religion becomes corrupt, social life also becomes corrupt, political life becomes corrupt and the material progress of the nation decays. The chain of cause and effect seems to me to always follow in this order, though, owing to the subtle nature of the higher links of the chain which lie in the spiritual, mental and moral worlds, the links usually escape attention. Social progress and reform, political progress and reform and material progress and reform among the human races must, in my humble opinion, be

merely the by-products of religious reform and progress, if such reforms are to be real and permanent and not merely verbal and formal. The Hon. Mr. Ameer Ali was, if I may say so with respect, quite right in saying that true Mussalmans do and ought to lay more stress on the unity of all Mussalmans based on their being followers of the same religion than on their unity as dwellers in any geographical area on the ground of patriotism. Is God greater or is our country greater? If God is greater and if God requires you to do a certain work while your country asks you to do some other work, you must obey God and not your country. If you want national unity in India, you must first cultivate religious union. Till the Hindus really love and respect the Mussalman religion and the Christian religion, till the Mussalmans in their turn really love and respect the Hindu religion without giving up their own religion, till the Christians similarly learn to love and respect the other religions of this land, there cannot be any true national unity. The first duty of patriots of every faith therefore is to see that their faith is so purified and extended that it is capable of looking upon other faiths as loving sisters. Raja Ram Mohun Roy was the father of every kind of reform in this country. He laid stress

some time to come on this one single reform of post-puberty marriages. Can we not see that Mr. Basu's Bill is revived in a form which might appeal more to a greater number of the Hindu community than his last Bill did, so that post-puberty marriages and marriages among subcastes may be placed beyond any doubt as to their being in accordance with law? As each of these resolutions is to be dealt with by able proposers, seconders and supporters, and as each of them has been talked about in so many previous conferences, both Provincial and District, I shall confine the remaining portion of my address to general observations as to how we should prepare ourselves for the work, rather than to the necessity, utility and propriety of the reforms. You will, however, allow me to express as mildly as I can, my surprise and regret that express resolutions* about post-puberty and virgin widow marriages have not been incorporated in the draft resolutions. Though this is the first District Social Conference in the Nellore district, much water has flowed under the bridge since these two questions were mooted for the first time in Southern India and public opinion every-

where cannot be so very unripe even here, as is suggested by the omission of these subjects from the draft resolutions.

No movement makes satisfactory progress among us, because we are wanting in some essential moral qualities. The late Mr. A. O. Hume deplored our lack of truthfulness and our lack of dogged perseverance. There is no use in ignoring these national defects in our character which would make us promise large things without much consideration in moments of enthusiasm, but which prevent us from seeing that it is necessary to show the real strength of our convictions by earnest fruitful deeds and which make us neglect even to pay our promised subscriptions to the most sacred causes. A leading statesman recently said of the virtues of Britons that they "possessed as almost natural gifts, that combination of earnestness and restraint, that true sense of proportion, that capacity for practical compromise which are the envy of every foreign people and on which depended all the liberties which dignify the life of the inhabitants of the British Isles." If some of us have got much earnestness, we are lacking in restraint. Almost all of us are lacking in a true sense of proportion and our capacity for practical compromise is

* These two resolutions were, at the instance of the President, proposed, seconded and duly carried.—Publisher.

almost nil. We would fight with our dearest friends for absolutely trivial causes and ruin all our efforts. I do not mean to say that I am freer from these national defects than any one of my brothers. I have preached much more than I have practised; and though what I have practised is thus quite insignificant, as my experience might be of some use to others who are intending to put their ideas into practice, I shall, at the risk of being considered egotistical, state a few of my experiences. I have found that a resolute resistance to the opinion of your orthodox relations that some dear widowed female relative's head should be shaved does not bring on us as much social persecution as we are apt to fear. After a month or two of scandal and gossip, our relations accept the fact that this head-shaving business is not going to be carried out, notwithstanding all their threats and scandals; and they quietly begin to move with us and with our non-shaving widow relations in the same manner as before. So also when we move with our relations who have gone on sea-voyages and who are not defiantly disobeying the Hindu rules as to food and drink, our orthodox relations do not make too much fuss as regards moving with ourselves, though they might not directly themselves have social communion with those

who had undertaken the sea-voyage. When I was in Trivandrum, I found that, though even Nairs who had gone to England were prohibited from entering the Sri Padmanabhaswami temple, the relations of such Nairs, who did not cease social amenities with their England-returned relation, were not prohibited from entering the precincts of the temple. Again as regards inter-caste marriages also, we need fear no opposition worth the name. (I have found that we can go even as far as breaking pure bread with religious and moral friends belonging to other than the caste to which we belong or even with friends belonging to other than the Hindu religion, though you need not and should not make a parade of having done so.) Again, I have found that the Brahmins, who have kept their girls unmarried after puberty and who have not even concealed the fact that their girls had attained puberty, have not been put to any inconvenience at all worth the name, in the matter of social conveniences and amenities. As I said before, I am stating all this for the encouragement of my friends, who are convinced that mere entertainment of ideas about social reform without any attempt to carry them out into practice, is both harmful to their moral nature and even unworthy of their manhood and womanhood. I

do not intend to say that social reformers should not cultivate tolerance and patience; but, on the other hand, I believe that they require these virtues much more than other men. But, after a certain age, and when we have fulfilled our obligations to our parents, action in accordance with our convictions becomes part of our religious duty. You might perhaps know that I am not one of those who consider it proper or Shastraic to tell young men to defy their parents in action. I said so recently when presiding at a meeting in the Danish Mission Reading Room, my esteemed friend Mr. V. S. Srinivasa Sastri having been the lecturer at that meeting. I was taken to task severely by the correspondent of a Madras paper, who told me that I was an ignoramus who did not know even the story of Prahlada and that I ought to take elementary lessons in the Puranas before I gave an airing to my ideas as to the duties of young men. Though I have read the Bhagavatham at least 20 times, I took the advice of that correspondent as a necessary piece of advice given through him by the Lord, lest I might get conceited that I was able to understand even a fractional part of the deep meaning in our religious works, though I might have read them several times. I thought again about that story; but, I was not

able to see that Prahlada ever disobeyed his father's commands so far as they were directed to the performance by him of any bodily action. He drank poison and he attended an atheistic school under the command of his father; only he had dedicated himself to the Supreme Lord Vishnu under the guidance of his Guru Narada, even when he was in his womb and when his father did not and could not have prohibited him from doing any such thing. His father was the father of his physical body but not of his mental and spiritual body or of his monadic spirit. Narada found in him an apt Sishya who had got all the four qualifications including the six *Sampa* *this* by long effort and practice in previous incarnations; and when a man or a child or a foetus in the womb is fit to lead the life of a Sannyasin or Ananyabaktha, he is freed from all other Dharmas except the supreme Dharma of devotion to God. Ladies and gentlemen, I believe that law and liberty are interdependent; I believe that Moksham from the world and eternal bondage to Isvara are inter-dependent; I believe that consonance to Shastra and social reform are inter-dependent; I believe that habits of discipline and physical obedience to parents when you are young and full liberty to carry convictions into practice after your duty to your parents is over

are also inseparably interdependent. Liberty of young men to think and learn and to worship in their hearts according to their convictions does not mean liberty to act against the law which prescribes physical obedience to parents, so long as the parents are alive and so long as the young man is not fit for the life of a Sanyasin or of an undivided lover of God, who has burnt up all his passions and even the thought of the existence of his body in the love of God. The worship of autonomy and the dislike of discipline are, I know, the faults of this age and I do not wish to encourage these faults in young men by any words of mine. As I said before, Narada, the great sacrificer of conventions and all the other Dharmas except the Dharma of undivided sacrifice of one's self to God, he was the Guru of Prahlada and taught him that Supreme Dharma, and when that Supreme Dharma is taught, all other Dharmas may be given up. But even Prahlada did obey his father in all matters which did not conflict with his mental devotion to Sri Hari. Whenever I find a young man who is fit to give up all other Dharmas excepting Moksha Dharma or the Ananyabaktha Dharma and whenever I am myself fit to be the Guru of such a young man, I also shall teach him to disobey his parents just, as Lord Jesus taught

his apt disciples to give up father and mother to follow Him. But, to teach ordinary young men who cannot give up their morning coffee for a single day to give up the great Dharma of obeying their parents is not in my line. Even Parasurama thought himself bound to kill his mother under his father's orders and Shri Rama could not obey his own mother, because, his father's command, though given by the mouth of his step-mother Kaikeyi, had to be obeyed. I am therefore addressing these words for carrying convictions into practice, only to those who are not under any obligations to parents and to those who have passed their 50th year, which is the limit laid by our Shastras as the age up to which alone, social conventions and other Dharmas except the Moksha Dharma and Ananya Bhaktha Dharma are binding on us. Manu says (chapter 6) that in the third period of a man's life, after he passes his 50th year, when he has become the father of a family, when he perceives his muscles become flaccid and his hair grey or sees the child of his child, he should flee from the bondage to society and conventions. When a man attains his 50th year, he ought to dedicate himself to God and should no more care what happens to his body or to his possessions. Dedication to God merely means dedicating

yourself to the welfare of God's fellow-creatures. As the Gita says, My Lord Sri Krishna does not want anything for Himself and He works only for the unity and co-operation of His worlds (Loka Sangraha) and He asks us to turn the wheel of altruism like Himself, not because He requires any such help from us, but because it is our duty to do so, as He is our Lover and we are His lovers. Let us, who are older than 50 years, those who are younger and owe no obligations to living parents and also those who are able to bring living parent or parents to our ways of thinking and acting, or to convince them that it is their duty to allow us to carry out our convictions, though those convictions may not be their convictions, let us cultivate perfect fearlessness, which is the first of the 26 virtues mentioned in the beginning slokas of chapter 16 of the Gita. Why should old men care for their decaying rotten skin, when they could sacrifice it for the benefit of the world? We have seen that, in the question of marriage after puberty, the majority of the Pandits of the Conjeevaram Parishad pronounced it to be not against the Shastras. I am perfectly clear that the Mantrams used at Brahmin weddings and the ordinances of the Grihya Sutras on the subject conclusively show "that the brides contemplated therein are

grown-up girls who have attained puberty." This reform can be accomplished, in my opinion, without much trouble, provided we all work at it in a spirit of co-operation. Let us, old men, bravely work in this cause and let us not egg on young men to do so; for, young men unless they are Prahladas, Vyasas, or Sankaracharyas, would be inclined to "indulge in action insanely disproportionate to the cause." I should like old men to be young in action, so far as altruistic action is concerned, and young men to be Chirakaris in action. But, we find old men are very keen in action intended to compete with young men for place, power, money and office, while they are very dull and cowardly in altruistic activities. Young men again, I find, not only break the hearts of their parents by disobedience and neglect of their proper studies and activities, but wish, by their ill-considered actions, to reform society in a moment. I should like that they reverse their roles so far as work on the physical plane is concerned, young men taking up action only under the advice and open co-operation of altruistic elderly men. The very fact that we call ourselves social reformers is no doubt an offence to our orthodox brethren "just as an idle person will take offence if he sees us industrious because it is a tacit reproach to his idleness."

So, a person who calls himself a reformer is an eye-sore to one who wants to be let alone. "That sort of offence you cannot help. He is angry with you, because you are making him reproach himself; but, even that anger and self-reproach are good for the man as they stir him up to activity." But, we social reformers should try our best not to be offensive to others in any way, if we can help doing so and to make our conduct as attractive as we can to those around us. As I said before, we should also take care that we do not incite young men to action which is not part of their duty, while we ourselves refrain from the action which is part of our duty.

We should, in my opinion, go still further and conform to and respect society and social usages in indifferent matters. Mrs. Grundy "loves uniformity and hates rapid movement of any kind" while reformers are bent on beneficial change and on rapid movement to produce that change. So, Mrs. Grundy is always prejudiced against social reformers. But, she is a great and powerful lady; and as practical men who want to reform even her (and she is always in the majority at any given movement), we need not antagonise her unnecessarily by eccentricity in "dress, speech and manners" as many of us

reformers do. Pandit Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar never forsook his orthodox dress, speech and manners, though he was a more earnest reformer than most of us. He never tried to give up his national dress, speech and manners to put on abnormal or outlandish garbs or to become a 'freak' curiously dressed and curiously mannered. While, in action based on principle, we might be obliged to defy Mrs. Grundy, we need not rub the old lady the wrong way by defying her through unnecessary actions for the mere sake of defiance and by refusing to recognize her legitimate authority in the matter of costume and manners, especially when we are in the midst of our Hindu countrymen. I know several men who have said to me "I approve of most items of social reform but I do so dislike social reformers." The Thathagata preached long ago that the middle way is the best. Let us follow it in the matter of dress and manners, so that we may not lose our influence with the masses and that we may increase our power of doing good to our countrymen.

I know that we social reformers belong to different schools. But, is it impossible for us to cultivate the spirit of loving brotherhood among ourselves, even though our methods of

reform may be slightly different from one another? All of us are against the pride of caste. All of us love our fellow-Indians and wish to bring about progress in the physical and moral improvement of our fellow-men. If we see that mere differences of opinion as to methods do not lead to unbrotherliness of feeling, I am quite sure that such mere differences of opinion will not at all retard the work of reform. These unbrotherly feelings, though they are intangible and unseen, are the real causes of the slow progress of social reform. Unbrotherliness among Indians is usually due to two causes. One is the pride of the separative intellect which always wishes to make much of the slightest differences even in matters of detail. The other and more serious one is the pride of blood, race and caste. Yudhistira proclaimed from the house-tops the principle of the essential equality of men without distinction of caste or race in this Kali Yuga and further enunciated the corollary that real caste in this Yuga is to be ascertained only by men's conduct, character and capacity and not by birth. Caste is a baneful institution, when it exalts mere reputed descent in blood over established and undoubted character and capacity, and so far as it lays undue religious stress on mere blood as the old religion of the Jewish people

did. Some of us have carried patriotism and the pride of caste to such a great length as even to deny to the inhabitants of any other country and to people of any other race the privilege of being fit for Moksha or to reach the feet of Isvara. The equality of men proclaimed by Yudhistira was reaffirmed in feebler and more inexact words by that great Frenchman Rousseau. I read recently in a review that Rousseau's writings, notwithstanding all their wildness and want of logic, have still remained vital, because they embody one great principle. "That principle is of course the essential equality of men, the essential artificiality of those differences between them upon which the privileges of privileged castes are based. There are many senses, of course, in which the statement that all men are equal is admitted by all men unconsciously, if not openly, to be absurd. The majority of men, however, feel that to cite instances of that inequality in reply to Rousseau's proposition is merely to trifle with words, and that there is no such actual inequality among men which entitles one class of men to keep

other classes of men in social, political or industrial subjection. That view of equality first laid hold of mankind when Rousseau put it in a book. In spite of reaction provoked by excesses, it has gained ground ever since. It was, alternately with nationalism, the insurgent emotion which so soon shook the apparently irresistible power of the Holy Alliance. It explains how the knees of Tories tremble at the suggestion that they should 'go to the country with the House of Lords on their back.' It may also explain a good deal of the instinctive hostility of labouring men towards Mr. Lloyd George's ingenious and complicated schemes for re-building privilege upon an illusory basis of socialistic philanthropy.'

Ladies and gentlemen, I have done. I told one of the organisers of this Social Conference that, owing to my heavy official work, I may not be able to prepare a speech worthy of this Conference. You will therefore excuse me if the remarks I have made are scrappy and unconnected. Let me conclude in the words of Tennyson that we may all pray to the Supreme

Lord that He might, out of His abounding uncaused love for us, and for our sacred Motherland,

"Ring out false pride in place and blood,
The civic slander and the spite;
Ring in the love of truth and right,
Ring in the common love of good.
Ring in the valiant man and free,
The larger heart, the kindlier hand;
Ring out the darkness of the land,
Ring in the Christ that is to be."

Mr. M. Chengayya Pantulu, B. A., B. L.

(Public Prosecutor & Municipal Chairman, Nellore.)

WELCOME ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

Nellore District Social Conference

held at Nellore in 1912.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I feel not a little honoured by the Reception Committee in their having made me their spokesman on this memorable occasion of the First Social Conference for the District of Nellore.

On their behalf, it is my pleasant duty to accord to you a most sincere and hearty welcome to this Conference and to thank you for the kindness with which you have gathered in such large numbers in response to their invitations.

The idea of the Social Conference is in itself a sure sign that a large number of intelligent and public-spirited gentlemen have begun seriously to think about the conditions and requirements of our society and it is sincerely hoped that the enthusiasm and interest displayed in convening this gathering will be kept up, until some tangible good should crown their labours.

This Conference meets under the most auspicious circumstances in that its deliberations will be presided over by the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sadasiva Ayyar, one of the best leaders of Hindu thought at the present day, who is, by his intellectual eminence, by his study and intimate knowledge of the Social problems, by his exalted position, and by the determined and practical step taken by him in the matter of one of our pressing reforms, best qualified to guide us not only through the proceedings of this Conference, but through all our efforts in the future in the field of reform.

We are all familiar with the admirable manner in which all the communities and nationalities of this vast Empire cherished common feelings and presented a united voice in their expression on the occasion of the visit

to this country of His Most Imperial Majesty, the King Emperor. We are also aware of the most far-sighted and statesmanlike advice left by His Majesty before leaving these shores that the same harmony and co-operation should be made to influence the various peoples and races in their every-day mutual relations.

His Majesty thus struck the true keynote of Social Reform conceived in the broadest spirit, namely, the obliteration of racial prejudices, and religious animosities and the cessation of internecine strife, whatever and however glorious the cause in the name of which it may be carried on. The effective appreciation of this noble truth is the surest foundation of all the practical steps that have been and may hereafter be taken for the social amelioration of our countrymen and countrywomen. The truth is equally applicable to the widest landmarks that divide races and creeds and to those sharp lines that separate Brahman from Brahman, Vaidika from Vaidika, a brother from a sister, and sisters from each other, among the Hindus.

The task of the Social Reformer is by no means easy or smooth. Not that we have not had noble examples of lives spent in the further-

ance of the cause, nor even that the result of their labours, such as it has been, is not sufficiently encouraging to the young labourer in the field. But, in the peculiar circumstances of our country and the turn that its civilization has taken, fresh obstacles and new springs of opposing action are ever in the making. It behoves all true citizens to strive after what is calculated to the promotion of human happiness, the lessening of human misery, and the eradication of the numerous social evils rendering impossible the healthy growth of an ancient and otherwise progressive community.

The signs of the times are, however, far from hopeful. Seventy years ago, when reform may be considered to have been fairly set on foot, the one ruling idea was how to minimise the force of evils more or less common to all classes of the Hindu community, though certain special customs of the Brahmans, such as *Sati*, early marriage and the cruel treatment of the widows, were, as ever, objects of special attention. I consider that it was the recognition of these common defects that facilitated the work of the early social reformers, such as Ram Mohan Roy and awakened the desire for higher political privileges. Much good would have been achieved

if this aim had been steadily kept in view. It is a matter for regret that the cause of Social Reform has latterly been given a set back, not only by the diversion of the best intellect available to the political programme, but by the accentuation of differences suggested by the requirements of class representation in the matter of the political franchise and appointments to offices under Government. It is extremely sad to contemplate the process of disintegration that is going on in the shape of conferences and associations for the benefit of individual sections of the community. The question of the establishment of separate Universities for Hindus and Mussalmans may have its own justification, but no valid reason can be conceived for a *Naidu* Conference, a *Kamma* Conference, an *Aruvela Niyogi* Conference, and even an *Aruvela Kamme Niyogi* Conference, which is said to be brewing. One has also to look with concern on the agitation that has been started by the well-wishers of the *Andhras*, for separate political representation, for the carving out of a separate Province, and for the establishment of a separate University. The only justification that can be urged—namely the development of Telugu Language and Literature, can well be achieved without the perpetuation of exclusiveness. If, after nearly a

century of Western Education, we have not learnt to sink our differences and strive after noble ends in association with our countrymen irrespective of their language, their habits of thought, or their social customs, either there has been something wrong with our Education, or it has not produced its natural fruit on the Indian soil.

One of the most prominent and perhaps natural reflections about Social Reform is that its progress has been slow in spite of valuable lives spent in its furtherance and the constant agitation carried on in every part of the country. This observation is easily answered, if it is remembered that the period during which proposals for reform have been under discussion is infinitesimal, when compared with the ages during which evil customs which are sought to be changed or improved have grown and become petrified. It cannot be denied that, for several decades, there has been an awakening among us, carrying with it a sense of dissatisfaction with the position of our women, the conditions of our home-life, our marriage customs, our inter-caste relations and a host of other matters on which the welfare of our society depends. We also know that there have been among us

the most sincere and self-sacrificing workers in the field for over a century. Their names are our household words, but a few typical names may yet be mentioned. Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, Iswar Chandra Vidya Sagar, Dr. Bandarkhar and Justice Ranade, and, nearer home, Dewan Bahadur Raghunada Row and Veeresalingam Pantulu were and are epoch-makers in the history of our country and would have proved the same in any age or in any other part of the world. Their one aim was duty to their country and their common principle was to do that duty in the face of opposition, ostracism and calumny. Their lives are sufficient to inspire us with hope and courage in whatever we may attempt to achieve for the promotion of the cause which has brought us together.

The results of the reform movement in this land were quite recently summarised by Sir Krishna Gupta in a lecture delivered by him at the Cambridge University. According to him, in social affairs there had been great progress. 'It was a matter of common observation,' he said, 'that in the large cities like Calcutta, the restrictions of food had nearly lost all their force. There was a time when the breach of the sumptuary rules entailed the severest penalties inclu-

ding social ostracism. The old disabilities had now practically disappeared. The rules regarding endogamy were more rigid; but even among the orthodox, marriages were being permitted between sub-divisions of the same caste.' While lamenting the pernicious custom of child marriage, he said, 'it was a hopeful sign that the people were beginning to realise the evils of this unnatural custom and the difficulty of securing eligible bridegrooms was raising the marrying age of girls. The youngmen were learning to resist the importunities of their parents for early wedlock.'

I am afraid these observations require considerable modification when applied to South India. But, they may derive some encouragement from the advance made in the theory as appears from the recorded opinions of Pandits at the *Parishad* held in Conjeevaram early this year. I shall refer to only two subjects, the sea-voyage and post-puberty marriages. Out of the 50 pandits, whose opinions were recorded on the question of Sea-voyage, so many as 30 considered that Sea-voyage was not objectionable in itself, only 18 holding that it was *per se* sinful. A very large majority, 45, were of opinion that the sin could be removed by suitable ceremonies, and

only three considered it inexpiable. The effect of these opinions was to a large extent discounted by the views expressed as regards the extent to which the purified persons could be associated with. 27 were for their complete association and 17 for association subject to limitations, fifteen of them saying that others should not eat in their company. Four persons held that such persons should not be associated with at all. On the question of post-puberty marriage, 7 pandits were of opinion that the Shastras prohibited such marriage, while three more said that, though permitted by the Shastras, this kind of marriage should not be re-introduced, as being opposed to *Sishtacharam*. 8 pandits were of opinion that post-puberty marriage was ordained by the Shastras, while two expressed the view that the Shastras were not unanimous on the question. 29 pandits considered that there was a rule permitting such marriages, as a matter of *Gauna* or *Apad Kalpa*, limited however in time to 3 or 4 years after puberty.)

It may perhaps not be inappropriate on this occasion to recall with reference to the methods hitherto pursued, the degree of success that has been attained in the past, and suggest what may be done in order, if possible, to accelerate the

rate of progress that has yet been made. The chief obstacle to social reform among the Hindu community is the most intimate connection of their social customs with religion. The difficulty was perceived by the early leaders of thought and they had the boldness to call in the aid of the Government in matters which to them appeared capable of being dissociated from religion and being dealt with by the State in the interests of humanity and social order. Such matters are those dealt with by sections 300, exception 5, 309, 371, 372 &c., of the Indian Penal Code. The early reformers also recognized the need of state's assistance to enable them to attempt at least reform in matters relating to marriage. To this circumstance do we owe those enactments whose policy is not to compel any one to act against the dictates of his religion or the sense of propriety prevailing in the caste or class to which he might belong, but to enforce on every one the duty of tolerance towards his neighbour who might of his own choice pursue a line of conduct against the rule of his society, if he should, by such conduct, not cause any physical or material inconvenience to his castemen or relations. They are:—The removal of Caste Disabilities Act of 1850, the Widow Remarriage Act of 1856 and the Special Marriage Act of 1873.

The chief feature of the method adopted by the early reformers, with or without the help of the State, was the direct and concentrated manner of the attack on the evils aimed at. It is permissible to enquire whether such a direct method is the most suitable one in matters of social reform. The problem of social regeneration is essentially a human problem; and a long-standing evil cannot be removed by any amount of direct advice or moral persuasion. The very directness of the attack is often sufficient to engender and even to muster opposition, which aims at and tends to the perpetuation, in one form or other, the very evil sought to be removed.

In illustration of the scanty success that can flow from the application of the direct method, I may mention the question of the remarriage of widows. No one can deny that our early reformers were guided by the justest and most humane considerations in advocating the remarriage of Hindu Widows. In fact, the reform was a necessary complement of the rule abolishing *Sati*, which rule will remain a standing monument of the justice and the boldness of the British Legislature in India. We are deeply indebted to the same Legislature for the law legalising Widow Remarriage, which was passed at nearly

the same time. Both the laws were instances of direct treatment, but while the positive rule in the case of *Sati* had its immediate effect, the permissive legislation in the matter of Widow Marriage has remained practically unproductive, for nearly half a century. The inference is clear that direct method is inefficacious, unless it is adopted by the sovereign power, and even then, only by the enactment of a positive rule of law. Where the coercive power is not available, the direct method is unsuitable. The result was that the proposed reform met with untold opposition from all parties concerned. The orthodox pandits who regarded it as the most violent inroad upon the religious life of the Hindus, the general mass of the population who could not appreciate the new thought and the women who had through ages conceived and inherited peculiar notions of chastity and a life of dependence as constituting ideal womanhood—all regarded the plea for widow remarriage as the most heinous of suggestions. True, there have been a few rare cases of men who have proved martyrs to this cause, either by encouraging parties to the marriage or by being the parties themselves. But, neither the number of such cases, nor the manner of their reception by

the society gives any indication of a waning opposition or at least an attitude of indifference on the part of any of the classes above-named.

This is probably the reason why, of late years, greater attention has been paid to the question of the postponement of the age of marriage than formerly, which may be taken as the beginning of the appreciation of the indirect method. But, even in this respect, the opposition that has to be counted is immense and sufficient to neutralise the work of the reform party. The figures recorded at the latest Census do not afford much encouragement. 6 out of every 1000 Hindu girls below the age of 5 years and 57 of these between 5 and 10 were found to have been married. In our Presidency, there were 1316 infants below the age of one year, the proud possessors of husbands or wives, besides 13 widowers and 31 widows. The figures for higher ages up to 5 years go on rising, showing 5667 boys and 15,894 girls married, and 172 widowers and 673 widows. Between ages 5 and 10, we have 23,698 married boys and 1,40,986 married girls and 791 widowers and 4,072 widows. The District of Nellore contributes its share towards the production of these figures with 138 boys and 281 girls below 5 already married and 5

boys and 24 girls already consigned to widowhood. Between the years 5 and 10, this District accounts for 243 married boys and 2,477 married girls, 13 widowers and 127 widows. If it is necessary to refer to the point, it may be mentioned that, between the ages 10 and 15, the District has 686 married boys and 16,137 married girls, 18 widowers and 637 widows. Though these figures are appalling, it would have been some consolation if, in comparison with the results recorded at the previous Census, there had been any improvement. But, we find that while the figures recorded at the Census of 1901 showed a slight improvement over those of the Census of 1891, the figures for 1911 showed a distinct retrogression in most respects, those in the case of girls having been restored to the level of 1891. The natural inference is that, for 20 years at least, we have not advanced, the fluctuation in the figures being attributable not to a growing sense of the evil of premature marriages, but probably to the economic conditions that prevailed in the respective decades. Children's marriages might be put off in times of scarcity; but "with returning agricultural prosperity, an increase in the number of early marriages, if regrettable, is not a matter for surprise." It is not meant to suggest that, because progress is not apparent, it does

not therefore exist. But, the materials available do not show that the direct attack on the system of child marriages, though vigorously persisted in, has produced any appreciable practical result.

Sir Oliver Lodge, in his Presidential address to the Social and Political Education League in the year 1905, said with reference to the methods of Social Reform in England, "Social progress is only sure and lasting when the average citizen is ripe for it, when he is carried along by the reformers, and realises the benefit of what has been done. Society cannot be reconstructed from out-side, it must be reconstructed from within, it must in a manner reconstruct itself or it will be unstable. This is the whole problem, this is the real and noble difficulty in dealing with self-conscious material and free agents." Again "the hopelessness of effecting any reform without the concurrence of the average man is the chief reason indeed which leads many of us to lay so great a stress upon Education, upon real education and the reform of the schools, and upon reconsideration of the orthodox methods of imparting knowledge and stimulating thought and enquiry in use until now." It will be interesting to consider whether these remarks can have any bearing upon our investigations

into the requirements of our society, and upon the construction or reconstruction of the reform organizations in this country. The unit of Hindu society is a *Griham* or a household, and the *Grihine*, the house-wife, has in it a status and an influence all her own. It stands to reason, therefore, that no movement to reform Hindu society can succeed, unless Hindu women are well-educated and are made to appreciate the needs and aims of the new spirit. There are other excellent reasons which show that no improvement is possible in India in any direction unless with the cooperation of Indian women. Almost the first essential requisite of sound education for boys or girls is a healthy and a moral environment and discipline, while at home. It is needless to say it is the mother that creates and commands the influences of the home resulting in the growth of children in health, in innocence, in beauty, and in their being equipped by capacity for physical endurance, moral courage and tolerance, acquired in the school of home life. Besides these general considerations, it is clear that almost every question of reform concerns women and unless they are in some manner made alive to their condition, their shortcomings and their opportunities, no movement of reform can succeed. When so treated,

the help that a woman can render to the cause of reform, will be unlimited. If otherwise, the result will be disastrous.

(1) The position of women in the matter of women's reform was very plainly and pointedly described by the late Mr. Rangacharlu, Dewan of Mysore. So early as 1882, he said "I attach great importance to getting up amongst our leading families numbers of young ladies with a high English Education, who could feel for the advancement of their sex, and take up the same position in regard to them as that occupied by educated man in relation to their ignorant brethren." He also suggested that the best course was "to leave to women all that concerned themselves to be judged and determined by the standard of their feelings and ideas on the subject." It does not appear to me that our experience of life in this country during the thirty years that have elapsed since this utterance and our knowledge of the happenings in Europe and America in the name of women's emancipation in any manner derogate from the wisdom of the policy therein enunciated. The expression "high English Education" may be considered to require elucidation. But, that women's education should be high, i. e., high enough to be useful and

productive, will not be disputed. It may be said, it is difficult to devise a suitable scheme of such education, so that it may be full and effective and yet not denationalise our women. I do not, however, regard it impossible and I sincerely regret that the task has not been seriously attempted. The question is, are we satisfied that we have done our duty in the matter of educating our women? Is the education, such as they have till now received, of any value in developing their minds, enlarging the limits of their vision, in enabling them to understand their functions as wives and mothers, and as citizens with social duties towards their uneducated sisters? You may call many of our girls literate, but you cannot regard them, except probably in rare instances, as educated. Mere literacy, as connected with the question of universal education, may have a meaning. What we require in order to render at least a few women capable of leading, and women in general capable of being led, is something higher. The problem is an imminent one, and must be tackled with wisely and manfully before it is too late. The matter now lies in men's hands, and it is their duty while it is there to give women the benefit of their earlier start. If women should realise that their interests are uncared for and resolve to look

about for themselves, there may not be serious harm, but men will have failed of their duty and lost their chance.

It is needless to call attention to the fact, that in point of education and general advancement, there is an utter disproportion between the progress made by men and women in this country. It is unnecessary to discuss the causes. But the result of this state of things is far-reaching. We often hear severe comments made on the practically double lives that most educated men are leading. The reason of this is the utter incapacity of women to sympathise and co-operate with their husbands or sons in ever so trifling situations, quite unobjectionable, but against orthodox notions. The consequence is that, while our educated men are prepared to break caste, tradition, and scruple, when they are practically unobserved, they lack the boldness either to act likewise or to avow their actions in the presence of the women of their households. Neither this disparity, nor the conduct which it necessitates, is creditable.

It is absolutely necessary to take the women along lines of education and civilization. The time has arrived when there should be High

Schools for women in all District stations. There is the question of funds; but if the people and the local bodies will realize their responsibility in the matter, the aid of the Government may be depended upon. The more difficult question is as to the means of providing suitable staff and appropriate curriculum. It will probably be desirable to memorialize Government to appoint a committee to discuss the necessary details and formulate proposals. The points to be aimed at appear to be :—

- (1) The appointment of women teachers at least for higher forms,
- (2) The restriction of the whole course to a period of six or seven years,
- (3) A qualified diversion of the course at the end of the 4th year, so that girls leaving school early may themselves have had a completed all-round course, though of a lower standard,
- (4) The adoption of indigenous methods of instruction, as most suitable for imparting the maximum knowledge within the minimum period of time, and,
- (5) The use of the vernacular more extensively than in the case of boys in the teaching of language as well as non-language subjects.

(Another reason for the slow progress of reform appears to be the disagreement among the reformers as to the stand-point of advocacy. One class appeals to the Shastras and attempts to satisfy the Pandits and the orthodox party that the reforms pleaded for have the sanction of India's sacred books and are in effect cases of return to the happy state which once existed. Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Row, the pioneer of the reform movement in Madras, spent all his life in the performance of this gigantic task. Mr. Mahadeva Sastriar of Mysore, whom we are proud to claim as of Nellore, has added valuable contributions to the literature on the subject. The other class of reformers would prefer to base their proposals on grounds of justice and expediency. It appears to me that the principle of Shastric sanction is not helpful to the cause of reform.) For one thing, the work is of an uphill character, and cannot be undertaken by a large body of men, who are otherwise eminently fit to carry on the work of reform. Secondly, an appeal to the Shastras would appear to carry with it an admission that this particular sanction is the determining factor. Again, justifying one reform, *e.g.*, post-puberty marriage on the basis of the Shastras would place other reforms such as breaking down of caste distinc-

tions in respect of which the Shastras cannot be of much use, at great dis-advantage. Further, the Shastras can afford no strong and unyielding basis, on account of their conflict and variety, due to changes of time, so that while one authority is cited in favour of a proposal, a later authority is cited on the other said and claimed to be more binding. Also, if you claim to reintroduce a custom, which suits you, as one sanctioned by the sages, what can be urged against the reintroduction of another, which you do not approve? One of the objections urged against Basu's Bill to amend Act III of 1872 is that while it reintroduces inter-caste marriages, it makes illegal bigamy, which has been an approved incident of social life among the Hindus through all ages. Lastly, it must be remembered that no written law will convince the Hindu community, among whom the last resort is to custom, which alone is binding, though opposed to a hundred texts.

It may be said that it is a wise step to conciliate the Pandit class, with whom an appeal to the sacred books might avail, and the results of the Conjeevaram *Parishad* may be instanced. But a careful examination of the tone of the opinions shows two things, one that the autho-

rities are capable of being read by the Pandits themselves in different lights and that each Pandit's sense of the propriety of the reform naturally determined the degree of readiness with which opposing texts were either disregarded or explained away. There is no doubt that by means of Pandits' conferences the reform party will be able to acquire a decent accession of strength. But the opposition gains strength also, and this is not desirable though the addition to the opposition might be less in point of number or influence. It seems to be problematical in any case whether the reform party will be able to win over the general community through the Pandits. The status of the Pandits in the social organism is not clear. The *Guru Peethams* will naturally hesitate to adopt the opinions of one set of Pandits in preference to the other. The *Gurus* themselves do not possess the needed authority or means to enforce their conclusions.

It distinctly appears to be the better plan to allow each reform to stand on its own merits, its reasonableness and its utility in the interests of the society. There is no doubt the world will take long to appreciate a reform upon abstract principles, but the process can be facilitated and

hastened by a more pointed attention paid to the general education of the masses and especially of women.

(There is also another practical method which may be considered in this connection. The best plan appears to be to carefully distinguish customs that have little or no connection with religion from those undoubtedly religious. It will be found that a large number of useful reforms may, when the necessary demarcation has been made, be effected with greater ease. And as regards customs clearly falling within the sphere of religion, a few will still be found among them to bear not upon the essentials but upon the excrescences of the Hindu religion. Several customs, whether connected with religion or not, will be found to have a most baneful effect upon the physical and moral well-being of the society; and there is no doubt that somewhat drastic measures, such as legislation, would in such cases be regarded as appropriate.)

To take an instance, it will, I conceive, not be seriously contended that either from a spiritual or religious stand-point, it is absolutely necessary to continue any longer the institution of *Devadasis* in our temples. The Government

have done their part in making it penal to sell or transfer girls for purposes of prostitution. As a pure question of Civil law, it is valid for a dancing girl to make an adoption. It is urged that *Devadasis* have a recognized status in Hindu society and adoptions have been customary among them for purposes of inheritance not only in respect of the property, but as regards the spiritual office in the temple. As it is notorious that the women of this class, as a matter of profession lead lives of infamy, the question is whether you should any longer tolerate their association with temple worship, which now affords at least one ostensible ground for the continuance of the custom of adoption among them. The rule to be followed by the Courts in such cases was elaborately discussed by Sir Raymond West, one of the ablest of Indian Judges, whose recent death we all deplore,—in one of his judgments more than 30 years ago. His view was that professional prostitution tainted the custom, which was not to be recognized, if disapproved by the enlightened sense of the community, whose approval and countenance had lent it legal sanction. The late Sir Muthuswami Aiyar controverted this position as a matter of jural theory and added “I may observe that whatever may be the change in the senti-

ments of the general mass of the Hindus in regard to dancing women in Bombay and Poona, I am unable to say that there is a considerable change in this Presidency in the opinion of the general mass of the Hindu community as contradistinguished from a comparatively small section that has come under the influence of western culture.” I do not pretend to be able to decide between these two eminent Judges. But whether a judge can take notice of the enlightened sense of the community in this matter or not, there can be no doubt that the legislature can.

The true danger in this matter is the tendency for this class to increase in numbers by the addition of destitutes and outcasts, almost the necessary consequence of the Hindu marriage customs. The questions that arise are (1) how to diminish the class and (2) how to protect the children. One means probable is to ask for a change in the law by which adoption of girls might be prohibited although or at least adoption of girls below 18; and in all cases of transfer whether by sale or adoption, the burden of proof that the object of the transaction is not prostitution but something else might be thrown on the person adopting. This legislation

would be along the lines of sections 371 & 372 of the Indian Penal Code. "The object of the Penal Code is to protect the chastity of minors and to assure to them the freedom of choosing married life when they attain their age, whether they are the natural or the adopted daughters of dancing women".

And this leads me to the consideration of another pressing need of the society, with a few words on which I propose to bring this long address to a close. There is no nation that is without its orphans, destitutes, and foundlings. It is the duty of the society, whose customs and manners are largely responsible for the ever increasing numbers of this class, to see to it that they are clothed and fed and trained to some respectable calling. A society for the protection of children was recently inaugurated in Madras, and an agent of the society who had been here some months ago, suggested the formation of a similar society for this District. It would be futile to attempt to make prostitution disappear. A great deal can be achieved even in that direction, if the class of children is kept from the harm's way.

It is a matter for sincere gratification that, through the generosity of one of the citizens of Nellore, this first Social Conference will be able to start an Orphanage in the town of Nellore. The name of the donor and details of the scheme will be announced to you in the course of the proceedings of this Conference. The institution will require large funds for its upkeep and I hope it is not too much to expect that the good citizens of Nellore will take the necessary steps to organise and place it on sound financial basis. It will be a most signal proof of their sincerity and self-sacrifice in the cause of reform.

I shall not detain you longer. I request you to proceed to the formal election of the President and under his able guidance, to the discussions of the several resolutions that will be submitted for your consideration.

*Mr. A. S. Balasubramanya Iyer, B. A., B. L.,
Sub Judge, Kumbakonam.*

WELCOME ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

*Madras Provincial Social Conference
held at Kumbakonam in 1912.*

Ladies & Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Reception Committee of the 14th Provincial Social Conference, I accord to you all a most hearty welcome to this ancient city which is one of the centres of Orthodox Hinduism in Southern India. This ancient city, bathed by the holy and fertilizing waters of the Kaveri, counts among its residents several eminent Pandits and supporters of orthodox Hindu opinion, representing our three principal sects Smarthas, Vaishnavas and Madhvas. It

is also the seat of one of the principal Pitas of the Acharya of the Adwaita Philosophy, whose subtle concepts are receiving confirmation day after day from the progressive sciences of the West. Amidst surroundings such as these, I cordially invite you to discuss and deliberate over the social evils from which Indian society suffers and the social conditions brought about by altered ideals, aims, and environments.

2. Since we commenced the organisation of this social conference, there has passed from our midst that great soul that was one of the pioneers in the cause of social reform in this province. The Honourable Dewan Bahadur R. Ragoonatha Rao C. S. I. advocated social reform only on Shastraic lines and had to retire from the Social Reform movement when it began to give up the Shastras as the basic sanction of the movement. Seeing that the Tanjore District Conference held last year had in a measure accepted the Shastras as the basis of all Social Reform, he was happy to come back to the movement and had promised to open this conference with his blessing. But he has been snatched away by the hand of death from a life of social service, love, sacrifice and purity. His loss will be mourned by all classes of people.

He is not here to-day; but his character and example will animate and sustain our activities in the cause of social reform.

3. We are the sons of the Rishis, but the atmosphere in which we live is not the pure atmosphere of Naimisharanya of Srimad Bhagavata, where our forefathers practised plain living and high thinking and directed their thoughts solely to the attainment of the goal of spirituality. Our lot has fallen in times when the material welfare of ourselves and our nation has come to occupy a higher place at least in the mind of the average Hindu, if not also of the foremost of our men of the times. This change of ideal has brought in its wake conditions and practices not easily reconcilable with the notions that are entertained as to the true import of the Shastras. It must be conceded that the life of the Brahmin of to-day, be he a Vaideeka or a Lowkika, bears little resemblance in its principal and essential aspects to the life ordained for him in Manu or Parasara. He has set at nought the injunctions of the Shastras and has be-taken himself to occupations and walks of life forbidden to him under ordinary and even extraordinary conditions. He begs freely, owns and tills the soil, lends money and

trades, and accepts service for hire or salary. He has given up the duties and rites enjoined upon him in the Vedas and the Smritis, not only for the elevation of his own self but also for the welfare of his fellow-beings as a whole. The merchant and other castes, whose occupations have now been usurped by the Brahmin, find no higher life pulsating in a Brahmin of to-day and claim equality with him in society. Apart from the lapses into a low life, the Brahmins and also the non-brahmins have misled themselves into attaching undue importance to certain historical, geographical, and professional distinctions between the sub-castes and sects, as if they were vital differences inviolable like Shastric ordinances. In doing so, they have unwittingly jumped into the seat of the Creator and have brought into existence quite a multitude of sub-castes and sects in place of the four castes, that were created by God according to qualities, deeds and tendencies. Differences in manners, observances, and usages are the only excuse for the perpetuation of these sub-castes and sects. Toleration and mutual respect of these differences and the renunciation of the self-imposed usages, at least to the extent of the absence of the circumstances that necessitated their imposition, will result in the

fusion of the numerous sub-castes and sects and help in the realisation of the truth that we are all members of the body of the Creator which are equally necessary parts of His body, mutually dependant on each other, be they the mouth, the hands, the thighs or the feet.

Hindu Society has thus to be re-adjusted for the better fulfilment of Dharma or primordial duties and functions enjoined on the Hindus. I am sure there are few in the country that are satisfied with the present state of our Society. All classes of reformers are agreed that there should be a thorough investigation into our social institutions, observances and usages for the removal of such of them as may be found to be pernicious and for bringing them into conformity with our Shastras and their ideals and restoring these institutions, observances and usages to their pristine purity. But we may not all be agreed as to the methods of reformer as to particular items of reform. Some of us—and I cannot be myself among them, believe in a Hindu revival on Shastric lines, discarding all unnecessary differences and practices that derive their sanction from mere usages and consensus of men of the community and not from direct Shastric

injunctions, as an effective panacea for all social evils and grievances. Others of us would disregard the Shastras as the very root of the evils to be reformed and would propose reforms based on their observation, study and reasoning. The course thus proposed by them would be feasible, only if we all have the same experiences and we are able to agree upon the same reasoning and if we are satisfied that our reason is sure to be an infallible guide in judging upon what is best for us. But we, who as Hindus believe in the Seers that laid the foundation of our society, cannot accept the consensus of opinion, if it contravenes the injunctions of the Shastras. The Reception Committee which I have the honour to represent has declared that to be their view and have drafted the resolutions to be placed before this conference on such topics and in such terms as do not in their view conflict with any express text of the Smritis. While thus excluding topics and resolutions that so conflict with the Shastras or what is generally believed to so conflict with them, the Committee were anxious to be understood as not excluding anybody of workers in the cause of Social Reform and have cordially invited all classes of Reformers, those that trust to their own reason even as against the Shast-

ras, as well as those that believe in a mere Hindu revival on the lines of the Shastras. The conference will now decide for itself what other topics and resolutions it will consider in the interest of the country as necessary reforms and include in its programme those topics and resolutions.

4. The resolutions that we may pass in this conference will not be accepted as final pronouncements on the subject or as binding rules of action by the public or even by all of us alike. They will be but recommendations as to the attitude which those that have at heart the interest of their country and our countrymen should assume on the topics dealt with in the resolutions. Each individual shall have to be left to himself to consult the exigencies of his family, his means and his surroundings, in carrying out the items of Reform that this conference may resolve upon. The extent to which an individual may be expected to act in matters of Social Reform can be determined only by his mental, and moral, and last but by no means the least, his material resources to stand the opinion, odium and ostracism of his own people and the society in which he lives. The cause of Social Reform suffers in one respect worse

than the other causes of reform. There is no organised body or tribunal, to which we can appeal with any effect or submit our resolutions, as being necessary for adoption or recognition by the community at large. Here and there, we do find the mutts and associations exercising little or no control or jurisdiction in social matters of vital importance over their Sishyas and members, even as regards their spiritual welfare. The revival of the authority of the mutts and the consideration of our resolutions by them are likely to prove in course of time a tangible method of getting our resolutions accepted and acted upon by the community. Srimukams of Mutts and resolutions of caste-associations are likely to be readily accepted and followed by the people. The procedure that I propose to you greatly resembles the presentation of the resolutions of our political conferences to the heads of the Governments of the country either by deputation or through the President of the Conference. I would, therefore, strongly urge it to the consideration of this conference that the President be authorised and requested to send the resolutions of the conference to the heads of the various mutts and caste assemblies or associations and to publish any answer that might be received. I am fully

aware that, for some time, there may not be much sympathetic response to our approaches; but I am sure that constant constitutional agitation and frequent approaches to the mutts, calling upon them to consider the necessity for reform, will educate the heads of mutts and their Pandits to study the questions, especially with reference to the present condition and needs of society. The ignorance that prevails or the treatment of these subjects in our Shastras is the chief obstacle now for even obtaining a consideration of the question without pre-sentiment, prejudice or bias. Unless and until we educate the Pandits and get them to study the questions with reference to the existing ideals, conditions and needs, and to see for themselves the true meaning and import of the Shastras according to the conceptions of our law-givers, and also the necessity for recognising the reforms we resolve upon, at least to the extent that they may not be opposed to the Shastras, our resolutions are bound to remain practically dead letters.

5. We need not be so pessimistic in adopting the course proposed by me as to feel that we are pursuing a mere chimera. The first appeal to the Pandits and orthodox public opinion has

been made in the Conjeevaram Parishad. Whatever may be the value of the opinions expressed at the Parishad eventually as final rules of conduct for us all, by reason of the disputes as to how the discussions and deliberations were to be carried on in the Parishad, we are told that the opinions of a large majority of the Pandits that voted on the questions are in favour of our resolutions on sea voyage and the marriage reforms. The advance and detailed reports of the Parishad will be published soon, and the public will be able to attach due value to the opinions of the Pandits that took part in the Parishad. Among the lessons we learn from the proceedings of the Parishad as they have appeared in the papers, the principal one brought home to us is that it is not desirable to keep the Pandits in the state of ignorance on matters with regard to which we have to accept them as experts or of ignorance as to the present condition and needs of our society in reference to which they have to consider the application of the Shastras. It is not so important to know what are recommended by the Shastras as the exalted paths leading to the liberation of the soul as to see how far average men of the world, as we find them to-day, returning home after sea voyage

to better themselves and their country or repenting their apostacy from Hinduism, may be received back as members of Hindu society. We should, therefore, welcome the Parishads and deputations or references to the Mutts as steps calculated to facilitate the cause of social reform on right and sound lines and probably on lines which are likely to be more successful.

6. If, on mere reasoning based on the experiences and necessities of the day, reforms are proposed by us, who have little acquaintance with the basic principles of the Shastras on which the Hindu society has been constructed, we may bring about a reconstruction of Hindu society on un-Hindu lines, instead of a reformed Hindu society true to its genius, ideals, and models. It will be confessed that our object is to reform Hindu Society and not to demolish it to its foundations and to re-construct it according to our notions of what it should be without reference to the fundamental basic principles of Hinduism, which are making wonderful conquests every day among the scientists and thinkers of the West. We shall be selling eternity for a toy, if we part with virtues enjoined on us for the attainment of the one ideal of Hinduism *viz.*, eternal existence, eternal

knowledge and eternal happiness, in order that we may relieve in some measure the temporary grievances of the present day. Some of these grievances may be apparent or trifling and may best be treated and prevented by removing the causes that really led to them. Prevention is better than cure and treatment of the disease which is the root-cause is better than the treatment of the symptoms as they appear. I therefore venture to think that the Reforms of our society cannot safely be undertaken without orthodox expert knowledge of the Shastras which have preserved Hinduism in tact and in shape to the wonder and admiration of the Historians and the Scientists of the day, notwithstanding the many collisions it has had with other aggressive religions of the world.

7. The history of Social Reform in our province also affords ample proof that iconoclastic or root and branch reform by mere secular bodies is not likely to be as successful as we wish it to be. The pioneers of the Social Reform movement in this country rightly based their proposals on the Shastras. The Social Reform movement was allowed by its advocates to drift away from its safe moorings and they supplanted the fundamental sanctions of the

movement in the Shastras by what they chose to call "reason". The individual members of the movement differed so widely in their reason that most valued members of it had to secede from the movement altogether. The general public began to look upon the movement as essentially un-Hindu and would not accept even the good proposals made from their platform. The Hindu Reform Association, the Marriage Leagues, Orders organised by Mrs. Besant and last but not the least, the Conjeevaram Parishad are all strong expressions of the opinion of the community that reforms cannot be undertaken on the lines of unaided "reason" but must be ushered in under the auspices of associations and assemblies with reform propoganda on Shastric lines. The Tanjore District Conference held last year brought this aspect of the Reform movement into paramount prominence; and under their auspices the Provincial Conference, consisting as it does of the various classes of reformers, has met to consider the items of Social Reform programme on which there is not likely to be much divergence of opinion among the reformers.

8. The Reception Committee hope that even orthodox Hindus will not find much difficulty

in accepting the principles embodied in our resolutions. The resolutions on female education, elevation of low castes, amelioration of widows, marriage reforms, Dasis, and temperance, are not in the least against the Shastras or the accepted public opinion as to what the Shastras enjoin on all true Hindus. The Shastras do not prohibit re-admission of converts or apostates to Hinduism, if they sincerely repent their lapses and seek re-admission. The recognition of three great sects differing on matters of faith, and the inclusion of even Charuvakas as Hindus within the pale of Hindu society, shows that Hinduism shows greater toleration in matters of the faith of its members. The conditions of such re-admission, including the prayaschittams, cannot be dealt with in one resolution for the whole province. The various parts of the Province differ widely on these matters. While the Tamil districts admit incarcerated persons into society after pilgrimage to the S. tu, Malabar refuses to take them into caste, even after any prayaschittam. It is therefore considered necessary to enunciate the principle of re-admission of the apostates as conducive to the promotion of sincerity, restoration of social fellow-feelings and development of Hindu Society, and to leave the details of

prayaschittam &c., to be levied by the Hindu community of the particular locality in which the repentant apostate comes to reside. The question of re-admission of persons that undertake sea-voyages stands on a better footing than those that dis-own Hinduism and repent afterwards. Those that never disowned their allegiance to the Hindu faith, but only did an act not recommended for their spiritual welfare, or entailing loss of purity for selection in connection with holy rituals, are entitled to be received back into society, in case they generally conform to the usages of their castes. Sea-voyage by the Hindus is an accomplished reform and has to be dealt with as such. None can say if we have not a relation in Burmah and Strait Settlements. Any further atonement or prayaschittams for impurities incurred while on the voyage and in non-Hindu countries have to be left to be determined by local conditions and local public opinion as in the case of apostates; and for the same reasons, the disfigurement of widows has also been given up in many respectable families, and orthodox persons have not looked upon the relaxing of the rigid practices in the case of widows with any particular disfavour. The orthodox persons have recognised and admitted such reformed widows freely

into society and dined in their presence or with them. Even Mutts have freely accepted *Biksha* from such widows. Our resolutions in that matter cannot and will not meet with serious opposition. Intermarriages between sub-castes are not prohibited by the Shastras; but the usage in connection with it arose from historic, geographical and professional considerations, and the custom has no legs to stand upon, in the present day, when those considerations have ceased to exist.

9. I now invite you to commence your deliberations. We have the good fortune to have for our President-elect an ardent, unostentatious and practical Social Reformer to help us in our deliberations. I call upon every one of those here present to invoke the blessings of Providence to guide and direct our proceedings to a successful end.

The Hon'ble Justice Sir Narayan
Ganesh Chandavarkar.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT THE

1st Aryan Brotherhood Conference

held at Bombay in 1912.

Gentlemen,

In opening the proceedings of the Conference as President, it is my duty first to offer you a hearty welcome, and, secondly, to explain briefly the reasons for holding this Conference. The Aryan Brotherhood, at whose invitation and under whose auspices we have met, is an institution whose single aim is to effect reform in the custom of caste, which has formed the main obstacle to the progress of the Hindu community. The Brotherhood has weekly

dinners, where members meet and partake of vegetarian meals without distinction of caste. It has on its roll 150 members, and among them are notably His Highness the Maharaja Gaekwar of Baroda, and His Highness the Maharaja of Sailana. You will be gratified to learn that His Highness the Maharaja of Holkar has been pleased to extend his sympathy to this Conference and has expressed his gracious desire to become a member of the Brotherhood. So far, we begin under good and encouraging auspices. The Brotherhood has deemed it necessary to hold annual conferences for the purpose of educating public opinion on the evils and mischief of caste as it has existed for centuries in this country, and to take practical steps for the gradual removal and correction of its abuses.

In the circular of the Brotherhood inviting this Conference, the statement was made that, in declaring itself against caste in the form in which it exists, the Brotherhood was but taking its stand upon the humanising principles of the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagawad Gita. In some quarters, the correctness of that statement has been challenged. By some others, we have been told that, by appealing to those religious authorities and making them the basis

of our attitude towards and fight against caste, we are using questionable ground, because we rely on the *Shastras* which, it is said, have enslaved the Hindu, instead of boldly taking our stand on *Reason* and condemning caste on the practical ground that it has led to much mischief and sapped the vitality of the people. This argument to which I am referring is one that has cropped up from time to time during these forty years of controversy over the problem of Hindu Social Reform; and I must beg leave to make as clear as I can the lurking fallacy of the argument.

SHASTRAS v REASON.

Man, whatever we may say and however we may reason, is a creature of his environment; so are all great communities. And that environment is made by the *past*. The past is man's history; the present is his reason; both must combine and supplement each other for his future growth and progress. What is reason today becomes history tomorrow. So, really speaking, there is no necessary antithesis between historicism and rationalism, when those terms are used properly to understand and regulate the law of communal development. It

is all very well and sounds very easy to say that, for working out the problem of social reform, we must get rid of the yoke of the past and begin afresh and write on the clean slate of reason, casting history and tradition to the winds. But you cannot do that without casting all the good of History with its bad; and even when you have done that, supposing you can do it, what you have written on the clean slate of society today becomes in due course tomorrow a category of the past and lives as a historic tradition. That is the meaning when we say that man makes history. If the past is society's tradition, its present is society's reason which means the need of adaptation to the changed and changing environment. And both tradition and reason must combine for social progress.

THE SHASTRAS AND CUSTOM.

The truth and force of this social law was, I humbly think, in the minds of our *Rishis*, who made the Hindu law and our religious and social codes, when they put the idea in the shape of a formula, which has become the sheet-anchor of Hindu Society, so much so that it has passed into a proverb, used by many but abused by most. The sacred formula I speak of is in

these words:—" Custom supersedes the Shastras" When you analyse the thought and experience embodied in those words, they mean not that we must always feed on the cake of custom prepared ages ago ; cakes so prepared and eaten get stale and can hardly nourish life. It is because the Hindu has gone on feeding on this stale cake of custom that he only *exists* but does not *live*. The proper meaning of the formula that custom supersedes the Shastras is that the Shastras, which represent laws made in the past, have to give way to the necessity of the present, which makes for the custom or usage of the future. Every custom began as an innovation on the Shastras and involved a departure from them. But, custom coming at the outset as a reformer and corrector of the Shastras has become in its turn our tyrant. Then it has ceased to be the law of reason and we accept the present blindly and are tossed between the present and the past, and Hindu Society is staggered. But the original principle underlying the sanction of custom as distinguished from the sanction of *Shastras* is that society must move with intelligence in accordance with the needs of the times, by making the eternal truth of the Upanishads and the Love of the Geeta its guiding lights.

With this fundamental principle of our Aryan social polity in mind, let us look at this problem of caste. Going back to the origin of it, we find it declared in the Vedas that the Brahmin came from the mouth of Brahma, that the Kshatriyas are the arms of Brahma, that the Vaishyas are his hands, and that the Shudras are his feet. We have there only four castes referred to. There is nothing in them to show that birth formed the test of a man's caste. Rather it would seem that a man's vocation determined his caste. That is rendered absolutely clearly in the *Bhagawad Gita*, which says that the four castes were formed with reference to a man's qualities and action. It follows that the institution of four castes was devised in the primary stages of our Aryan society as an economic necessity to serve the purpose of what modern political economists call division of labour. So far it had its rise in the infancy of our social growth. But it has long ceased to be an economic force ; beginning with four castes, it has developed or rather degenerated into thousands of castes, each divided from and against the other, until the word Hindu has become a mere name with no reality of union. In our law books, it is laid down that any inferior caste can rise to the

superior caste such as that of Brahmin in the 5th, 6th or 7th generation. Even that has ceased to be. And the determining factor of each of these thousands of castes has come to be not quality or action but birth. Caste then is becoming, if it has not already become, extinct as an economic force now. Of what use is it then for our progress?

CASTE AS A MORAL FORCE.

So much for the economic aspect of caste. It no longer serves the economic purpose which dictated its origin. Let us look at another aspect of it. In the earlier stages of the growth of a society, men have to be led as if they are spoonfed children. In times when education has not enlightened the reason, and men are not inspired by the idea of liberty of thought and action, they must be subject to the rigour of the law of religious and social institutions. They must obey the law, for it is only by obeying that they can learn sooner or later to command themselves and others. This is the spirit in which the *Shastras* conceived caste in the earlier stages of our society. What St. Paul said of the Jews is true also of the Hindus. There is a parallelism of history bet-

ween these two ancient peoples—the Jews and the Hindus. The Jews were made by the law of Moses; the Hindus by the law of Manu. Each law was rigid in its terms and became in course of time a routine. But man is greater than law. External law regulates his outer life; but he has an inner life, the life of the spirit, which transcends in aspiration all space and time. This is what St. Paul, addressing the Jews who hated the Gentiles, meant when he said, that, when man has put on Christ, he is no longer under the yoke of bondage but has become free; he is led of the Spirit and is no longer under the law. And the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy and peace. Similar is the Voice of our *Shastras*. What St. Paul called putting on Christ, our saints called abiding in Brahma. To him who is a stranger to Brahma, there must be the regulation and restraint of law. But, to him who has put on Brahma, law is lifeless and he need be under no bondage of caste or custom. He is free—what the sages called *Jivan Mukta*. That, no doubt, came to be recognised by some of the *Shastras* as the appropriate condition and essential of the life of an ascetic only. But our saints declined to accept the principle that the ascetic alone is and can be free and is led by the Spirit. To retire from the world is no doubt

one way of becoming free from the yoke of its bondage ; but though we retire from the world, the world does not retire from us. The ascetic often turns out the worst egotist, said Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Real manhood and spirituality lie in living in the world, taking its responsibilities, and in serving society in peace and love. That is true freedom and real renunciation. Just as some critics of St. Paul have understood his words about being led by the Spirit as applying to the Apostles, so some of the interpreters of our Shastras have understood the language of the latter as to being led by the Spirit as applying to men who have become ascetics and discarded family and society. That is not so. One of our saints has put it in these words:—"The Jivan-Mukta (*i. e.*, the ascetic) with all his release from the bondage of the world, cannot attain to the love of God so long as he is wanting in devotion." Hence the joyous cry of our saints that we are free then, when, living in the world and of the world, we work and live, led by the Spirit to love all our fellows as our brothers in thought and deed.

This is the religious aspect of Freedom or Liberty. Secularly, it has this practical lesson

for us. The laws of caste are no longer laws restraining vice ; we live in an age of liberty of thought and action. We are led by the modern spirit. In these days of education and liberty, do you think, can you say that caste serves as a moral and disciplining force ? Nearly every caste is proving in that respect chaos and confusion. Men eat and drink as they like, eat at hotels and restaurants and Irani shops and castes are powerless. How much of hypocrisy and double lives this has led to, we all know. It is but the barest description of many that we are living, because of caste, lives of mental and moral contradiction. In the old days, when education had no diffusing influence, when ideas of liberty of thought and conduct had not the strength they are having now, when the world-force had not grown upon us, caste, with all its evil, perhaps, checked immorality and intemperance. But, now, it is proving powerless ; you may eat and drink and act as you like, provided you live to all appearance an orthodox life of caste. You are safe and caste keeps you and you keep your caste. Caste serves no useful purpose now, either economic or moral, only it has made cowards of us. I have noticed during the last few days that one of our Anglo Vernacular papers has

been taken to task for having written approvingly of this Conference in its English columns but in terms of condemnation of it and of praise of caste in its vernacular columns. That kind of journalistic attitude represents our double lives and double faces. A Hindu to seem and speak, a non-Hindu to be and to act—on the sly! This is the most insidious danger that can threaten disintegration of social life in the case of any society. How can you expect great work, demanding clearness of thought, heroism of action, inventive genius, decision of character—all that means *paurusham* or manhood—when we are tempted to lead such divided lives? Look at another aspect of it. The Hon'ble Mr. Gokhale is reported to have said, in one of his speeches in South Africa, that the struggles of our countrymen there for the rights of citizenship had not secured from their own countrymen in India as much of sympathy and support as they had a right to expect. And why? The reason is obvious. Your caste-ridden Hindu explains that Hindus have no business to cross the *Kala pani*, go and settle in the land of the *Mlechhas* and lose his caste. They say that such Hindus are served right when they are told by foreigners not to enter their land.

Our character is being unbinged, our divisions and dissensions are being sharpened, our activities for public good are being weakened, our very national existence is being threatened by this demon of caste, which has made and is making cowards of us. "What does India teach?" is the title of many a book that has been written and may be written. Over and above all it teaches are writ large the words: "India teaches Caste"; and yet, when borrowing from us our caste spirit, others beat us with the weapon we have forged, we complain, forgetting that we are paid in our own coin!

I have often been asked—do you think you will succeed against caste when heroic souls like Buddha, Basawa, Guru Nanak, and Ramana failed in the past? My answer is—the stars in their courses are now fighting for us as they did not in the past. The school-master is abroad; the law is levelling us all up; and the railways, the tramways, and other ways are opened wide. The masses, treated as Shudras, are slowly but surely waking up. Thirty-years ago, a Brahmin who had returned from England received an invitation from Government House to dinner. He accepted it. Two English friends of his, who were interested in him and

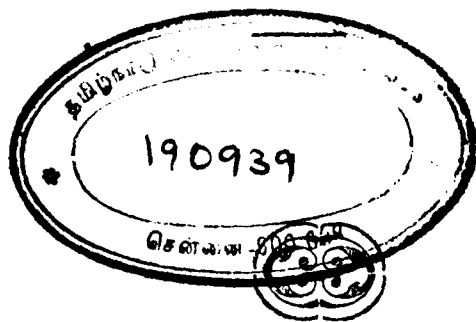
his work, feared that that bold action on his part might lead to disturbance from his caste and leading to his expulsion, expose him to great hardship and persecution. They advised him to excuse himself and refuse the invitation. The gentleman stood firm, and was excommunicated. That was 30 years ago. But, now, the number of Hindus dining at Government House has increased—and we hear of no excommunications. Seventeen years ago, a number of Hindus dined at a Club with the late Mr. Justice Tyabji and a number of other Mahommedans. It was intended to be a dinner of a private and confidential character. But, somehow, the names were published in a newspaper by some one of Brahmindom and other centres of Hindu orthodoxy were up in arms. For months, the castles and homes of some of the Hindus, who had dined with Mr. Justice Tyabji, were made the scenes of fury and misery. Social reformers who fought against caste and hypocrisy kept watch in their newspapers, and chamed the men who had dined into speaking and standing by the truth. There were excommunications.

That was 17 years ago. To-day, you may dine with any one—and caste will wink in at least even cases out of ten. Only last January, nearly three hundred Hindus of different castes met at a certain place to witness the opening of a Hindu sanitarium built by a philanthropic Hindu. And all joined at dinner publicly without the slightest difference of caste. Several of the castes we call *Shudra* are coming out bravely under the broadening influences of the day.

I know it is up-hill work; but the more uphill, the better. It is trials that test the worth of linen and people. Here, we must catch inspiration from the washer-woman who said: "The more trouble, the more lion." Whether we succeed or we fail, we must fight the demon of caste, and present-day forces are on our side. Our beginning may be small and feeble; but, I cling to the faith that, from the smallest beginnings, greatest nations are made. In waging our struggle against caste as it exists, we are fighting against the life of dissimulation, cowardice,

indecision of character, and narrowness of life and vision, which it has bred hitherto and which it is breeding now more than in the past. Our is a moral warfare and if we stand firm spite of ridicule and belittling, we shall win. Go on, and God-speed you in this work of Life which is the healer and unifier of all.

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