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OF

**Srijut Ramananda Chatterjee**

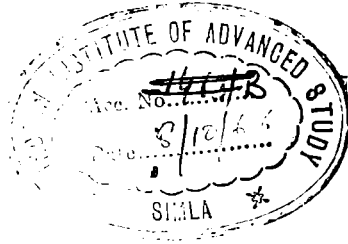
At the 12th Session of

THE ALL INDIA HINDU MAHASABHA

Held at Surat

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# Presidential Address at the Twelfth Session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha, Held at Surat, 1929

By RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

IT is undoubtedly true that all over the world every man owes a duty to the nation to which he belongs. But in addition to that duty, he has his duty to the family he belongs to, and the religious community or other section or class to which he belongs. Even in countries which are inhabited almost entirely by people professing a single religion, it is found that those who belong to different sects of that religion, such as Roman Catholic, Anglican, Baptist, etc., try to promote the welfare of the particular sects to which they belong. This they do without neglecting their duties as citizens or as members of a household. That is to say, they belong to particular political parties, particular religious sects and particular families, and do their duties to all. Some may belong also to trade unions, learned societies, chambers of commerce, etc., and do their duties as such. Nobody contends in those countries that there is any necessary antagonism between a man's duties to the nation and his duties to smaller groups. Even the greatest of statesmen in those countries may belong to these smaller groups, and many have actually so belonged. No charge of communalism in a bad sense is brought against them. Similarly in India, the charge of communalism cannot justly be brought against Ananda Mohan Bose, President of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj and also of the Indian National Congress, against Lajpat Rai, President of the Hindu Mahasabha and also of the Indian National Congress, or against Madan Mohan Malaviya, President of the Indian National Congress and also of the Hindu Mahasabha. What is true of them is true also of nationalist Hindu Sabhaites of lesser note. They all try to change the various Hindu bodies into compact bricks for the Indian national edifice, instead of allowing them to remain like loose dust or shapeless mud, not fit to build palaces with.

Among the inhabitants of India are to be found men and women following some one or other of all the historic religions of the world. Here we also have political

organizations open to persons of all religions or no religion, such as the Indian National Congress and the National Liberal Federation. As Hindus form the majority of the population of India, they have, all along, as a matter of course, constituted the majority of the members of these political bodies, and have been their most active workers. Their political zeal is neither un-Hindu, nor unnatural. For though during certain periods of their history Hindus may have been rather un-politically-minded, it is in their sacred epic of the Mahabharata, Santi Parva, that one finds the following verses :—

“Majjet Trayi dandanitau hatāyām,  
sarve dharmāḥ prakshayeyur-vivrdhāḥ ;  
Sarve dharmāshchāshramānām hatāḥ syuḥ,  
kshātre tyakte rājadharme purāne.  
Sarve tyāgū rājadharmeṣu dṛṣṭā,  
sarvāḥ dīkṣhā rājadharmeṣu yuktāḥ ;  
Sarvā vidyā rājadharmeṣu choktāḥ.  
sarve lokā rājadharme prabiṣṭāḥ.”

“When Politics becomes lifeless, the triple Veda sinks, all the *Dharmas* (i. e., the bases of civilization), (however) developed, completely decay. When traditional State-Ethics are departed from, all the bases of the divisions of individual life are shattered.

“In Politics are realized all the forms of renunciation, in politics are united all the sacraments, in politics are combined all knowledge : in Politics are centred all the Worlds”.—K. P. Jayaswal's translation.

It is to be understood that, in these verses from the Mahabharata, by politics is meant the politics of a free people. Politics of a certain kind is also needed in order that a dependent people may be free ; but it is not of the petitionary or theatrically minatory variety.

But even the politics of a free people does not include all kinds of human activity, inner and outward, though all such things are intimately connected, directly or indirectly, with politics. Much less does the politics of dependent peoples comprehend all their activities, including their culture. To conserve and promote all these, something in addition,

to political organisations and activities are needed. At this time of day, it would be rather superfluous to dwell on India's achievement in human history. Nevertheless, I shall here quote the opinions of two men : of Lord Curzon, who cannot be accused of sympathy with Indian aspirations, and of Max Muller, who studied ancient Indian literature sympathetically. The former as Viceroy said in his address at the Delhi Durbar in 1901 :—

"Powerful Empires existed and flourished here, while Englishmen were still wandering painted in the woods, and while the British colonies were still a wilderness and a jungle. India has left a deeper mark upon the history, the philosophy, and religion of mankind, than any other terrestrial unit in the Universe."

The latter, in his book on "What India has to teach us", says :—

"If I were asked under what sky the human mind has most fully developed some of its choicest gifts, has most deeply pondered on the greatest problems of life, and has found solutions of some of them which will deserve the attention even of those who have studied Plato and Kant, I should point to India. If I were to ask myself from what literature we here in Europe, may draw the corrective which is most wanted in order to make our inner life more perfect, more universal, in fact more truly human, again I should point to India."

Later on I shall have something more to say of India's achievement. At this stage, I need only observe, that it is necessary that there should be a community whose special business it should be to conserve our heritage. I do not say that people of non-Indian faiths have not the right to this heritage or that none of them have done anything to preserve it—for some of them have been pre-eminent workers in this field ; what I mean is that it is peculiarly our duty and our right to keep whatever of permanent value has come down from our past and to extend the bounds of Indian thought and culture. For, whatever friend or foe may say, we are not a decadent people. We mean to live, we will live, we can live, and we will yet give to the world what God intended that we should. Men of non-Indian culture may care—and sincerely care—for Indian culture as something ancillary ; but with us, our heritage is that in which our being is rooted, it is the core of our collective and individual life. We may assimilate the best that is in non-Indian cultures and faiths, but the essence of our individual and collective personality must necessarily be Indian. Others may think that we are mistaken in holding that Indian culture and spirituality are not inferior to any other that exists ; but we stick to our opinion.

In order that there may be a living continuity between India's past, present and future, and in order that India's past may bear fruit again for all men's good, in the soil of India's present and future, drawing sap from all quarters, it is necessary that the Hindus should not die out. For, their loyalty to India is naturally more comprehensive, deep and whole-hearted than that of any other community. And in saying this do not in the least disparage Indians of non-Indian faiths and their cults and cultures, which also have a value, or forget that cultures of non-Indian origin have in some measure enriched Indian culture. Nor do we suggest that by merely calling oneself a Hindu, one becomes in any respect more loyal to India than an Indian who is not a Hindu. Loyalty to India implies devoted service to India in a comprehensive sense and living according to the ideals of Indian culture and spirituality.

For the continued existence of the Hindu people, something more than the politics of a dependent people is required. It should be the duty of the Hindu Mahasabha and all other Hindu organizations and institutions to be this additional something. Man cannot live by politics alone. Nor, therefore, can the Hindu man. Far less can he live by politics, if it becomes lifeless.

What is the life of politics ? A common hatred of alien rule cannot be this life. Love of freedom in its widest sense, love of India and her heritage with "love far-brought from out the storied Past," and a loving, profound and burning faith in something eternal which makes for righteousness, justice and truth can make politics living. This faith we call religion. The religions of the Hindu people may give them this faith, if they are sincere believers. Men who have such faith are thereby fortified for all strenuous beneficent endeavours for all sacrifices and sufferings, and are placed above fear and temptation.

Just as internationalists of an extreme type forget in their condemnation of nationalism that nationalism may be of two kinds, so nationalists forget that devotion to the welfare of the religious community to which one belongs may not necessarily deserve the name of communalism in an opprobrious sense. Nationalism is bad when it means "My country, right or wrong," when it seeks to aggrandise one's own country at the expense of other countries.

Nationalism has come to have a sinister significance because in Europe it has been generally of the predatory sort. But Indian nationalism is not of that character. It only wants the restoration of the birthright of Indians in India; it does not seek to deprive any foreign people of their rights in their countries. Similarly, the Hindu Mahasabha does not seek to have for Hindus any political, economic or civic rights or privileges to which they are not entitled by their numbers, educational and other qualifications, character, ability, public spirit and tax-paying capacity. And, in particular, the Hindu Mahasabha does not want for Hindus any fixed share of anything which may indirectly leave an inequitable portion for others. It stands for open and fair competition, for an open door for talent irrespective of considerations of race, creed, or complexion. It is one of its objects "to promote good feelings between the Hindus and other communities in India and to act in a friendly way with them with a view to evolve a united and self-governing Indian Nation." Its other objects are concerned mainly with the internal affairs of the Hindu community. The promotion of the political interests and rights of the entire Hindu community is mentioned last. And it is added in a note that "the Mahasabha shall not side or identify itself or interfere with or oppose any political party." This leaves the members of the Mahasabha free in their individual capacity to join or not to join any political party.

The history of the Mahasabha shows that its political activities have been purely of a defensive character. It has put in an appearance in the political arena only when in its opinion the political interests of the Hindus have been jeopardised. And, so far as my knowledge goes, it has not been as active in certain political matters as it could justifiably have been. Whether this has been due to forbearance or some other causes, I do not know. I will give an example.

The qualification of electors for the Council of State, for example, are not the same for Muhammadans and non-Muhammadans. A person can become an elector for the Council of State if he was in the 'previous year' assessed, in Bengal, on an income of not less than Rs. 12,000 in the case of non-Muhammadans and Rs. 6,000 in the case of Muhammadans; and in Bihar and Orissa on an income of not less than Rs.

12,800 in the case of Non-Muhammadans and Rs. 6,400 in the case of Muhammadans. A non-Muhammadan in Bengal becomes an elector if he pays land revenue amounting to not less than Rs. 7,500 in the Burdwan and Presidency Divisions and not less than Rs. 5,000 in the Dacca, Rajshahi or Chittagong Divisions, but a Muhammadan becomes an elector everywhere in Bengal if he pays land revenue amounting only to not less than Rs. 600. In Bihar and Orissa, a non-Muhammadan can become an elector if he pays land-revenue amounting to not less than Rs. 1,200; but a Muhammadan obtains the same right by paying not less than Rs. 750 as land revenue. Thus do political and civic human values differ in some provinces in the estimation of Government according to the creed one professes, a Muhammadan being *ipso facto* held to be better qualified to exercise the right of citizenship than a non-Muhammadan. The Hindu Mahasabha may rightly protest against such deliberate efforts to depress the Hindus.

Perhaps what has more than anything else made the Hindu Mahasabha unpopular with the bulk of Indian Mussalmans is its effort "to preserve and increase the numerical strength of the Hindus," which is one of its declared objects. Non-Hindu communities in India, like the Muhammadan and the Christian, particularly the former, have increased vastly at the expense of the Hindus and the aborigines of India. Therefore, anything done to arrest this process cannot be looked upon with favour by the followers of those non-Indian faiths. Still more unpleasant must the reversal of the process be to them. But I do not see how one can logically and justly object to the Hindus' doing what the others have been doing for centuries—particularly as the Hindus have not gone in for the accession to their ranks of "rice" Hindus, of non-Hindu women abducted or confiscated and obliged to be converted, of men tempted to come over by the prospect of marriage, of persons induced to be converted by the prospect of economic advantage, and of persons forced to be converted by terrorism of any kind. The Hindu Mahasabha and Hindu missions connected with it, formally or informally, want re-conversion and conversion only by fair, open and legitimate means.

Non-Hindus allege that Hinduism has never been a proselytizing faith, and that,

therefore, conversion to Hinduism is a new departure, and hence, an aggressive move. Assuming that Hinduism has never been a proselytizing religion, I do not see what spiritual, moral, rational or legal objection there can be to Hindus adopting a new method to meet a new situation. Every individual and every group has an inherent right to take all legitimate steps for self-preservation and maximum usefulness. "New occasions teach new duties", and "new times demand new measures". That a new situation has arisen is quite plain. In most provinces of India the Hindus now form a smaller percentage of the population than they did fifty years ago, the percentage showing a decline at each successive census. This is true also of India as a whole. In 1881 the Hindus were 7,432 per 10,000 of the population, but in 1921 they were only 6,841 per ten thousand of the population, according to the Census of India Report, 1921, vol. I. In some provinces or parts of provinces, there has been an actual decline in the number of Hindus. For example, in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh during the decade 1911-21 the Hindus have decreased by 347 per 10,000 and in the previous decade they decreased by 130 per ten thousand. These decreases are not, of course, due mainly, but are so only partly, to conversion to non-Hindu religions. But whatever the causes, the Hindus are entitled to combat them by all legitimate means. During the decade 1911-21 the Hindus have decreased in numbers in West Bengal by 52 per thousand, in North Bengal by 32 per thousand, and in the whole province by 7 per thousand. The main cause of these decreases in these areas is not conversion to non-Hindu faiths. But whatever the causes and the extent of their responsibility for these decreases, the Hindus must try to combat all of them by all fair and scientific means. It is to be noted that in some other areas conversion is a cause of considerable decrease. The Report from which I have quoted before states :—

"The Punjab Superintendent estimates that during the last decade Hinduism has given 40,000 converts to Muhammadanism and nearly three times that number to Christianity. . . . The losses elsewhere are much smaller, but everywhere a steady drain is going on." P. 122.

According to the same Report Christianity got 700,000 converts during the decade 1911-21 in the whole of India.

Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and if the Hindus become proselytizers like the followers of Semitic faiths, the latter ought to feel flattered.

I have hitherto taken it for granted that Hindus had not until recently admitted non-Hindus into their ranks. This, however, is not a historical fact. The Hindu methods of proselytism may have been different from the methods of non-Hindu religions. But from time immemorial, Hinduization has gone on continually. According to the definition of the Hindu Mahasabha, Buddhists are also Hindus. Vincent Smith says that both Buddhism and Jainism may be regarded as offshoots of Hinduism. In the opinion of Prof. Rhys Davids, the Buddha was the greatest and wisest and best of Hindus. Weber holds that Buddhism may be regarded as a reformed phase of Hindu religious and ethical activity. Now, it is well-known that Buddhism was the earliest and foremost of proselytizing religions both in and outside India. The Hindu Mahasabha considers Sikhism also to be a form of Hinduism, which originated some centuries ago. It also has initiated both Hindus and non-Hindus into its faith. I need not refer to the activities of the modern Brahmo and Arya Samaj movements.

But even if one confined one's attention to the Hindus proper, to those who are called Brahmanic Hindus in the Census Report, one would find that Hinduization has gone on from time immemorial. I need not and have no time to go into details. But there is sanction for such conversions or initiations in the ancient Hindu scriptures, as well as in the later Devala Smriti. It is not merely the Brahmans and the so-called other higher castes who are Hindus. Persons of all castes, however humble, who call themselves Hindu, belong to that community. Taking these latter first, it is clear from their features, complexion, manners and customs, and in some cases, their languages, that they are Hinduized autochthons or indigenes. But even if we take, say, the Brahmans of different provinces of India, neither the man in the street looking at them nor the votaries of the science of anthropology would say that the Brahmans of Kashmir, Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Andhradesha, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Kerala and Tamil Nadu, were sprung from one and the same original stock descended from the same Arya Rishis. The eminent orthodox Brahman scholar Mahamahopadhyay Pandit

Haraprasad Sastri has said of his people, the Bengalis, that they are mainly of non-Aryan stock, there being large admixtures of Mongoloid, Dravidian and other strains. In some Brahman families of pure Brahman stock, related to one another, whom I know, there are very marked differences in the features, complexion, nasal index, hair, etc. All this shows that the vast Hindu community is a composite group, that many castes, including the "highest", are also composite groups, and that this compositeness is due to Hinduization of various peoples through the ages. One may be permitted to hold that the Aryans are not the only members of the human race entitled to respect. Non-Aryan stocks also have produced numerous persons of superior calibre.

The evidence of history also testifies to the Hinduization of many Indian and non-Indian tribes, etc. Innumerable Huns, Scythians, Parthians and others who made inroads into India centuries ago, were absorbed by the great Hindu community and were sometimes assigned all but the highest place in the Hindu social organization.

Coming down to more recent times but to a period anterior to the inauguration of the *Shuddhi* movement, one finds decisive proofs of Hinduization in the Census Reports of various provinces and years. I will make only a few brief extracts from one of them. It is stated in the Census of India Report, 1911, Vol. i, p. 121 :—

"An aboriginal tribe in an environment where Hindu influences are strong comes gradually and half-consciously to adopt Hindu ideas and prejudices, to take part in Hindu festivals, to attend at Hindu temples and to pay a certain amount of homage to Brahmans. Some degraded members of the priestly caste, or perhaps some Vaishnava Gosain in search of a livelihood, becomes their spiritual guide : and as time goes on, the difference between them and their Hindu neighbours, in respect of their social customs and outward religious observances, becomes less and less marked, until at last they are regarded by themselves and their neighbours as regular Hindus. The change takes place so slowly and insidiously that no one is conscious of it. There is no formal abandonment of one ritual for another. Sometimes it happens that a tribe is thus divided into two sections, the one Hinduized and the other still Animistic. In such cases open proselytization often takes place amongst the unregenerate."

Further information on this question of the Hinduization of the non-Aryan or casteless tribes is to be found in Sir Alfred Lyall's *Essay on Missionary and non-Missionary Religions* ; Risley's *Tribes and*

*Castes of Bengal*, Vol. i, page xv ; Assam Census Report for 1891, Vol. i, pages 83 and 84 ; and Bengal Census Report for 1901, page 152.

As regards the re-conversion of Christians and Muhammadans, the same Census Report from which I have already made an extract, says :

"It appears that here and there small communities of Christian and Muhammadan converts have drifted back into Hinduism. The Urap and Varap Agris of the Thana district of Bombay are said to have reverted to Hinduism from Christianity rather less than a century ago. The Kirpal Bhandaris of the same district were forcibly converted to Christianity by the Portuguese, but were afterwards accepted back into Hinduism. Regarding the Matia Kumbis and Sheikhas of Baroda, the local Superintendent writes that they became Muhammadans about three centuries ago, but have gradually abandoned their Muhammadan practices, and many of them were recently admitted into the Vaishnava sects of Ramanand and Swami Narayan.

"Another indication of the awakening of Hinduism and the tendency of errant sects to return to the main fold is found in the fact reported by the Punjab Superintendent that certain Panchpriyas in that Province have substituted a purely Hindu combination (Bhairon, Siva, Parbati, Gunga and Sitala) for the five Muhammadan saints ordinarily worshipped by this sect." Pp. 121-2.

It is added :

"The Mundas and Hos of Chota Nagpur return a larger proportion of persons claiming to be Hindus than they did ten years ago..." P. 122.

Hitherto I have spoken of the process of Hinduization as carried on within the boundaries of India as at present constituted. But in times past this was a vaster process which went on in parts of the earth outside India which were very much larger in area than India herself. For it must not be forgotten that in ancient times the Hindus were not *kupa-mandukah* or 'frogs in the well,' confined to their homeland, but were among the greatest, if not the greatest, of seafaring and colonizing peoples, and that they deeply influenced a much larger portion of the earth than even the ancient Greeks, whose influence is rightly considered to have been great and wide, and who among the ancient peoples, Europeans think, exercised the greatest influence over considerable sections of the then known world. This is not the time and the occasion to compare the respective achievements of the ancient Hindus and the ancient Greeks. But I may here direct attention to a few points of difference.

Though Greek influence extended to some parts of Asia, though similarly Hindu influence reached some parts of Europe'



and though the Greeks greatly influenced a strip of North Africa and the Hindus had penetrated to it and the island of Madagascar, speaking broadly Europe formed the main sphere of Greek influence and Asia that of Hindu influence. Now, Europe has an area of 3,750,000 square miles, Asia of 17,000,000 square miles. The ancient Hindus influenced not only a much larger area and population than the ancient Greeks, but Hindu influence was more profound and ranged over wider fields of intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual effort. Religion is the highest, the most profound and the most dynamic factor in human evolution. Neither the Greeks nor any other Western peoples were able to give mankind any new religion, though Neo-Platonism had something to do with Christianity; whereas the Hindus have given to Asia Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism—not to speak of their many comparatively modern offshoots. The influence of no ancient or modern European peoples has raised any savage people in their homeland to heights of creative effort in literature, painting, sculpture, iconography, architecture, music and dramatic art equal to their civilized teachers. But the touch of the ancient Hindu's "magic wand" of universal love and truth awakened into activity the latent genius of many an uncivilized people in the south-eastern mainland and islands of Asia. "Wherever India's magic wand of universal love has touched any foreign land," says Rabindranath Tagore, "what a marvellous display of art has come to life there! That country has become radiant with the splendour of a new artistic creation. And yet, look at the people of exactly the same ethnic stock living in neighbouring countries which were not visited by ancient Indian missionaries. They are cannibals, utterly devoid of art. India lit up the dark hearts of such a savage race by the sublime message of her religion of mercy, renunciation and love. It is not that Indian influence has resulted in certain changes in dress, speech and manners in Cambodia and Borneo, Java and Sumatra; the latent power of artistic creation among these peoples has been awakened. And what a marvellous creation it is! There are many other islands around the India-colonised Java and Bali. But why do we not find any Boro Budur, any Angkor Vat there? It is because the rousing call of Truth did not reach these neighboring islands. There is no glory in stimulating the imitative spirit in men; but there is no

nobler work than that of liberating the latent creative energy of others."

And this work the ancient Hindus did in a pre-eminent degree. The result is that, though at present it is only in the island of Bali that there still exists an archaic form of Hinduism and in Siam there is Buddhism, yet among the modern peoples of Java and other India-colonised islands and in the Moslem countries of Further India, there are glorious remains of Indian art. The sculptures relate to scenes from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata and the Jataka stories. The literature extant in Java and Bali was born of Hindu influence and relates to the Sanskrit epics and Puranas. The dramatic performances and dances are of Hindu origin. The culture is still Hindu. The names of many places and persons are Indian. Mr. K. T. Paul, the well-known Indian Christian, writes in his book on "The British Connection with India," page 38 :—

"In this connection it is very interesting to note that a fellow-passenger of mine on this boat, a Javanese, who is a very good Mohammedan, bears the name of Sastravidagdha (learned in the Sastras)! While the religion of practically the whole of his nation is Islam, he tells me that the literature studied is still Ramayana and Mahabharata, and that a recent production of high merit is on Agastya."

In some parts of the Malay Archipelago Mussalman Mullahs are called *pandita*, and in Moslem Annam they are called *achar*, that is to say, *acharya*.

The Javanese and some other neighbouring islanders believe that the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata had their scenes in their countries. I cannot dwell at length here on the absorbing topic of Indian colonial culture and civilization in Further India and in the Indian Archipelago. But a few more facts may be mentioned.

"The first record we have of a king in Indo-China bearing a Pallava name is from the fourth century of the Christian era when a Pallava Brahman by the name of Kaundinya came from the old Faunan, the name of which was later changed to Champa. This Kaundinya assumed the surname of Varman, which was the official Pallava title, and it is from him that the later Hindu-Chinese rulers in this portion of the peninsula traced their descent." A History of the Orient, by Steiger, Beyer and Benitez, p. 109.

The sage Agastya is believed traditionally to have been the greatest coloniser of the Indian Archipelago. The Empire of Sri-Vijaya or Sri-Vishaya in Sumatra became such a great seat of learning that students from India went there to sit at the feet of

a great Buddhist scholar and preceptor of the name of Dharmapala. A recently discovered ancient manuscript in Nepal pictures and tells how Sri-jnana Dipankara, the greatest Indian teacher in Tibet, who went there from East Bengal, visited Dharmapala in Sumatra and became his disciple. Numerous Sanskrit inscriptions in South Indian and Devanagari scripts have been discovered in Indo-China and the Indian Archipelago.

The cultural enterprise of the Hindus in the Philippine Islands is not generally known. Hence I mention here the following facts from "A Cyclopedia of Education," edited by Paul Monroe, Ph. D., Professor of the History of Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, Vol. IV, p. 674 :—

"The Filipinos were not wholly illiterate before the arrival of their Spanish conquerors. The influence of the civilization of India had extended to Malaysia and modified the culture of the primitive forest-dwelling and sea-going Malays. Syllabic systems of writing were in use in the Philippines. Chirino (*Relacion de las Islas Filipinas*, 1604) states, 'So given are these islanders to reading and writing that there is hardly a man and much less a woman, that does not read and write in letters peculiar to the Island of Manila.' "They write upon canes or the leaves of a palm, using for a pen a point of iron.' These syllabaries passed quickly out of use among the peoples Christianized by the Spanish, and no actual examples have come down to us, though the form of the syllabaries has been preserved as used by Bisaya, Tagalog, Pampango, Pangasifian, and Ilokano. Similar syllabic forms of writing are still employed by the uncivilized Mungyan of Mindoro Island and the Tagbanwa of Palawan."

In *A History of the Orient*, mentioned before, a facsimile is given on page 123 of one of the two old syllabic scripts of Indian origin still surviving among the Filipinos. It is to be noted that among the ancient Filipinos who came under Hindu influence women were not less but probably more given to reading than men; which shows that Hindu influence there did not make for the inferiority and subjection of women.

There are various other kinds of evidence of Hindu influence in the Philippines. In recognition of this historical fact, the facade of the new Legislative Building at Manila bears the figure of Manu, with three other figures, symbolizing the debt of the Philippine people to India. A photographic reproduction of this facade is given on page 388 of "*A History of the Orient*."

In spite of the destructive march of Muhammadan conquest and propaganda, Hindu in-

fluence is traceable in Arabian lands, in Persia and in Afghanistan. The sand-buried cities and villages in Central Asian deserts are yielding proofs of Hinduization in those ancient centres of population, now depopulated. Tibet, China, Korea and Japan were greatly indebted to India for their religion, literature and arts. In Japan there are still found paintings and sculptures with Devanagari names upon them. In China and Tibet there are still numerous original Sanskrit and Pali mss., and Tibetan and Chinese translations of books in those languages. The work of Indianization was done so earnestly, lovingly and for such a long period there that the Poet Rabindranath Tagore has said: "In China is found a race entirely different from the Hindus,—in features, language and manners. But I felt such a deep sense of community with them as I have found impossible towards many people of India itself." "In my travels in Japan, whenever I marvelled at the deep patience, self-control, and æsthetic sense of the people even in their daily life, they have again and again told me that the inspiration of these virtues came mostly from India through the medium of Buddhism. But that inspiration is to-day all but extinct at its source in India itself... These lands (outside India) are places of pilgrimage to modern Indians, because the eternal true expression of India's character can be found in these lands only."

Recently we have all read of the participation of Brahman priests at the coronation of the King of Cambodia, though he is not a Hindu. Similarly in the independent Buddhist Kingdom of Siam, some "Brahmans are in charge of the ceremonies at the time of the coronation; and the chief of the Brahmans must go to Benares to fetch water from the Ganges for the *abhisheka-snana*, the annointment-bath of His Siamese Majesty." The Siamese language is not Indian, but the alphabet is Indian, as also the religion and culture. The dynastic name of the king, Rama, his personal name, Prajadhipaka, and the names of many others, such as Balabhadra, Vajrayudha, etc., are Indian. "The names of towns are reminiscent of India; Ayodhya, Lavapuri, Nagara-Svarga, Vishnu-loka, Sukhodaya, Vrajapuri, etc." New words are coined in Siam from Sanskrit. The Railway Traffic Superintendent is called Rathacharana-Pratyaksha. An Officer of the irrigation department bears the official title Vari-Simadhyaksha. Aeroplanes are called Akasha-yana. In fact, Hindus can

feel so much at home in Siam with the Siamese, that, as Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee writes, "even the humble Bhojpuriyas, Brahmans and others, who are found in their thousands in Siam serving as *darwans* or watchmen and bearers and sometimes working as petty merchants and dairy men, who are the typically intensely orthodox Hindus of northern India, told us that they felt themselves very happy (as far as their exile's life permitted them) in the land where the King was a descendant of Sri Ramachandraji, where the Ramayana was honoured and sung, and where the people were worshippers of Buddha Bhagwan, the ninth avatar of Narayan-ji."

Indianization succeeded to such a great extent in many an Asiatic land, because India's spiritual and cultural ambassadors and workers there were not the sappers and miners, the scouts, the spies, or the agents, abettors and camp-followers of imperialists and exploiters. Love of humanity and of the truth impelled them to cross snow-capped mountains, the parched and burning sands of deserts and the storm-swept waves of the ocean. Many lost their lives in the pursuit of their humane enterprise. Unlike many European Christian nations, the ancient Hindus neither enslaved nor exterminated any races in foreign lands less civilized than themselves. Unlike the Moslem Arabs and the Christian Spaniards, English, Americans, and others, the ancient Hindus were never slave-catchers and slave-traders. And here I must beg leave to remind our very orthodox touch-me-notists, that whatever the origin of the wicked and accursed custom of untouchability may be in India itself, in the India-civilised Indian Archipelago and Further India, our modern Indian travellers have not found any trace of the natives there having been assigned the inferior social position of the Negroes in America and South Africa or of the untouchables in some parts of India. Let us all learn from our ancient colonizing ancestors the lesson that we become strong, immortal and manlike not by despising and depressing the lowly but by loving and respecting them and uplifting them to our own level—nay, by helping them to rise higher even than ourselves. The true Brahman is he who is the selfless helper and servant of all, not the self-righteous conceited person who places his feet on the heads of others.

I hope I have shown that the work of

Hinduizing non-Hindus is not a new line of work, but that it has been the God-given duty of Indians in India and far-off lands from time immemorial.

Like the work of conversion and re-conversion, there are some other items in the programme of Hindu Sabhas and Missions which have brought upon them the charge of communalism and made them unpopular with Christian and Moslem propagandists. One such item is the amelioration and improvement of the condition of the so-called low castes of the Hindu community and of the aborigines of India. It is from these classes that the Christians and Moslems have got the largest number of their converts. So, if the "lower" classes of the Hindus are raised in the social scale and their economic condition is improved, and if the aborigines are similarly uplifted by the Hindus, there would not be as much scope for their conversion to Christianity and Islam as hitherto. But Hindus cannot leave the field entirely to non-Hindus. Let me say here once for all that, as Hindus are responsible and thinking beings who always can and ought to judge and act for themselves as circumstances demand, they are entitled for their own preservation and welfare to take whatever legitimate steps they think fit, even if in the scriptures, tradition or history of themselves or others there be no precedents for such steps. But this uplift work is not new to Hindus. It is, no doubt, our shame that there are still so many Hindus and so many indigenes suffering from dire poverty, ignorance, superstition and social indignity. Without vain regret for the past, let us all gird up our loins and do our utmost for these sisters and brethren of ours, not in the spirit of condescending patrons and benefactors, but in that of devoted and selfless fraternal service and in that of repayment of the debt we owe them. For it is they who feed us, house us, clothe us, help us in locomotion, and, as sweepers and scavengers, keep our houses, villages and towns clean and sweet and healthy.

I have said that the work of uplift of the lowly is not new to Hindus. Let me in this connection dwell a little on the spirit of Hinduism and Buddhism as revealed in their view of the lower animal creation and of the lower grades of humanity. It is not for me to gloss over, defend or extenuate the cruelty of any Hindu to any living being. That is indefensible. What

I mean to show is that Hinduism and Buddhism at their highest do not despise or contemn even the lower animals, not to speak of the lower grades of human beings.

In Hindu mythology, the god Vishnu is said to have incarnated himself as a fish, as a tortoise and as a boar. In the Buddhist Jataka stories, the Buddha is narrated as having lived in his previous births in the form of various kinds of lower animals. The belief in transmigration is common to Hinduism and Buddhism. In the Ramayana the greatest of devotees and heroes is Hanuman, the monkey-god. Some other allies and counsellors of Rama in his campaign against Ravana are spoken of as belonging to some species of lower animals or other. But they are not referred to contemptuously, banteringly or in a spirit of patronizing condescension. These facts show that in the ancient Indian view of life as a whole, there is no impassable gulf between men and the lower animals. Men are not thought to be infinitely and unapproachably superior to the lower animals, though, of course, in our scriptures it is spoken of as a rare boon and privilege to be born as man.

Coming to persons of humble birth, either on the mother's side or on the side of both parents, we find in numerous cases that they were not treated as unworthy of social recognition. The mother of Satyakama-Jabala, who attained the rank of a rishi, was a woman-servant and could not tell him the name of his father. The mother of Vyasa was the daughter of a fisherman. Sri Krishna, an avatar of Vishnu, was, in infancy and childhood brought up as their own child by Nanda and Yashoda who belonged to the caste of cowherds. Guhaka, the Chandala chief, was admitted to the friendship of Ramachandra and was embraced by him. Ramachandra accepted the offerings of the forest votaress known as the Shabari, who obviously belonged to some hunting tribe. There are numerous such other examples in our ancient literature. But these few would suffice to show that to judge of men by their worth, not by their birth, was not an unusual practice in ancient India. The approved attitude towards the lower animals and the lower orders of men was summed up in the words,—“*Atmavāt sarvabhūteshu ya paśyati sa paṇḍitah*”, “the wise man is he who sees others as one with himself.”

As for the uplift of the so-called depressed classes of the Hindus and of the aborigines,

I have already stated that throughout the ages many aboriginal peoples have been absorbed and assimilated by the Hindu community. Gautama Buddha, who is adored as an avatar of Vishnu, admitted many persons of both sexes who belonged to “low” castes into his orders of Bhikshus and Bhikshunis. Sri Chaitanya and Nanak and several other religious teachers made no distinction of caste or creed in admitting persons into the ranks of disciples.

Incredible as it may seem, even the efforts made by Hindus to get their widows married are, for obvious reasons, disliked and opposed by some Mussalmans. Similarly, also for obvious reasons, the efforts to get abductors punished and abducted Hindu women rescued and given a respectable position in Hindu society are resented and misrepresented in some Muhammadan organs in Bengal. But the marriage of widows is sanctioned in the Sastras and widow-marriage has prevailed throughout the ages among some Hindu castes. Even if it were otherwise, we could not be precluded from introducing the practice. As for the protection of our women, I consider it the highest of our duties both to give them protection at all hazards, including the sacrifice of life itself, as well as to train them for self-defence. Tales of the heroic sacrifices made for safeguarding the honour of women are among the priceless treasures of Hindu tradition and history, which are destined to inspire countless generations to live and die nobly. If I were asked which I would have, freedom from foreign domination, or security of the honor, persons and lives of our women, won by chivalrous men and heroic women capable of self-defence; I would say, both. But if I were compelled to choose only one of the two, I would choose the latter. The supposed alternatives placed before you may seem strange to those unacquainted with the state of affairs in some parts of the country. But it has often seemed to me as if some politically-minded Indians were disposed to make a choice exactly the opposite of that which I would make.

I would now with your permission state briefly only some of the means by which some of the objects of the Hindu Mahasabha may be gained. The first object is

“(a) To promote greater union and solidarity among all sections of the Hindu

community and to unite them more closely as parts of one organic whole”.

This would be possible if our social organization were such as would make every Hindu, whatever his birth or lineage, proud of the Hindu name. At present, people of some castes are so treated and so looked down upon that it would not be strange for them to feel that their social position would be better if they went over to some non-Hindu community. Therefore, to promote greater union and solidarity among Hindus, our social system must be at least as democratic as the Islamic social organization. Each Hindu caste or sub-caste is, no doubt, a social democracy. But the Hindu community as a whole must also become a social democracy. I do not know whether that would mean the entire demolition of the caste system. But whatever the means to be adopted and whatever its effect on the present form of caste, union and solidarity cannot be obtained without thorough social democratization. I should here also state my conviction that the reclassification of Hindus on the Varnashrama model is impracticable. Where are the men who would possess in every generation the detailed knowledge of the characters and works of all Hindus, whose impartiality would inspire confidence, and whose authority would be generally, if not universally, obeyed? Many think that Hinduism cannot exist without caste. I do not think so. If other casteless communities can remain distinct social units, the Hindu community can also do so.

Paragraph 4 of the 7th Resolution passed at the 11th session of the Mahasabha held at Jubbulpore expresses the opinion that “every Hindu, to whatever caste he may belong, has equal social and political rights.” This opinion, if consistently and sincerely acted up to in our daily lives, would result in the realization of the ideal we have in view.

Democracies lift up as well as pull down. Examples will be found if we look around. I need not point to any particular religious community. Proper safeguards, therefore, should be adopted so that there may be levelling up but not levelling down.

The next object of the Mahasabha is

“(b) To promote good feeling between the Hindus and other communities in India and to act in a friendly way with them with a view to evolve a united and self-governing nation”.

Pacts, ententes, compromises, etc., undoubtedly have some value. In times of distress, relief should be administered irrespective of communal considerations. This the Hindus do. Non-Hindus have also generally the benefit of schools and colleges founded and run by Hindus. But something deeper and more fundamental is necessary to gain the above object. There is bound to be harmony and agreement at the highest levels of thought, feeling and spiritual intuition. Therefore the different communities should know one another's cultures at their best. Then there can be mutual respect. In times past Hindu and Moslem cultures and spirituality came into friendly contact in some cases. As the poet Rabindranath Tagore says :—

“In the middle ages of India...a succession of saints were born—many of them Muslims by faith,—who bridged the gulf of religious discord by the truth of oneness of spirit. They were not politicians, they never mistook a political pact, prompted by expediency as a true bond of union. They reached that ultimate point where the union of all men is established on an eternal basis. In other words, they embraced that secret principle of India which lays down that they alone can realise the truth who see others as one with their own selves. In that age many warriors fought and earned glory: their names were recorded in histories of India written on foreign models. But they are forgotten to-day, even as their triumphal monuments have crumbled into dust. But the deathless message of these saints is still flowing like a life-giving stream through the heart of modern India. If we can derive our soul's inspiration from this source, then only shall we succeed in invigorating our politics, economics and action.”

I now pass on to the third object :

“(c) To ameliorate and improve the condition of the so-called low castes of the Hindu community”.

Resolutinn 13 (on *Acchutoddhar*) of the 10th session and Resolution 7 (on removal of untouchability) of the 11th session, if acted up to, would go a great way to improve the social status of the so-called low castes. The opinion of the Hindu Mahasabha that “every Hindu, to whatever caste he may belong, has equal social and political rights,” should be literally interpreted and strictly followed in practice. Another opinion should also always be borne in mind, namely, that “every Hindu, to whatever caste or class he may belong, is nearer to and deserves a better social and religious treatment at the hands of other Hindus as compared with all non-Hindus.” though it would not, of course, be right to discriminate against non-Hindus.

Our sisters and brethren, the so-called low-caste Hindus, are human beings just like ourselves. It would be wicked and shameful to treat them as if they were not. It is suicidal to give them better social recognition when they are converted to some non-Hindu faith than when they remain Hindus.

Permanent and hereditary untouchability is not only wicked and shameful, but it is also an absurdity. Those who believe in untouchability of this sort tacitly and indirectly give greater rights to various lower animals, including plague-carrying rats, than to human beings. Those who are holy and pure ought to be able to raise and purify those who are not, by their company and contact. The sun purifies every impure thing it shines upon; its rays and itself are not made impure thereby. Can noisome fogs and mists obliterate the sun? God is the purifier of all. Nobody can make Him or any symbol of His impure by his approach or touch.

In order to improve the condition of the depressed classes, educational facilities, both general and vocational, should be provided for them to an adequate extent. The Hindu Mahasabha itself ought to take action in this direction, as well as get pressure to be brought to bear on the Government and local bodies for them to take such action. Social status cannot be improved without economic improvement. The provision of land and the supply of raw materials for home industries are suggested as some of the means to be adopted in addition to vocational education.

I have been obliged for the sake of brevity to refer to some of our fellow countrymen as the depressed classes. But the sooner the use of this expression is given up in the Census and other Government reports, and by us and these classes themselves, the better. When under the necessity of doing so, we occasionally refer to the example of Japan as an oriental country which is politically free, independent and progressive. But we should at the same time always bear in mind that the Japanese have abolished untouchability, and their untouchables, the *henin* or *eta*, are no longer outcasts, but have in actual practice, the same social and political rights as others. The higher and privileged classes of Samurai and others have of their own accord given up their special privileges; so that there is at present no caste feeling in Japan, and no Japanese need

suffer from the inferiority complex. Every one there can walk erect and hold his head high.

I have said that the sooner the expression "depressed classes" falls into disuse, the better. Another thing to be guarded against is the exaggeration of their number. It is generally thought and said by our critics that these people number six or more than six crores. But it has been recently admitted officially that the number is somewhere near three crores. Possibly it is still less. I long for the day when we shall all be known only as Hindus, all in the enjoyment of equal social dignity.

Among our scriptures *Sruti* ranks highest. And in *Sruti* the classical Upanishads occupy the highest place among our religio-philosophical works. I understand no sanction is to be found in these texts for untouchability. So those among us who want really to follow Sastra, should abide by the highest Sastra and give up in practice their belief in untouchability.

There is one tendency among some of the so-called lower castes which I cannot but deprecate. Some of them say that unless the so-called higher castes give them certain facilities or certain kinds of social recognition, they would leave the fold of Hinduism, and some actually carry out the threat. But I think the "lower" castes ought to be more self-reliant. Without abusing or accusing the "higher" castes, they should simply assert themselves in a dignified manner. If they cannot get the services of the ordinary priests, barbers, etc., they should say that they would render these services themselves, as some Hindu castes actually do. The lower classes form the majority of the Hindu community, Hinduism is not the monopoly of the "higher" castes. Why should the majority banish themselves? They are the Hindu community in a larger sense than the others. Similarly, as God is nobody's monopoly, if in any place those in charge of temples do not allow the "lower" classes facilities for worship there, why should they leave Hinduism? They can claim to have temples of their own, as some classes of Hindus have.

The next object of the Hindu Mahasabha which I shall take up for consideration is—

"(c) To preserve and increase the numerical strength of the Hindus."

When I come to the consideration of the last object of the Mahasabha it will be seen

that this Association does not wish mere increase in numbers but also improvement in the quality of our people. In fact, unless we rise continually in the scale of humanity and keep pace with human progress, our numbers also cannot but diminish.

I have shown before that Hindus have absolutely decreased in some regions, and in others they have not increased as much as some other communities, so that there has been a relative decrease among them there, so to say. I have also shown that conversion to Christianity and Islam is one of the causes of our decrease. But it is not the only cause, nor is it in some regions the most important cause. For instance, it is stated in the U. P. Census Report for 1921, page 55, that "Hindus have decreased during the decade by 347 per 10,000 or just under 3.5 per cent". "Any causes other than the influenza epidemic for the decrease in this decade are, if they exist, completely obscured by the overwhelming nature of that calamity."

Similarly, it is stated in the Bengal Census Report for 1921, page 157—

"Muhammadans have increased in number faster than Hindus. The change has not been produced by conversion, for instances of conversion are few and far between, nor mainly by the greater fecundity shown by Muhammadans. Though it is true that in Eastern Bengal especially, the natural growth among Muhammadans has been greater than that among Hindus in the same locality, the increase of the majority of Muhammadans over Hindus has been due in the main to the accident that Muhammadans are numerically superior in the healthier and more progressive parts of the Province, while Hindus have a majority in the parts which have suffered the severest disabilities of the last 50 years."

Thus in Bengal, though Hindus have lost to some extent by conversion to non-Hindu faiths, the main decrease is due to the fact that most of them live in West and Central Bengal, which are malaria-stricken, unhealthy and less fertile than some other parts of Bengal.

Before considering other means of preserving and increasing the number of Hindus, let me dwell for a moment on the method of conversion and reconversion. I have already shown that Hindus have an indefeasible right to Hinduize others. The field of work of this description lies particularly among the aborigines who are described as Animists, among those Moslems and Christians who or whose ancestors were converted from Hinduism, and among the "border-line" sects. Hindus have a special claim to

Hinduize Animists, because it is very difficult to distinguish Animists from certain classes of Hindus. Many are entered in the Census Schedules as Animists who are really Hindus. The capricious way in which this is often done is exemplified in the Bombay Census Report for 1921, page 63, where it is said: "In 1911 Mr. Gait, the Census Commissioner, when visiting this presidency on tour, converted 70,000 Bhils in Reva Kantha from Hindus to Animists by a stroke of the pen".

It is not generally known that there are in India many sects who are on the boundary line between Hindus and Muhammadans, whom it is difficult to class definitely either as Hindus or Muhammadans.

"There are many so-called Hindus whose religion has a strong Muhammadan flavour. Notable amongst these are the followers of the strange Panchpiriya cult,—Throughout India many Hindus make pilgrimages to Muhammadan shrines, such as that of Sakhi Sarwar in the Panjab. A friend of mine tells of a Mullah most of whose clients were Sikhs. On the other hand, many descendants of persons converted to Islam are far from being genuine Muhammadans, though they have been classed as such at the census. Of these the Malkanas of the country round Agra furnish a striking instance. These, says Mr. Blunt, are converted Hindus. They are reluctant to describe themselves as Mussabmans and generally give their original caste name. Their names are Hindu; they mostly worship in Hindu temples; they use the salutation Ram, Ram; they intermarry among themselves only. Of late some of them have definitely abjured Islam. In Gujrat there are several similar communities—such as the Matia Kunbis, who call in Brahmans for their chief ceremonies, but are followers of the Pirana saint Imam Shah and his successors, and bury their dead as do the Muhammadans, the Sheikhdas who at their weddings employ both a Hindu and a Muhammadan priest, and the Moimnas who practise circumcision, bury their dead and read the Gujrati Koran, but in other respects follow Hindu custom and ceremonial. These and similar communities lean more strongly to the one religion or the other according to their environment." *Consus of India*, 1911, vol. I, pp. 117-8.

The Hindus have a right to thoroughly Hinduize these border-line sects.

In the Census Report of India for 1911 Vol. i, page 121, it was stated:—

"Forcible conversions are of course a thing of the past, but none the less there is a steady drain going on. Though there is at the present time no organized proselytism by the Mullahs, here and there individuals are constantly attorning to Muhammadanism, some few from real conviction, but more for material reasons, such as the desire to escape from an impossible position when out-casted or, in the case of widows, the allurements of an offer of marriage. Whenever there is a

love affair' between a Hindu and a Muhammadan, it can only culminate in an open union if the Hindu goes over to Islam. while the discovery of a secret liaison often has the same sequel. In Appendix II to the Bengal Census Report for 1901 I gave a large number of actual cases of conversion with the reasons assigned for each"

The workers of the Hindu Mahasabha should study all these and other cases, as far as practicable, and adopt preventive methods for the future.

Whenever men and women are Hinduized, arrangements should be made for their instruction in the highest doctrines and ideals which the proselytizing agency has to offer. Whenever necessary arrangements should be made for the general and vocational education of the converted persons.

In regions where, as in the U. P., the Hindus have decreased owing to epidemics, earnest attention should be given to the adoption of preventive measures and the provision of medical treatment, both on an adequate scale. Preventive measures and medical treatment are, however, not everything. The power of resistance to disease should be increased by the adequate nourishment of the people. This presupposes economic improvement—a very important problem, which I can only just mention here.

In some regions Hindus decrease or do not multiply in sufficient numbers, because these are unhealthy, malaria-ridden, and not sufficiently fertile, as, e. g., West Bengal. Insanitation and diseases have to be fought in all such regions, the land has to be made more productive by irrigation and other means, and industries have to be revived or introduced. I cannot here enter into the details of this very important problem. But I would only say that those who want to prevent the decadence of the Hindu community in Bengal must not forget the unhealthy and unproductive condition of West Bengal.

The consideration of the problem of the preservation and increase of the number of Hindus leads me to discuss briefly the causes of the decay of nations and peoples. First of all, we must all bear in mind that, though each individual human being is bound to die sooner or latter, no people or nation is *bound* to die. Scientists have spoken of the "diseases of nations." Before I refer to their nature and remedies, let me say that, as in the diseases of individuals, so in those of peoples, hope is an important factor in the curative process. Like

individuals, both small groups and big groups of men may die out. How they may die out unless buoyed up by hope, has been shown by F. O. Brien in his work entitled "White Shadows in the South Seas," published by the Century Co., N. Y., 1919, in which he writes :—

"A hundred years ago, there were 160,000 Marquesans in these islands. To-day their total number does not exceed 2,100."

According to him this decrease is due to the detrimental effects of "Christianization" on these people. Formerly they had their dancing, tattooing, religious rites and other so-called superstitions, which gave them a zest in life and thus had a vitalizing influence on them. But now they are "nothing but joyless machines" and "are tired of life," because they have been compelled by the white Christians to adopt alien customs and thus deprived of their old spiritual life. This author also says that to-day "all Polynesians from Hawaii to Tahiti are dying, because of the suppression of the play instinct that had its expression in most of their occupations." They are dying because they are "unguarded by hope or desire to live, willing to meet death half way, the grave a haven."

I am not, of course, for the continuance of any immoral or degrading custom or superstition. But we should all see that neither Hindus as a whole nor any section of them lose hope and joy and zest in life on account of new conditions imposed on them from outside, or on account of new circumstances. If any Hindu caste or Hindus in any area are decreasing, it should be investigated whether owing to any cause their play instinct has been suppressed, collective enjoyment of life diminished and hope decreased. The stoppage of festivals and processions is, no doubt, an infringement of religious and civic rights. But it also amounts to the deprivation of one of the vital needs of life. Therefore, such encroachments on our rights should be resisted.

When reformers want to reform any custom on grounds of morality, decency, or refinement, something unobjectionable but enlivening ought to be substituted. The obscenities and vulgarities indulged in by some people during the *Holi* have been substituted by reformers in many places by refined and innocent music and other similar recreations in the form



of *pavitra holi*. The Ram Lila and some other processions are entirely unobjectionable on moral grounds. But Government and the Moslems have combined in many places to bring about their cessation on excuses which will not bear examination. This is a grievous injury. We must have a remedy.

However, we cannot be made despondent. All Indian religions are religions of hope. There is no eternal hell in them. Even Buddhism, which has been wrongly called a pessimistic faith, holds out hope to its votaries in an unparalleled manner. "In order to bring salvation to all humanity, the Mahayana taught that every man could aim at being born as a Bodhisattva; and any ordinary man, even a Pariyah, could attain salvation by the practice of virtue and by devotion to Buddha." Our history also is full of hope. Every time that we have fallen, we have risen again. Again and again has India produced great men in all spheres of life. It continues to do so. Italy has had rebirth after fourteen centuries of bondage. India's servitude has never been of such long duration.

The Hindu Mahasabha should give hope to the lowest of the low in the Hindu community, taking off the incubus of social indignities and disabilities from their backs. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick. It will not, therefore, do to tell them that their lot *may* improve at their next birth. Just as we politically-minded Indians want full political freedom during our own life time, so do they want social freedom and respectability during theirs. If they lose hope as Hindus, they will either go over to Islam or Christianity or die out.

In Hinduizing the aborigines, regard should be had to the conservation of their play-instinct and their joy and zest in life, while reforming degrading customs and amusements, if any,

I shall now dwell briefly on the subject of the diseases of nations. It will be easy for you and me to judge how far we are suffering from these diseases and what the remedies are. I should say at the outset that I am not using the word nation here in a political sense, but in the sense of a large body of men; for the Hindus do not form a nation by themselves.

Some thirty years ago Dr. Daniel G. Brinton, an American professor of the University of Pennsylvania, said that when a nation, as a unit, is chronically incapable

of directing its activities toward self-preservation, it should be held to be suffering from a national disease. He added :

"I could give you instances from history, where, for instance, a dis-solute priesthood, where an aristocracy which had become degenerate, where a particular form of government which had become untrustworthy, led to the destruction of that nation; and yet the majority of that nation may have been perfectly healthy in their feelings, and they might have survived had it not been that this particular social element was thoroughly and utterly diseased."

He classified the main causes of national diseases under four headings. The first of these is imperfect nutrition; the second is poisons: the third is mental shock: and the fourth is sexual subversion.

"Some physicians say that all diseases whatsoever in the human body begin with insufficient or misdirected nutrition of one of the organs of the body. If this is the case for the physician, you see at once how eminently important it is that the nation should be sustained by proper food, in sufficient quantities and properly prepared; otherwise it lays the foundation for those mental diseases which soon tell, with destructive results, upon the body politic."

"It is undoubtedly true that every nation must have, throughout all of the nation, enough to eat, of good quality and properly prepared, or that nation will degenerate . . ."

"The actual effect of limited food for a long time has been carefully studied by physicians from the point of view of national economy. We can see and distinctly point out the results of a prolonged absence of food on many nations. We know that it brings about degeneration of tissue, inferiority of stature, weakening of the body, and in all other respects making them physically and mentally incapable of aiding the great work of the progress of civilization. Nothing, therefore, can be more dreadful than the prospect of national starvation, even in the limited sense of the word."

This is not the place to enumerate all the evil results of *our* national starvation. I shall mention only two. India's death-rate is far higher than that of any other civilized nation and our average length of life—23 years—is half or less than half of that of other civilized nations. How can people who live for 23 years on an average compete with people who live for 50? We have, therefore, to increase our food supply and our ability to buy food, and also to make the country more healthy. I would appeal to all our Maharajas—particularly those who have large irrigation works and much uncultivated but culturable land, such as the Maharjas of Gwalior, Bikaner, &c.—and our landholders to settle larger and larger numbers of peasants and farmers on their lands. A people which loses touch with the land is doomed. In

Bengal the number of actual Hindu cultivators of the soil has been steadily diminishing.

Our industrialists should see that factory labourers get a living wage and are taught to make a proper use of their income. On our part we should use all kinds of Swadeshi goods, so that more and more of our men may find employment and food. The sentiment should be instilled and widely acted up to that no honest avocation is mean. It is a bad sign that Hindus are rarely found to work at some trades and crafts. Among other occupations our young men should take largely to the seafaring life, acquiring all knowledge about ships and sailing, in foreign countries if necessary. Thus should we regain our ancient place in maritims enterprise.

Poisons are the second cause of national diseases. Among these poisons are mentioned alcohol, some narcotics and stimulants (including tobacco) and the germs of some diseases.

"Alcohol brings with it the elements of national degeneration and decay." "There are vast districts of the earth's surface which are so permeated with the malarial poison that no race can be there and reach a high degree of physical and mental power. Men live there—they live everywhere; but they are not in a condition ever to assist much in the great work of progress; and wherever malaria is constantly and persistently prevalent, you need not expect that that nation will ever count for much in the history of mankind."

Historians ascribe the fall of ancient Greece and Rome in great part to malaria. But the poison has been combated there and elsewhere in the world; and so can it be in India. Only we are never to forget and give rest to this our great enemy. To malarial poison I would add the syphilitic poison, originally imported into India by Europeans.

The third national disease is of the nature of the peculiar physical effect which medical men call "shock",

"Sometimes, in performing a surgical operation, the surgeon knows perfectly well that the operation will be successful under ordinary conditions; and yet he is aware that certain mental temperaments have received what we call 'surgical shock' by the operation, which imperils, if it does not destroy, life which, otherwise, under ordinary conditions, would be saved. There is something of the same kind in the history of nations. They, too, are subject to have that mental shock which seems to overbalance them. They do not any longer have control over their faculties. They yield to despair and in consequence fail"

Devastating epidemics like plague, political subjection and emasculation, inferiority complex produced by political hypnotism, etc., may produce this kind of national disease. But I hope we have sufficient self-possession and strength of mind to shake it off.

About sexual subversion the American professor says :

"Every nation, if it is to be prosperous, if it is not going to retrograde and degenerate, must increase in numbers; and it must increase not through immigration only but also through natural reproduction;—therefore, fertility, reproduction,—in the long run must be looked after in every nation it is not going to fall into decay. A nation is sure to become diseased when for any reason religious or secular there is a large abstinence from marriage." "Mr. Galton has written a work on this subject of the 'Influence of Celibacy and Spinsterhood on the Fate of Nations.' He has pointed out that the celibacy which has been enjoined by Christianity—the celibacy of the priesthood and the conventual life—has resulted distinctly in national decay."

We have all recently read in the papers what special honours, rewards and exemptions Mussolini is giving in Italy to parents of many children. But that is by the way. Applying to India the views of the American professor and of Galton, I must say that the large number of idle so-called *sadhus* in India is an evil. Those who find it necessary to remain celibate for rendering some real religious or other service to the nation may rightly remain unmarried. But those aforesaid celibates are a curse. India does not yet suffer from any large number of women remaining unmarried. But the child-widows in India are really spinsters. Their lifelong real celibacy is productive of many evils, one of which is that many possible wives and mothers do not become such.

The evil custom of 'bride-price' prevents many persons in parts of the country from marrying at all and others from marrying while they are young. This leads to decline in the population of some castes and to other evils. Similarly, the custom of 'bride-groom-price' is a great evil. When our young men realize how mean, ungentlemanly and dishonourable it is to demand money for marrying a girl and when they want to be true lovers and real gentlemen, then this disgraceful system will disappear.

The introduction of inter-subcaste and inter-caste marriages will widen the field of choice of brides and bridegrooms. This will be one remedy for "enforced" celibacy, late marriages and marriages of elderly bridegrooms with brides very much younger than themselves, all of which go against due continuance and propagation of species

My last observation on the subject of the diseases of nations is that, speaking broadly, we as a people do not suffer from sexual perversion or exhaustion. Great stress is laid in our highest scriptures on continence and sexual purity, and, though the number of those among us who do not lead pure

lives is not microscopic, yet as a people we are not worse in this respect than any other.

The amelioration of the condition of Hindu women is another object of the Hindu Mahasabha. Hindu idealism relating to woman is unsurpassed in the world. But many of our customs fall so short of this idealism as to make us ashamed. In order that our women may be what according to our ideal they ought to be, there should be physical culture (including the arts of self-defence), moral training and heart culture, intellectual culture and training in domestic science for all our girls and young women. In order that there may be ample time for the education of girls, child marriage and premature motherhood should be put a stop to. I am glad that the 7th session of the Hindu Mahasabha under the presidency of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya "enjoined upon all Hindus not to marry their girls before the age of sixteen", which leaves it optional to keep them unmarried a few years longer, if necessary. Child-marriage and premature motherhood is injurious not only to the girls but also to their progeny and decreases the fecundity of the mothers.

The custom of the purdah, wherever it exists, should be abolished. I need not describe its evils. As regards the condition of our widows, a great improvement will take place in their condition, if we give effect to Resolution 12 of the 10th session in right earnest. Clause (c) of that resolution requires that "every legitimate measure be adopted to save them from falling into the hands of people of other religions or leading a wrong course of life." My interpretation of this clause is that it allows childless child-widows to marry. I have the highest veneration for the ideal of true widowhood. I know that the custom of lifelong widowhood is partly an outcome of this high ideal. But child-widows are not really widows, for they have not truly known the men with whom the ceremony of marriage was gone through. Therefore, personally, I would not only allow the marriage of child-widows but would promote such marriages. Motherhood is not less sacred than maidenhood and widowhood. Hindu social reform would have been much facilitated if it had been remembered that, as Kulluka Bhatta says in his commentary on Manu Samhita, "Srutī dvidvidha Vaidiki tantriki cha," "Srutī is of two kinds, Vedic and Tantric," and the following verse of the Mahanirvana Tantra, quoted by Ram Mohan Roy, had also been remembered :

Vayojāti vicārotra Saivodyāhe na vidyate. asapindām bhārtirhinām udvāhet Sambhusāsanat."

"There is no discrimination of age and caste or race in the Saiva marriage. As enjoined by Siva, one should marry a woman who has no husband and who is not sapinda, that is, who is not within the prohibited degrees of marriage." This sloka makes widow-marriage, inter-caste and inter-racial marriage and post-puberty marriage valid.

For widows who cannot or should not marry, such education should be provided as would open useful careers to them.

As has been shown first in modern times by Ram Mohun Roy and then by others, our ancient laws of inheritance for women were juster than those stereotyped by the British Government and Courts. These laws should be made perfectly just and generous to our women.

With their physical, moral and intellectual handicaps removed, Hindu women will obtain their rights as human beings and directly and indirectly help in promoting the cause of India and of the world.

The 9th resolution passed at the seventh session of the Mahasabha points out all that is necessary for the protection and improvement of the condition of cows and their calves. Every effort should be made to give effect to this resolution.

In conclusion, I shall consider objects (d) and (h) together, namely,

"To protect and promote Hindu interests and Hindu rights whenever and wherever necessary," and "generally to take steps for promoting the religious, moral, educational, social, economic and political interests and rights of the entire community."

In relation to the fulfilment of these objects, it should never be forgotten that the welfare of all classes and communities is interdependent and that Hindu welfare cannot be secured by sacrificing the welfare of other communities. Other communities should also understand that they cannot do good to themselves by disregarding or injuring the interests of the Hindus. Therefore, there should be peace and good will and unity between all communities. The deliberations and conclusions of the Unity Conference point the way to such friendly feelings. The settlement made at that conference should be honestly and earnestly worked by all parties.

The encroachments on Hindu rights are many. I will not dwell on them in detail. But as the Hindus along with some others have been deprived of the right and duty of defending the country, I will refer to it in particular. With the expansion of the British

Empire and the gradual evolution of British imperialistic policy in India, recruitment for the sepoy army has gradually receded from province after province in British India with the growth of political self-consciousness there, and sepoys are now for the most part recruited from some Indian States, from transfrontier Moslem territory and from Nepal. The result is that the descendants of those who at one time fought valiantly against or for the British are practically declared unfit for self-defence, British India is thoroughly emasculated, and, as Hindus outnumber other communities, they are the greatest sufferers. *Proportionately* there are more Moslems than Hindus in the Army. The division of the people into martial and unwarlike is unscientific, un-historical and based on falsehood. No such classification exists in any other civilised country. There should be recruitment from all provinces and religious communities, as far as practicable. As an aid to the realization of this ideal, there should be gymnasia and sporting clubs all over the country. Both our girls and boys should be taught the arts of armed and unarmed, individual and collective self-defence. They should be placed above the fear of getting wounded and of bleeding. The Hindu Mahasabha should give the greatest possible attention to this matter. I lay stress on this subject not for any aggressive purpose, but in order that we may get rid of the softness caused by over-civilization and may be able to acquire the strength, courage and secure position which alone entitle and enable men to preach and practise *ahimsa* and *maitri* which constitute India's message to the world.

I have already far exceeded my limits. So with regard to our political interests and rights I shall say only this in brief that, as in the past, so at present and in the future, the Hindus will not shrink from facing all dangers and making all the sacrifices necessary for winning freedom *for all communities*. In order to obtain the co-operation of the other communities, the Hindu community will honourably stand by, as it has hitherto stood by, the Hindu-Moslem agreements arrived at as recorded in the Nehru Committee's reports, provided there is no going back from those agreements on the part of others. But if there be such going back, and if the Mussalmans persist in opposing the Nehru Report as passed by the All Parties Convention at Calcutta, the Hindus on their part will be fully justified in going back to their original national, logical and just position that there is to be no reservation of seats for

any community anywhere and that the electorates for all legislatures are to be everywhere joint and mixed.

There can be no greater confession of want of confidence in the capacity of the Moslem community than for any of them to demand reservation of a proportionate number of seats even where they are in a majority. Such a demand practically means that in their opinion there must be perpetual Moslem Raj in the Moslem majority provinces. On the other hand, our great departed leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, who was also a great national leader, has declared it "as a fact that the bulk of the Hindus do not want a Hindu Raj. What the latter are striving after is a National Government founded on justice to all communities, all classes and all interests." "In my judgment," he said, "the cry of a Hindu Raj or a Muslim Raj is purely mischievous and ought to be discouraged."

I respectfully request all to always bear in mind some facts relating to the origin and continuance of political power. The British people, nay the entire white people inhabiting the British Empire, are a minority; whereas the Indian people, even the Hindu community by itself, form the majority. Yet the British people are masters of the situation. They did not become masters by virtue of any pact or compromise. When the Moslems became masters of India, that was not by the force of any agreement. Power is gained or lost, whether there be or be not any verbal or written guarantees, pacts, and things of that description though they have their value.

Peoples' fates are determined by their possession or lack of character, strength, ability, intellectual calibre, efficiency, firm resolve and sacrifice for the cause of the whole people. Let not Hindus, therefore, be under any delusion that their mere numerical strength will be a safeguard against loss of rights and power in the future, any more than it has been in the past. Let not Moslems, too, be under any delusion that reservation of seats for them, both where they are in the minority and in the majority, will secure for them a perpetual lease of powers and rights any more than the possession of supreme political power in the past in India and elsewhere has prevented their downfall. The present generation of neither Hindus nor Moslems have the right or the power to make any artificial, unjust and illogical agreements binding on their descendants. Still less can the present or any other generation make such agreement binding on the Power that rules the destinies of nations.

In addition to communal strifes, conflicts between labour and capital and between cultivators and landholders have begun to loom large on the horizon. It is necessary in the highest interests of the Hindu community and of all other communities that the points at issue between the parties should be settled by mutual consultation and agreement. Nay, these points should not arise at all. There are Hindus among labourers and peasants and their leaders, and among capitalists and land-holders. I appeal to them all not to take to the warpath in occidental fashion, not at least till the fullest trial has been given to methods of arbitration and conciliation.

In all climes and ages givers have been richer than receivers. The teacher, the man who has to impart spiritual, moral or intellectual truth, must be superior in his possessions to the man who acquires knowledge for himself alone. Hence for India to be rich in the possession of inward treasure, her sons and daughters must be in a position to give. They must not be mere learners and borrowers. In the ancient world they were rich in the possession of immaterial treasure, because they were givers. Let them again prepare themselves to take up their ancient role. A few have already in modern times become world teachers. This is the way to promote our religious, moral and intellectual interests.

But in order to give, one must also receive. He alone can give who has life. Life connotes adaptation to environment, assimilation of that which is good and elimination of that which is effete or injurious.

Let India's children, therefore, fearlessly face all climes, races and cultures, Let them go forth, as their ancestors did in days of yore, to all corners of the outer and inner world, to give and take. The strong can digest and assimilate all that is good and reject all that is bad. Let us not be afraid of world forces and the world current. The Hindu who in modern times worked earliest and hardest to break through India's prison-house of physical and intellectual isolation, Ram Mohun Roy, had no such fear. Firmly grounded in Hindu faith and culture, he assimilated what was good in other faiths and cultures, too. He had faith in the unmeasured capacity of his people for continuous improvement. In the course of a controversy with a European Christian, he wrote :—

"If by the 'Ray of Intelligence' for which the Christian says we are indebted to the English, he

means the introduction of useful mechanical arts, I am ready to express my assent and also my gratitude; but with respect to Science, Literature or Religion, I do not acknowledge that we are placed under any obligation. For by a reference to history it may be proved that the World was indebted to our ancestors for the first dawn of knowledge, which sprang up in the East, and thanks to the Goddess of Wisdom, we have still a philosophical and copious language of our own which distinguishes us from other nations who cannot express scientific or abstract ideas without borrowing the language of foreigners."

This was no unhistorical vain boast. The Rev. Dr. J. T. Sunderland writes in "India in Bondage : Her Right to Freedom" :—

"India contributed enormously to the advancement of civilization by giving to the world its immensely important decimal system, or so-called Arabic notation, which is the foundation of modern mathematics and much modern science.

"India early created the beginnings of nearly all of the sciences, some of which she carried forward to remarkable degrees of development, thus leading the world. To-day, notwithstanding her subject condition, she possesses scientists of eminence."

The world is indebted to India of the past for many priceless treasures. My hope and aspiration is that India of the not distant future, too, may again be such a benefactor. Sir Oliver Lodge has said that man's ethical condition lags behind his scientific and mechanical achievement. Hence there is no moral restraint sufficient to make wars and murderous economic competition impossible. Will not India be able to teach the world a better way? Will not her message of *Ahimsa* and *Maitri* triumph in politics, economics and industry?

Discussing in *The International Review of Missions* the subject of what Christianity can appropriate and assimilate from Hinduism, the Rev. Mr. Pelly, Vice-Principal of Bishop's College in Calcutta, mentioned the Hindu doctrine of the immanence of the Supreme Being and the practice of contemplation or meditation.

I do not say all these things to boast and feed our vanity. Rather should we be ashamed that we are so unworthy of our lineage. I mention all these things only to revive confidence in our latent capacity. Let us meditate and achieve self-realization, and then go forth to play our part in the world in the firm faith that the Paramatman immanent in the universe and transcending the universe will not fail to give us *Siddhi* according to our *Sadhana*, though it may not be according to our desire or expectation. For,

"Karmanyevadhikaraste ma phalesu kada-chana," "It is for us to work, but not to demand its fruit."

