

The Hindu Organ.

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HINDU STUDENTS' MOVEMENT.

Seldom do we come across such a lucid, thoughtful and practical speech as that which Prof. C. Suntharalingam of the University College delivered on the occasion of the inauguration of the Hindu Students' Movement in Colombo. He has engaged some of the most important religious and social problems that call for solution of the Hindu community and he has also suggested the methods of approach which ought to provoke thought both among the Hindu youth and the elders of the Hindu community.

The Hindu students constitute a very considerable number of the student population of the Island. Little work outside Hindu schools has been done hitherto to make them live up to the highest ideals of their religion and to study the Hindu scriptures especially those relating to Saiva religion. The Christian students though small in number have their Y. M. C. A.'s and other Christian organisations which give them scope for their religious endeavours and activities. The need of similar organisations among the Hindu students has been long felt and we are sure that the Hindu Students' Movement inaugurated on the 12th inst. will not only minister to the religious welfare of the students in Colombo but also it will take steps to unify and co-ordinate the isolated activities of small Hindu organisations which are scattered throughout the Island.

One of the greatest obstacles for the religious progress among the Hindus as observed by Prof. Suntharalingam is religious indifference. Many causes have contributed to this. The chief of which is the lack of knowledge of the Hindu religion. The majority of the educated Hindus received their education in Missionary institutions. There they were not given any opportunity to study their religion and even if they have come to know anything about it at all it was only through tainted sources. The Hindu schools, no doubt, saved the Hindu students from the hostile religious influence of the Missionary schools, but the positive effort made to provide for the teaching of the Hindu religion did not bear much fruit owing to the fact that many of the teachers were not fully equipped for such work. The Pandit who is perhaps the only one in the school who has some knowledge of religion has made its study dull, uninteresting and burdensome owing to his lack of understanding of the modern methods of teaching. Teachers who combine the knowledge of Hindu religion with that of modern needs and conditions are necessary to promote effective religious instruction in Hindu schools. It is by such teaching that religious indifference can be removed. Many of the Hindu under graduates of the University College will take to teaching as their vocation in life and therefore it is necessary that the Hindu Students' Movement should see that its members become well-grounded in the knowledge of the Hindu religion.

The study of religion alone is not enough for eradicating religious indifference. No doubt knowledge by removing ignorance gives true perspective of values of things and paves the way for religious living. But knowledge of religion without sadhana will degenerate into empty intellectualism and will create a penchant for idle speculations and a thirst for worldly warfare. It is by sadhana that knowledge can be directed into fracturing channels and religious life can be deepened and invigorated. The essence of sadhana is worship. "பொருள்புகழ் அருளுத தெய்வபுகழ்" says "Periarpuranam". It is by true and genuine worship of the Lord, that a devotee can realise the fulness and richness of religious life and attain the heights of religious experience which will make his

life a great power for good. Therefore it is the duty of the Hindu Students' Movement to lay due emphasis on the practice of religion.

Religious life should not remain a matter of subjective experience. It should also become objective by finding its expression in service of God and man. The Movement as we understand it from the speech of Prof. Suntharalingam is a brotherhood of Service. It is inspired by the ideal of doing something for the recovery and reconstruction of national and religious life. The learned Professor has indicated the lines of work which give scope for such service.

The programme of work outlined by Prof. Suntharalingam may appear rather ambitious and out of place in a student organisation. Some may even entertain the fear that the students may carry the reforming zeal too far. In our opinion there is not much justification for it. Some degree of freedom should be given to them so that they may take an abiding and intelligent interest in the affairs of their religion. We are sure that under wise and capable leadership their energies and enthusiasms can be kept within bounds and profitably harnessed to give driving force to the Hindu Movement which it cannot have otherwise.

LOCAL & GENERAL.

WEATHER—A light shower of rain fell on Tuesday morning. The remaining portion of the day was cloudy but there was no rain.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.—Consequent to the departure of Mr. H. S. Perera, M. A., Divisional Inspector of Schools, N. D., Jaffna, on ten months' furlough to Europe, Mr. S. Candiah, District Inspector of Schools, has been appointed to act for him. Mr. S. Arinardi, will act for Mr. Candiah during this period.

PERSONAL.—Mr. C. Perumalpillai, Proctor S. C. and Notary, Colombo, is on a short holiday visit to Jaffna and is staying at his residence at Thunavy, Vadukkodai.

—Mr. T. A. Thurasappillai, Head-Master, Mahajana English High School, Tellippalai, is laid up with an attack of cerebral haemorrhage, at his residence at Tellippalai. We are glad to learn that he is progressing.

UNIVERSITY COMMISSION INITIAL EXPENDITURE.—The Finance Committee is to be invited at tomorrow's (Friday) meeting to sanction a supplementary vote of Rs. 19,000 for the purpose of meeting expenditure in connection with Ceylon University Commission.

USUMBIYAY H. E. MIXED SCHOOL.—The following programme will be gone through at the prize-distribution of the above School on Saturday next. Thevaram, Welcome Song, National Song, Dialogue English, Annual Report, Tamil Recitations, English Recitations, Dialogue (Tamil), Distribution of Prizes; Speeches by Hon. Mr. S. Rajaratnam, Mr. S. Kanagaratnam, Trained Teacher, F. M. S. and Mr. M. S. Rajaratnam, Advocate; Remarks by the Chairman, and Tamil Drama, "திருவிடைக்கூட்டு சாமுத்திரம்."

LOUGHBOROUGH COLLEGE FACULTY OF ENGINEERING.—Among the member of students from Ceylon who have been successful in the examinations held at Loughborough College, Mr. P. Coomaraswamy obtains a First Class in General Engineering.

EASTERN ASSIZE.—The Eastern Assize sessions opened at Batticaloa on Monday last, Mr. Justice Driehberg presiding. The calendar includes seven cases of which three are of murder.

Anti-Prohibitionists in Jaffna.

RABID CHAMPIONS OF LOST CAUSES

The "Ceylon Indian" commenting on the tactics of the Anti prohibitionists in Jaffna has the following:—

"The Government Agent of the Northern Province has received about thirty two applications for the re-opening of taverns in the Jaffna District. Judging from what one hears of the activities of the ardent anti prohibitionists and the attitude of the average Jaffna man towards the drink question there is little hope of the re-opening of such a large number of taverns. It is expected that the rabid anti prohibitionists of the north will meet with no better success than they did during their last campaign. The most interesting feature in the present campaign is the application for one foreign liquor shop and two arrack taverns while the application for the former and one arrack tavern comes from a well known centre of anti prohibitionists—Karayoer, the other application for an arrack tavern comes from Point Pedro, a centre of prohibitionists' activities. There is not the remotest chance of the anti prohibitionists having their way at Point Pedro. Probably as champions of lost causes they think of creating some impression on the people outside Jaffna by sending to a large number of applications for the re-opening of taverns....."

Hindu Students' Movement.

INAUGURAL MEETING IN COLOMBO.

At the inaugural meeting of the Hindu Students' Movement held on the 12th inst. in Colombo, the following gentlemen were elected to serve on the Managing Committee for August 1928—January 1929:—

President: Prof. C. Suntharalingam, Vice-President: Mr. V. Murugesuvaru, Hon. Sec: Mr. P. Navaratnam, Hon. Treas: Mr. V. Thurasappillai, and Messrs. M. Tiruchelvam, S. R. Kavaganyasgam, N. Coomaraswamy, P. Anirbatragam and S. Thangarajah.

Below is given a full report of the inaugural address of Prof. C. Suntharalingam:—

THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

Gentlemen—The notice convening this Inaugural Meeting which has just been read out to you has indicated in rather brief but explicit terms the objects which the promoters have in view. It is essentially a Student Movement and as such it is intended primarily to focus the attention of all Hindu Students whose minds are mature enough for the purpose, to the principles and practices of their religion and to make them live up to the highest ideals of Hinduism.

Some of you probably know that the Student Christian Movement which has been in existence for some years past has had and continues to have a deep and lasting influence not only on the followers of Christ but also on the followers of other great religious leaders. I have been a member of that movement myself though not a Christian and I know from a close and intimate association with its activities, as a member who served on some of its Committees while abroad, the good influence which it has had on me as well as on several of my friends. This Movement therefore which we have met to inaugurate today owes its inspiration, and I acknowledge it quite frankly and gratefully, to the Student Christian Movement and our main purpose is to enable our Movement to do to the students who have been born to the Hindu faith what the Student Christian Movement has been able to achieve for the Christian students, in moulding their character and shaping their lives during a difficult and delicate period.

A RELIGION AS OLD AS MANKIND.

But there is however one great difference which arises out of the nature and age of our religion. We have been born into a religion whose history is as possibly as old as that of mankind. During the uncountable years through which our religion has persisted, it has had several exponents, several scriptures, and performed several malpractices and several reforms. It has not been possible and I do not consider it will ever be possible to disentangle or to think of our religion apart from the customs and practices which have grown up with and around it. As you are probably aware Hinduism in its earliest form was the crude religion followed by the primitive settlers of Hindustan. As they and their successors grew and expanded, the religion which was interwoven with their daily lives had to grow and expand too. It had to go through all the ordeals and vicissitudes which overtake a people or rather a congeries of peoples in the course of their long history. It had to adapt itself to the understanding and philosophy of successive generations of thinkers. It had to withstand attacks on its tenets from outside; it had to assimilate ideas from other faiths. Is it therefore a matter of surprise that at the present day we should have innumerable sects and systems of Hinduism each of which appears to assume for itself the right to pass unchallenged as the sole exponent of the pure form of the Sanatana Dharma?

UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

We have in our own little Island our Vedantists and our Siddhantists and some times when the enthusiastic adherents of these systems meet it is all that onlookers can do to prevent their discussion from terminating in a breach of the peace! It is, gentlemen, one of our objects to make a close study of our scriptures and the various Hindu systems, each student to realize for himself the unity which pervades the apparent diversity, to sight the treasure from the track and thus strengthen our belief in the faith that is ours by inheritance. This is all the more necessary at a time when we have well-meaning though misguided enthusiasts of other faiths who make no secret of their attitude towards our religion and try to secure converts of their faith from ours. I do not think, any Hindu who has a good grasp of the essentials of his religion or who has given some thought to them will consider his faith secured by any other. Indeed I think it safe to say that the more one studies not only one's own religion but also other religions one feels that there is so much that is common to all. Speaking for myself I should say I prefer to have as a friend a good Hindu or a good Christian, a good Muslim or a good Buddhist to one who is indifferent to a Hindu or a Muslim or a Buddhist. It will then know that at least in his ideals and outlook there is virtue.

This Movement would therefore achieve a great purpose indeed and would bring happiness to many if it could help to remove the indifference towards religion which is fast becoming a fashion among our students and to make its members good and true Hindus.

ELIMINATION OF BAD CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES.

Our object however does not end there. I have already hinted to you that owing to its nature and age several bad customs and practices have grown round our religion. Some would urge, as a conventional way of escape, that those customs and practices do not belong to Hinduism but to Buddhism. But I do not think we can discuss the question so lightly. Brahmanism is after all Hinduism in daily practice. It is up to us who are still students to examine and analyse all our customs and practices; to find out according to our ideas which of them are necessary evils and which are not and which may or rather need must be removed from our religion if we are to make it a life-force adapted to the needs of the modern world; to devise ways by which we can best cure the ill which afflict our Hindu social system. I must however make a note of warning here.

CAUTION TO YOUNG HINDUS.

We are after all students. We may be inclined owing to our age, to be impatient or even impatient. But we must not fail to realize that we cannot apply the surgeon's knife readily to the ill of the social body. Our treatment must on the whole be more physiological than surgical and the best prescription we can suggest must include large doses of education and persuasion. Fifteen years hence most of those of you who are still in your teens will by virtue of your education be the leaders of thought and action in this country and if the ideals which you now at the most impassioned period of your lives, assimilate after due study have any real and substantial value in them, and if you are true to yourselves those ideals cannot fail to inspire you in your activities in later life. I hope and hope earnestly that in the circumstances in which you may find yourself God will enable you to be firm and faithful in your ideals until such time as you are able to translate them into practice. In my own mind I am convinced that nothing can do more harm to our course than impatience and that nothing can do more good than perseverance. I speak in this strain because of some specific customs and practices which I have in view and which I should like to see done away with. It will not be possible now or will it be necessary for me to detail to you on this occasion for your consideration a catalogue of what I consider to be bad customs and practices. But I must invite your attention at the earliest opportunity to two important questions which affect our religion and which bring it to a large extent into disrepute and to remove which we must devise ways and means without delay.

HINDU TEMPORALITIES.

First and foremost there is the perplexing question of Hindu Temporalities. If any of you were to travel along the main road from the Sivam Kovil at Keerimalai to the Kandawamy temple at Nallur, you will find there are Hindu temples or shrines practically at intervals of quarter of a mile or less. The temples are either in ruin or in a state of hopeless neglect or immersed in costly litigation of the managers or priests not leading that exemplary life which one would expect them to lead in accordance with Hindu ideals. I think it a crying shame that we who pride ourselves in our religion should neglect our temples so badly, should litigate about them and should call upon those who are not of our faith to sit in judgment over them. I feel convinced that the degradation to which we find our religion is largely ascribable to those who are in charge of the temporal affairs of our temples. And we can make no headway, make no progress whatever until we modernize the management of our temples. It is not a task which an individual can undertake; but it is a task which can and must be undertaken by a movement such as ours. If the temporal affairs of our temples are under better control and supervision, our spiritual life will be all the more pure and richer and our religion will be held in better esteem. I submit to you that this important question must be tackled by us from the outset. We will have to collect information, gather statistics, and suggest expedients suited to our genius by which Hindu Temporalities may be placed on better, surer and safer foundations than at present.

AN "INHUMAN AND UNCHARITABLE CUSTOM".

I shall now pass on to a second question: that of the exclusion of the so called low castes from Hindu temples. This, in my opinion, has been more responsible than any other cause for the conversion of so many Hindus to other faiths. For my part I have a real sympathy for those who are not finding a solace or a chance of enlightenment in what is supposed to be their religion receive with open arms those who preach to them the principles of other religions—principles which at least enable them to lead more human lives. We must remember we are not living in the days of Manu and whatever high and caste system might have achieved in Hindu Society in the remote past, it is entirely out-dated and unsuitable to the conditions of the modern world. It will sound strange indeed but it will nevertheless be an established fact in Ceylon in the near future when we will be called upon to open our polling booths to men and women to whom we may not by established custom and through unreasoned prejudice open the doors of our temples. I think we should without causing unnecessary friction or provocation take the steps we will enable us to free our Society from this inhuman and uncharitable custom. It will be I have no doubt a very delicate task and I hope this Movement will prove itself equal to it.

There are other practices such as Animal Sacrifice, the Dance of Nautch girls, the hereditary succession to spiritual office etc., in our temples. I need not elaborate them now. These questions will come up for consideration and solution in due time.

SELF HELP.

There is a well known saying "Heaven helps those who help themselves" and at this stage of our development when we have to justify and defend the principles of our faith, to free it from those practices which are out of harmony with present day ideas, we must look to none but ourselves for study and reform. And no group of persons can better fitted to undertake this arduous work than earnest and sincere students who I trust will approach the various questions without bias or prejudice. It may be that we may not be able to gather much in the way of fruits and that our efforts may not be always be crowned with success but we should for all time have before us the advice of Sri Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna "Thy business is with the action only, never with its fruit; so let not the fruit of action be thy motive, nor be thou to inaction attached."

