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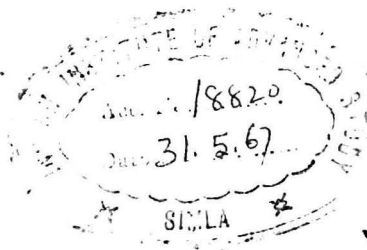


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19/10/67

Sri Rajyapal, Delegates of the Indian History Congress, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Reception Committee of the 19th Session of the Indian History Congress I extend to you all a very cordial welcome to Agra, the city of the Taj.

It is a source of great gratification to us, and I am sure it will be to you all, that Sri Rajyapal, Dr. K. M. Munshi, has kindly agreed to inaugurate the 19th Session of the Indian History Congress. It is due to his interest in Indian History and in the Agra University that we are holding this Session of the Indian History Congress at Agra. The Session was originally scheduled to be held at Allahabad, but the venue was shifted to Agra on the initiative and suggestion of Sri Rajyapal. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the History Congress is meeting in Uttar Pradesh for the third time. It held its Second Session under the presidentship of the late Dr. D. R. Bhandarkar at Allahabad in 1938 and its Sixth Session at Aligarh in 1943 under the presidentship of the late Sri K. N. Dikshit, the then Director General of Archaeology of the Government of India. We are grateful to the Executive

Committee of the Indian History Congress for extending this favour to Uttar Pradesh for the third time. Agra certainly lacks some of the amenities of life which bigger towns of India may offer. But it does not lack warmth of feeling and a quiet atmosphere for your learned deliberations. I am also conscious of the fact that considerations of physical comforts alone have not drawn you to this historical city, as I do realise that at any other place your stay would have been much more comfortable.

The city of Agra enjoys an international reputation and attracts distinguished visitors from all over the world on account of its historical buildings particularly the Taj Mahal which is regarded as one of the architectural wonders of the World. The cultural and academic traditions of this region called, Braj-bhumi, are of no less significance. Within 35 miles of Agra are situated the sacred towns of Mathura, Vrindaban, Mahaban, Gokul, Nandgaon and Barsana, which were once the scenes of youthful activities of Lord Krishna who is looked upon by millions of Hindus as an incarnation of God. It was Lord Krishna, through whose lips flowed the song celestial, the Bhagwat-Gita, through which

the spiritual wisdom of the East has been made available to the world. Agra is the nerve centre of Brajbhumi, the home of poets like Surdas and Faizi, musicians like Haridas and Tansen, and a host of Vaishnava saints whose names are legion and are writ large on the pages of history. The great social and religious reformer, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, received his education under his Guru Virjanand at Mathura and preached his first sermon at Agra with the mission of transforming the social and religious life of the people of India.

The origin of Agra is shrouded in mystery. Tradition says that there existed somewhere near the present Red Fort of Akbar a brick fort, called Badalgarh, in the 11th century. It was stormed by Masud Ghaznavi in 1180 A. D. Sikandar Lodi transferred his capital to Agra in 1504 and from that time Agra became one of the most prominent cities in the country. Babur, the founder of the Mughal dynasty in India also made Agra his capital. The city, however, reached the height of glory in the time of Akbar the Great and his two immediate successors, Jahangir and Shahjahan. In the reigns of these three Mughal Emperors Agra was the first city of the Mughal Empire.

During this period some of the notable existing buildings, such as, the Red Fort consisting of the Diwan-i-Am, Diwan-i-Khas, Shahjahan's Residential Palaces, the Moti Masjid etc., the Mausoleum of Akbar at Sikandra, the Tomb of Itmad-ud-Daula, the Jami Masjid and the Taj Mahal, which are some of the finest buildings in the world, were erected in this city. At a distance of 24 miles from Agra is situated Fatehpur Sikri, once a wilderness inhabited by tigers. which was converted by Akbar the Great into a great and prosperous city full of magnificent edifices notable among which are Shaikh Salim Chisti's Mausoleum, the Buland Darwaza, the Diwan-i-Khas, Jodh Bai's Palace and Birbal's Palace. Both Agra and Fatehpur Sikri were centres of learning, art and culture throughout the Mughal period of our country's history.

The Agra University is the largest university in India. It has 79 colleges affiliated to it which are situated in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and a part of Rajasthan. Besides several Post-Graduate Arts Colleges, there are 4 Medical Colleges, 8 Agricultural Colleges, 2 Colleges of Veterinary Science and Animal Husbandry and 2 Colleges of Engineering,

affiliated to the University. The University has two teaching institutions, the Hindi Institute and the Institute of Social Sciences.

The fact that this University is primarily an affiliating University has produced an erroneous impression in some circles that it has nothing to do with original research. It is hoped that a brief account of the research work done by the University during the last 20 years given in the Souvenir supplied to the delegates will dispel that erroneous impression and will show that the Agra University is not behind other Universities in the field of original research. No place in India is better suited to be a centre of historical research in Indian History. The cultural traditions of Brijbhumi go far into antiquity. The historical traditions of Agra of the Mughal times which happily continue to inspire the Indian people even today are of the very best that this vast land can boast of. It was here at Agra that a great emperor first beheld the vision of a united India and took concrete steps to bring about a fusion of the cultures of the two great communities inhabiting the country. Akbar successfully nationalised architecture, painting, music and some other arts by a harmonious blending

of the ancient Hindu arts with those of Muslims from Central Asia and made them the common property of all Indians. His patronage of learning resulted in a great cultural understanding. When the history of modern Indian civilization comes to be written the pride of place will have to be assigned to Agra as the centre which conceived and implemented the policy of cultural fusion in this country. The architectural monuments of Agra, and Fatehpur Sikri represent the joint achievements of Indians of all communities and are the embodiments of the best in our culture. Which other place can be a better centre of historical and cultural research than this city of the Taj?

We in Agra have made a modest beginning in the above direction. Half a dozen scholarly monographs have been published at Agra during the last five years and as many as two dozen research scholars have been trained in the art of historical research. It is my earnest desire to establish at Agra a School of Historical Research in the near future. I am confident that this dream of mine can be translated into reality with the generous support of Sri Rajyapal and the Governments of the State and the Centre.

Although a lay man, I am deeply interested in the history of our country both as a private individual and as the Vice-Chancellor of the biggest University in India. The Indian History Congress is the most authoritative body of Indian historians and its deliberations are bound to arouse interest in all those who want to know something of India's great past and in those who are keen to understand some of our national problems of the present epoch. The stream of history is one continuous whole and the present cannot be understood without a knowledge of the past. During the last 30 years Indian historians have made a commendable contribution to the unearthing of our ancient and medieval history, and historical research in this country has made great progress. I am conscious of the services rendered by European Orientalists in this field, but when I see the volume and quality of achievements of our research workers I confidently feel that Indian historiography has a bright future before it. It is not an easy task to collect contemporary raw materials in various languages some of which have become obsolete, to collate them in a proper manner, to sift evidence and separate wheat from the chaff,

and then to present the conclusions in temperate balanced style. I am also conscious of other human imperfections, particularly, nationalistic, communal and religious bias. Nevertheless I feel from a perusal of some of the outstanding works produced in our generation that our scholars are gradually rising above these prejudices. I am sure this learned body of India's historians would not only give a lead but would also formulate scholarly opinion so that younger scholars may have a tradition to follow and should not fall a prey to temptations to which immature minds are usually subject,

I understand your scheme of a Comprehensive History of India in 12 volumes is being pursued. At any rate I trust it has not been given up. Of the three schemes of a New History of India, the one under the patronage of Sri Rajyapal Dr. K. M. Munshi, is bearing concrete fruit. Four scholarly volumes of the series planned under his guidance by the Vidya Bhawan of Bombay have already appeared. Your Organisation, that represents the flower of India's historical talent, has not kept pace with the progress and speed of the Vidya Bhawan's scheme. Let me hope that

you will put forth your talents and energy at this historic city and chalk out a realistic programme for the implementation of your scheme of a Comprehensive History of India which was formulated even earlier than 1940.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me once again extend to you a most hearty welcome on behalf of the Agra University and the Reception Committee. Let me express a solemn wish that the deliberations of the 19th Session of the Indian History Congress may be crowned with success. I trust that despite the chilly weather of the season the learned delegates from all parts of this vast country will have at Agra a quiet and warm atmosphere and will generously overlook short-comings, if any, in our arrangements.

K. P. BHATNAGAR,
Vice-Chancellor and Chairman,
 Reception Committee.

