

secure local co-operation, it will be necessary to name gentlemen who will volunteer to act as Secretaries in different circles. In making these appointments, I would desire that the existing local associations should be recognized by their Secretaries being appointed to report their work to this Conference, and to correspond with each other. After these appointments of volunteer Secretaries have been made for the several circles, the President would call upon the local Associations represented here to affiliate themselves to the Conference, and to send their reports through delegates each year. After this work is over, a resolution will be proposed for your adoption, explaining the methods to be followed in the work of successfully carrying out reform in social matters. The last resolution would refer to the subjects on which attention should be chiefly directed for the present, and the limitations suggested by the conditions of our society in respect of desirable and practicable reforms. This is the programme of the day's work, and I will now request you to give effect to it in the way you deem most convenient.

One more general remark, before concluding these observations, may be permitted to me in regard to the existing condition of things. The chief event of the year in this connection is, no doubt, the great meeting at Ajmere in March last. The representatives of twenty large and small states met at Ajmere, and agreed to certain proposals for reforms in marriage and death expenses, and to certain limitations about the age of marriage, both of boys and girls. This indicates a great change of feeling in a most orthodox province, and in the most orthodox class of the people of that province. This change of feeling is not due to the adverse criticism provoked by the activity of the Congress. I would never have welcomed the change, if it had been the result of such adverse criticism. I have closely watched public feeling during the last four years, and though when we met in Bombay nothing great was done or thought of beyond a discourse by one or two friends, and in Calcutta we absolutely did nothing, we were able to put up the scaffolding at Madras, and we now hope to lay the foundations at Allahabad. Only one explanation can be given of this change of feeling and that is, that people have come to

see that, if they mean real work, that work must be on all the lines of their activities. Even a citizen's virtue is not the highest ideal to which we can aspire. There is a higher life still, and that is represented by our family and social obligations. The Rajputana people have set us a noble example, and a Conference such as this, consisting as it does of men who represent all that is best in each province, may well be expected to take a leaf out of the history of the Ajmere gathering. (*Loud cheers.*)

The Third Social Conference—Bombay—1889.

In moving the first proposition Rao Bahadur M. G. Ranade said.—MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—The Resolution I desire to place before this great meeting relates to a subject of considerable importance, and one which was very hotly discussed in the public newspapers in the early part of the year. It was at first expected that Mr. Dayaram Gidumal, who originally started this discussion by the publication of a small pamphlet, would have been able to attend to-day, and move the Resolution himself. Unfortunately he has been unable to attend the meeting, and I have been asked by him to supply his place. The Resolution is to the following effect :—

‘That, in the opinion of this Conference, the distinction made by the Penal Code between the general age of consent (12 years) laid down in Section 90, and the special age prescribed in clause 5 and the Exception in Section 375 is both unnecessary and indefensible, and that with a view to prevent early completion of marriages, which leads to the impairment of physical health of both husband and wife, and to the growth of a weakly progeny, cohabitation before the wife is twelve years old should be punishable as a criminal offence, and that every effort should be made by awakening public conscience to the grave dangers incurred to postpone the completion of marriage till the age of 14 at least, as being in accordance with the dictates of our ancient medical works and modern science, and countenanced by the approved sentiment and practice of the country.’

The question to be considered is a simple one. All men are aware that, under the law as it now stands, connection by a husband with his wife or by a stranger with any woman is punishable as rape, if the wife's or woman's age is below 10 years. If the wife is above 10 years, the law has ruled that connection with her by her husband is not rape. In the case of strangers, connection with a woman with her consent is not an offence relating to the body under the Section, unless consent has been extorted or given under mis-impression, while in the case of the husband, connection with or without consent is not regarded as an offence at all. The age of consent in this section is fixed at 10. The general age of consent as laid down by Section 90 of the Penal Code is, however, 12, even in the case of assault (Section 350), while in the case of certain offences it is as high as 14 or 16 (Sections 361 and 373). These limits of age mean that the consent given by a child, who is less than 12 or 14 or 16 years, to certain offences being committed does not take away the criminal character of these offences; while in the case of rape the consent is of no avail only where the child is less than 10 years old. This is clearly an anomaly of the law which requires an explanation. If in the case of more venial offences against the person and property of a child the age limit should be so high, it does not stand to reason that it should be so low in the case of the offences described under Section 375. Mr. Dayaram's pamphlet, it must be admitted, raised side issues which provoked controversy. He compared the English with the Indian Law, and dwelt upon the contrast as one unfavourable to the Indian Code. Of course, there was some point in these observations, but too much stress should not be laid upon these differences, as the laws of different countries are intended to suit the different conditions of life and the habits of the people affected thereby, and it cannot be urged as a sufficient reason to modify the law of one country that in some other country the law is different. On another point also, Mr. Dayaram took up a position which was not likely to pass unquestioned. He maintained that as the law now stood, connection with a woman above 10 and below 12 years by a stranger with her

consent was not punishable at all as an offence. This position was questioned by Professor Tilak of Poona in a reply he published to Mr. Dayaram's pamphlet, and in which it was urged that up to the age of 12 such consent would not avail the offender. I do not wish to enter into these controversial points. They are not necessary for the purpose of recommending the Resolution I wish to move, in which particular care has been taken to steer clear of controversy. I take my stand on the Penal Code of the country, and on the gravity or otherwise of the several classes of offences, and on this basis I contend that if the consent of a girl does not avail a man who assaults her or robs her or cheats her or kidnaps her, if she is below 12 in some cases, and below 14 or 16 years in age in other cases, *pari passu*, it should not equally avail a stranger, or even a husband, when the offence is rape, and the girl is less than 12 years old. The thing has only to be stated in this clear way to make the anomaly appear a very invidious and unjust reflection on our national character. It might indeed be said, Where is the practical evil which needs relief? Has anybody complained against the existing state of the law? The answer is not far to seek. If the law protects the husband or a stranger in the matter, when the victim happens to be not less than 10 years old, how could you expect complaints in regard to it? And yet there have been cases of such offences, and in certain parts of the country it is almost an institution to bring the child husband and wife together, notably in Guzarath and Bengal. The fact that the legislature, in deference to what it regarded as our national weakness fixed the limit so low, itself serves to blind men's consciousness on the point, and blunts the moral sense of indignation and resentment. It is urged that the practice in all respectable families is superior to the law as it stands, and that therefore no change in the law is necessary. My own feeling is that it is very desirable to bring up the law to the limit of this respectable practice, and to direct general attention to the necessity of slowly raising the age of consummation. Even the limit of 12 years is too low; but as that age has been laid down generally in the Code, I do not seek to raise the limit above that age. Of course it is very desirable on medical

grounds that every effort should be made to put off the connection at least till 14, and the resolution is worded accordingly. While it seeks a change of the law by substituting 12 for 10 years as the age of consent, it requires us all to put forth our best efforts to enlighten public conscience, and in this way to raise the limit to 14. Private effort will thus supplement the work of legislative reform, and it will only seek legislative help in respect of removing an anomaly, which the law itself has created, and which no private effort can by itself remove. A change of the kind suggested would in its consequence produce a very healthy reaction on public feeling, and stimulate and strengthen private effort. I hope you will all accept the resolution as a very reasonable proposal. You will see that it is not a matter in which we go out of our way to seek the help of the law, where the law has hitherto not interfered. It relates to a matter in which the law has interfered to our prejudice, and we seek a change to establish a desirable harmony between the law and our most approved practice. (*Loud cheers*)

In moving the second proposition, Rao Bahadur M. G. Ranade said :—The second proposition relates to a subject which intimately concerns the future of all organised attempts at social reform. Whatever difference of opinion there might be as regards the general question of compulsory legislative interference for the prevention of great social evils, it is clear that no serious objection can be taken to a proposal to empower a certain body of persons, who voluntarily take solemn pledges in matters of social reform for their own guidance, to associate together with other similarly pledged members who consent to be bound by penalties enforceable by the society to which they belong, in case of a breach of these pledges. Every legally constituted society has this power. It may have no occasion to use it, but the power must exist as a last resource. Caste organisations have this power, and they enforce it on occasions. They enforce it against the wishes and consent of their members, while under the plan proposed, consent, free and voluntary, is an essential condition of enforcement, and this circumstance

differentiates the proposal from a law of the State, or a caste rule. Certainly no individual can claim power to dictate to others how they should act, but all conceptions of natural justice and civil polity imply that any one individual, or a number of individuals, can, in respect of matters not prohibited by law, prescribe the rule of conduct for his own or their guidance, and be in fact a law to himself or themselves. When the idea of compulsory prohibition by law of certain social abuses had to be given up as impracticable for various reasons, it became clear that for the success and solidarity of all organized efforts at self-help, it was necessary that this permissive protection and authorization by law should be secured to give effect to the pledges which might have been accepted as rules of conduct. The want of such binding and empowering law was seriously felt by a Social Reform Society in Sind, and it asked the help of the Government of India about three years ago. That Government, however, referred the applicants to the Companies Act VI of 1882, in which Section 26 provides for the Registration of Associations not carried on for profit. The suggestion was adopted, and the Society registered itself as an Association after obtaining a license from Government to do so. Since then a similar society in Guzarath has also taken some practical steps in this direction. We have also a movement in our part of the country based on the same lines. It is, however, plain that as the provisions of the Indian Companies Act are clearly intended to regulate large Joint Stock business undertakings, carried on mainly for the purposes of profit, these provisions cannot conveniently regulate the work of societies established for purposes of social reform by persons who bring no capital, and own no joint property, but who take certain common pledges for binding themselves to practise particular rules of conduct. The two objects being so inconsistent, the law regulating business societies can never be conveniently applied to the other set of Associations. Experience has also demonstrated that this inconvenience is a real, not a fancied grievance. I hold in my hand a letter written to me by a Sind gentleman, who is himself a member of the Sind Society, registered under the Companies Act. He observes

that the Companies Act is utterly unsuited to the genius of a Social Reform Association. The cumbrous procedure which has to be observed under Sections 76 and 77, when any alterations have been made in the Articles of Associations, the impossibility of altering the scope and object as set forth in the Memorandum of Associations under Section 12, the necessity of printing and publishing notices, balance sheets, &c., are obligations, which impose serious inconveniences. The Sind Social Reform Association has experienced the difficulty of complying with these onerous obligations, and it is the general desire that a special law for the better regulation of Reform Associations should be passed. Similarly the regulations in table A have to be expressly excluded under Section 38 by the Articles of Associations. If not so excluded or modified, the regulations in table A apply, and fix the procedure of Associations. The rules in table A regarding accounts, audit, notices, and the procedure to be followed at general meetings, are so elaborate, and require so much expenditure for printing that it is very necessary to provide that these rules shall not apply, unless made expressly applicable by the articles.

Then again the fees laid down under Section 40 are so heavy as almost to be crushing, and greatly disincline men from seeking the protection of the Companies Act. Government have only reduced the registration fees in the case of such Associations to Rs. 50, but this sum itself is not small, while the other fees on the registration of documents, (e.g., on notices of change of office, Section 64) remain unchanged, and press inconveniently on the limited resources of the members. It is necessary, therefore, that these fees should be removed. Inadvertent omission to comply with the provisions of Sections 47, 50, 55 and 74 subjects Associations to heavy penalties. This deters men from volunteering to serve as Secretaries or Managing Directors of Associations. The winding up process is also very cumbrous, and must be made simpler and easier. I have made these quotations from the letter of my Sind friend, and as he speaks from experience and the letter represents, as I am informed, the views of the Secretary of that Society, his opinion is entitled to considerable weight. I may also state that Mr.

Dayaram Gidumal, though he does not go so far as the other Sind correspondent to whom I have referred, in condemning the Companies Act, joins with him in thinking that the Companies Act is unsuitable, and that the best plan to follow would be to enlarge the scope of Act XXI of 1860, which is in every way a simpler law, and to make it applicable to Social Reform Associations. Mr. Dayaram has himself prepared the draft of such an amending Act, which incorporates the most needful provisions of Act VI of 1882 and of Act XXI of 1860, and that draft was sent to me for consideration at this Conference. As it is out of place to expect a detailed consideration of the draft in this place, the Resolution provides for the appointment of a small committee to take the draft into its consideration. You will then all agree with me that a case has been made out for applying to Government for a special law, which necessity the Resolution affirms in its third paragraph, and further suggests the lines on which the amending Act should be passed. The first paragraph affirms the principle of such permissive legislation. The second paragraph of the Resolution will, I fear, require some more explanation from me. Section 9 of Act XXI of 1860 provides for the levy of penalties for breach of rules, and Section 15 prescribes the qualifications of the members. On the analogy of these provisions, it is proposed slightly to enlarge them by providing that when a member of a Reform Association dies without resigning his membership, his sons and other heirs shall, if the rules so provide, be regarded as coming in his place, unless or until they signify their intention to the contrary. Such a provision might seem unusual in such a matter of voluntary organizations, but it is a very necessary provision to safeguard the interests of the surviving members. It may safely be presumed that the son of a man will prefer to continue his adherence to his father's principles rather than disown them. There is an evident advantage in the arrangement, and the analogous traditions of castes and guilds are in its favour. There is no hardship in the provision, because complete liberty to resign is guaranteed to the heirs of a deceased member. I hope to have thus made my meaning plain in regard to the more important portions of the

Resolution,' which I have proposed for your consideration. It seeks no compulsory interference of the law. It only seeks for the organised Associations a power to give effect to the rules and penalties to which their members have given express and voluntary assent. Without such a power, it is the experience of all of us that we are often in our weaker moments tempted to falter and go wrong. Of course, nobody expects that men can be made to practise as they preach by force of the law. The strength of motive, and the impulse to act up to it, must come from within. At the same time the fear of social opinion is not small. In a large number of cases, men fear the opinion of their fellows more than they fear their own conscience. There is no valid reason why this power should not be turned to account. Of course it will be turned to account only in the case of those who consent to join a society on these conditions. Others, who so choose, might join simply as sympathisers, but not prepared to bind themselves to the penalties laid down for a breach of pledges. Those, however, who stand aloof, have no right to dictate that none shall bind themselves, if they so choose. Such a principle of joint action cannot fail to be of great help, and I trust that it will meet with your approval. The power of registering Social Reform Associations already exists, and it is not a new law that is sought. The law is there. It is not a compulsory but a permissive law. It is, however, proved to be cumbrous and inconvenient in many respects, and all that is proposed is to simplify it. Under these explanations, I beg to move the adoption of the second Resolution entrusted to me.

'That in the opinion of the Conference, it is highly desirable that persons, who voluntarily associate together for the promotion of social reform, and accept certain pledges in respect of the obligations cast upon them as members of such Associations, should be enabled to enforce, without difficulty and expensive litigation, the rules against those who violate them, by the levy of any penalties sanctioned by the rules so accepted by them;

'2. That if the rules so provide, the heirs (sons, &c.)

of a deceased member shall on his death be deemed to be members of the said Associations, and clothed with all the rights, and be subject to all the liabilities of such membership, until they resign in accordance with the provisions contained in the said rules ;

'3. And that as the provisions of the Companies Act VI of 1862 and Act XXI of 1860 (Literary and Charitable Societies Act) do not provide sufficient facilities for the proper organisation of Associations for the promotion of social reforms, and the conduct of their business and the enforcement of their penalties, a draft of a less cumbrous and more elastic Act incorporating and amending certain provisions of both these Acts, be prepared and submitted to Government, with a prayer that it will take into its earliest consideration the desirability of passing a Special Act for this purpose, and that in the meanwhile Government should exempt the levy of all fees under the Stamp and Companies Acts on all documents executed for the purposes of such Associations. The draft prepared by Mr. Dayaram Gidumal should be referred to a committee consisting of Rao Bahadur Ranade, the Hon. Mr. Telang, Mr. N. G. Chandavarkar, and Mr. Dayaram Gidumal'

The Fourth Social Conference—Calcutta—1890.

In moving the (first) proposition, 'That this Conference has heard with satisfaction the account of the work done in the promotion of social reform by the various independent and affiliated Associations, established in different parts of the country, and it trusts that the good work that has been done during the past year will be continued with the same earnestness during the coming year,' the Hon. Rao Bahadur M. G. Ranade said :—
With the permission of the President, I propose, within the short time at my disposal to lay before you a brief summary of the work done by the various independent and affiliated Social Reform Associations now at work in this country during the past year. The year that is now about to close has been in this respect a most eventful one. From one end of the country

to the other, there has been an earnest struggle going on in the minds of all classes of the community, and the fact has been recognised that the claims of social reform on our attention are of a paramount character, and that the time is past for a mere academical consideration of the same. You will be glad to notice that we are no longer liable to the reproach of devoting our attention exclusively to politics, while neglecting the more peremptory calls of duty nearer home. I have kept myself in touch with the beatings of the national pulse, and I can therefore speak with some authority from first hand sources of information. We have received reports from 16 circles, including large and populous districts and provinces in all the great Presidencies of the Empire. The mere enumeration of the names of these places will give you an idea and a much better idea than any description can convey of the universal character of this national awakening. The reports that I hold in my hand have come from distant Quetta, Panjab, Sind, Gujarath, Bombay, Deccan, Southern Maratha Country, the Berars, Madras, Malabar, Bellary, Oudh, Rohilkand, Agra, Meerat, Gorakhpur, Hyderabad (Deccan), Allahabad, Rajputana, and even from places where we have received no reports, messages of sympathy and co-operation have come to us during the last few days by letters or telegrams. Of course, as might be expected, action has provoked in some quarters a reaction, and orthodox communities, which hitherto treated the matter with indifference, have been stirred up to throw off their lethargy, and put forth their strength of numbers by way of protest against the coming change. This has been notably the case at Delhi and in my part of the country, as also in Madras. I welcome this orthodox struggle to discountenance the efforts of what they are pleased to style the so-called reformers, because it brings forcibly to the minds of many thousands of people, whom we could not otherwise reach, the urgent necessity of setting our house in order. Even the Delhi Pundits found it necessary to yield to the spirit of the times by taking up the cry of the reformers against extravagant expenditure on marriage and other occasions. The Shastris and reactionists on our side of the country, as also on the Madras side, found it necessary to admit

the existence of the evil, though they would have nothing to do with the suggestions for reforming the admittedly evil customs. The chief bone of contention was the question of the Age of Consent, in regard to which our views were formulated in the first Resolution adopted at the last Conference. The controversy has raged rather furiously round this central point. Memorials to the Government of India were sent from various parts of the country,—Sind, Gujarath, Bombay, Decan, Madras, Mangalore and Meerat, and as a consequence counter-memorials were also sent up by the Benares and Delhi Pandits, and the Bombay, Poona and Madras reactionists. There is no dispute about the main question. All are agreed that the evil of premature connections is one which should be strongly put down. Those who oppose the proposals do so chiefly on the ground of the abuse of power by the police. This is however a question of procedure, and does not affect the amendment of the substantive penal law. All reasonable apprehensions can easily be set at rest by enacting certain provisions by which the offence can be made a non-cognizable one, and permitting bail in cases where the offence does not result in serious crimes. It can, therefore, no longer be said with justice that there is any serious difference of opinion on this point. The matter is now in the hands of Government, and it is an open secret that the legislature will before long take up this question on the unanimous recommendation of the executive Government. The point chiefly to be considered at this stage is the exact limit of age, which should be adopted. Outside the Hindu community, the feeling is that 12 years as recommended by the last Conference is too low a limit. The lady Doctors and the Public Health Society of this place have suggested a higher limit. On our side of the country, 1,600 Hindu ladies have taken the same view in a memorial addressed by them to Her Majesty the Queen-Empress. As the subject is now engaging the consideration of Government, we deemed it necessary to refrain from including it in the business of this year, which you will see, from the draft Resolutions placed in your hands, includes no proposal for legislative interference, except in one small matter about which, however, I am glad to

see from the reports that have come to hand, there is not much difference of opinion. I refer to the proposed abolition of civil imprisonment in the case of married women in execution of restitution decrees.

I agree with my friend Mr. Manmohan Ghose in the view that social reform is eminently a question in which we must work for ourselves, and by ourselves, but there is one limitation to this freedom, *viz.*, that where, as in the case of the Age of Consent, as also in respect of the execution of restitution decrees and the disabilities of married widows, the law itself has laid down certain undesirable restrictions, a change in the law can alone remove the evil complained of. Mr. Manmohan Ghose is too good a lawyer not to be aware of this limitation. In regard to all other matters, the present programme of the Conference is to work out the changes proposed by organising and educating public opinion. On the question of infant and ill-assorted marriages, for instance, the various Social Reform Associations have proceeded on the principle of self-help. Their members pledge themselves to advocate and adopt certain changes. The pledge movement started in Poona has taken root, and has been adopted by Berar friends, as also by reformers in the N.-W. Provinces and Oudh and Beluchistan. In Rajputana, State agency is made available by its peculiar constitution. In Sind and Gujarath, friends have advanced a step further and have registered their Associations which are working satisfactorily. The general feeling on this subject appears to be that the marriageable age should be fixed for the present at the limit of puberty, that is, 12 years in the case of girls and 18 in the case of boys. In Rajputana they have gone further. In Sind and Gujarath and Berar the limits are lower. In respect of ill-assorted marriages, the feeling seems to be that more than 30 years' difference should not exist between the ages of man and wife. The draft Resolutions have been framed on these lines, and as they represent the general view it may be hoped that there will be no room for much difference of opinion. In regard to widow-marriages there were celebrated during the last year, a re-marriage among the Kayasthas in Panjab, one in Central Provinces, and three on

the Bombay side. About the excommunication of persons who undertake sea-voyages, public opinion is growing more favourable. The Indian Delegates, who returned about the middle of the year, were admitted back into their communities without much difficulty. The difficulties, however, are not altogether imaginary, as the records of the Jain defamation case in this city amply testify. A resolution therefore has been drafted on this subject to give expression to the wish of the Conference that a better feeling in regard to the admission of such persons by their castes should be created all over the country. You will thus see, gentlemen, that a good deal of work and very hopeful work, has been accomplished all along the line. The Conference, where we have gathered, brings all this work to a focus, and this appears to me to be its chief value. It strengthens the hands of local societies, it formulates the methods, and it regulates the aspirations of those who are working earnestly in this cause. It thus makes us feel for the first time in our history, not only that we are politically a united nation, but that our social arrangements are also being subjected to the inspiring influences of the national spirit. (*Loud cheers.*)

The Fifth Social Conference—Nagpur—1891.

Rao Bahadur M. G. Ranade said (in moving the first resolution).—

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—I have been asked to move the first resolution for the consideration of the meeting. The resolution runs thus :—

“That in the opinion of this Conference the recent decision of the Madras High Court, affirming the validity of the custom of exacting money in consideration of the gift of girls in marriage, not only conflicts with the decision of the High Courts of Bombay and Calcutta, but is also condemned by express texts of Hindu law, and by the best orthodox sentiment of the country. The Conference accordingly recommends all Social Reform Associations to join together in one effort to denounce this practice, and ensure that monies

received by the father or guardian of the girl, shall be held as a trust in the interest of the girl, and the trust duly enforced."

The Madras decision referred to is reported in the Indian Law Report, 13 Mad. 83.—*Viswanathan versus Saminathan*. The parties in this suit were Brahmins, and the Plaintiff brought his suit on a bond for Rs. 200 passed by the Defendant in consideration of Plaintiff's giving his daughter in marriage to the Defendant's nephew. The Defendant pleaded that the consideration was illegal. The Sub-Judge of Kumbhakonum held that the consideration was not illegal, and allowed the claim. The matter came before the High Court. Justices Parker and Wilkinson held that Plaintiff's claim was maintainable, and was not against public policy or Hindu Law. They admitted that such contracts were illegal in England, but under the impression that the moral consciousness of the people in this country was not opposed to the practice, they decided that the consideration could not be regarded as immoral or against public policy. The decisions of the Bombay High Court in *Dularai versus Vallabdas Pragji* reported in the Indian Law Report, 13 Bombay, 126 and of the Calcutta High Court in *Ramchand Sen versus Audaits Sen* *Id*, 10 Calcutta, 1054, were referred to and disapproved for reasons stated in the Judgment.

The High Courts being thus in conflict with one another, it becomes necessary in this Social Conference to give an expression to the general feeling, that not merely the sympathies, but the convictions of the public generally and not of reformers only, are opposed to the view taken by the Madras High Court. In the first instance the Madras High Court appears to have overlooked the fact that the parties before them were Brahmins, and that the *Asur* form of marriage was condemned for the Brahmin caste. Out of the eight forms of marriage, the first four are commended for Brahmins, namely, the *Brahma*, *Daira*, *Arsha*, and *Prajapatya*: and the *Asur* form is only for *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* (*Manu*, ch. 3, verse 24). Secondly, the Judges relied upon the commentator *Siromani* of Southern India, who identified the *Asur* with the *Arsha* form of marriage. The commentator may have been right in his view to the extent of

seeking to establish some resemblance between the two forms, but he could never have intended that the *Asur* form was as commendable as *Arsh* for the Brahmins.

The money consideration in this case cannot, under any circumstances, fall within the gift of a cow or two permitted in the *Arsh* form of marriage. In ch. 3, verse 53, Manu goes so far as to expressly controvert the position that the gift in the *Arsh* form was दूतक, and lays down that whether the gift is small or great, it is equally a sale of the girl, and constitutes an offence described as the sale of one's own children.

There is, therefore, no Shastraic basis for the view taken by the Madras Court, and this is admitted by the Judges themselves. They, however, thought that the custom was widely prevalent, and was not opposed to the moral consciousness of the people. We can fairly join issue on both these points, and contend that the custom is not widely prevalent in the higher castes, and that in all castes, it is opposed to the moral feelings of the people. Mr. Justice Scott, in his judgment, has expressly observed that the *Asur* form of marriage is only legal among the lower castes; and that in this respect though the custom in the country may be defective, that is no reason why an additional evil should be engrafted upon the existing usage. It is immoral and against public policy even in the present state of matrimonial relations in India. This view of Justice Scott was concurred in by Justice Jardine. The Chief Justice Garth, in the Calcutta case also held that such contracts were void and illegal in this country, and were incapable of being enforced by the rules of equity and good conscience. The fact that marriages of girls take place during infancy is not a sufficient reason for encouraging parents and guardians to abuse their authority over their infant charges, by deriving money advantage from disposing of their wards. They were bound as parents to exercise their choice, not for their own advantage, but for the interest of the minor girls.

It was, indeed, contended in the Madras case that the parents had to maintain the minor, and might claim to be reimbursed the expenses incurred by them. Such an argument may hold good in other countries, but in this country, the

daty of the parent to support his child is not limited by such mercenary considerations.

The Madras Judges are themselves prepared to invalidate such contracts, where the girl is given in marriage to old and debauched men, but this distinction saps at the root of the principle involved. Who is to decide upon the qualifications of the old and debauched men? Where is the limit to be drawn? The better course seems to be to follow the rulings of the Calcutta and Bombay High Courts. Of course in this conflict between the High Courts, the Legislature can alone remove the evil by express law. It has, in Section 23 of the Contract Act, laid down the principle, and all that has to be done is to make the meaning more clear by an addition, declaring that all payments, received by the girl's father or by the guardian in consideration of the girl's marriage, are void and illegal.

Till this is effected, the next best course is to declare that all such payments are made in the interest of the girl, and that the parent or the guardian is only a trustee of the girl. Manu lays down (in ch. 3, verse 54) that if the payment is made to the girl, there is no objection, and he strictly prohibits the relations of the girl from seizing the girl's wealth (ch. 3, verse 52). It is on this account that the resolution is worded in the way proposed.

There are some who think that payments made to the bridegroom's father should be brought under the same category. In some castes these payments also are exacted from mercenary motives. There is, however, a difficulty in the way, caused by the fact that the approved forms of marriages, *Brahma* and *Daiya*, contemplate gifts of money, &c., to complete the gift of the girl. The circumstances of the two cases are not identical, and it will take some time to make people see any inconsistency in following the old law. We have, therefore, confined the resolution to the circumstances of the case, in which the custom is not widely prevalent, (and is certainly opposed to the moral consciousness of the people, and is, moreover, in conflict with express texts. I hope I have made my meaning clear to every body present, and that you will approve the proposition, which I have the honor now to move.

The Hon'ble Rao Bahadur M. G. Ranade delivered an address at the Hislop College, explaining the objects and necessity of the Social Conference, and the methods of its operations. Rao Bahadur V. M. Bhide of Poona was in the chair. Mr. Ranade said that he was not uttering words of mere common-place courtesy often used on such occasions, when he said that the cordial reception given to him and his friends, strangers as they were, by the people of Nagpur, was exceedingly kind of them. When he left the Western coast, with its hill-forts and arid plains, which were at present threatened with scarcity, and when he first saw the fertile parts on this side, he could conceive the satisfaction his ancestors must have felt in settling here, in this land of plenty, verdure, and happiness. Those days are gone. The wounds then caused have been healed. The people have reconciled themselves to the effects of the British conquest. The old invasions from the West have ceased. But what is this new invasion, you will ask,—this new invasion which also comes from the West, and seeks to capture the East? There is first the Congress invasion,—you must surely have reconciled yourself to it. Its triumphal arch has been raised. The camp is ready; and all preparations are ripe for a mighty siege. The sieging operations will commence from to-morrow, and you will all be busy contributing your share in them. The Conference movement represented a more humble invasion, there are no battlements, no triumphal arches, no preparations for war. Before commencing its operations, as the spokesman of the Conference, he was desirous of having a parley with those that had assembled there, and of seeking their earnest co-operation in the work it had undertaken. The Congress invasion was an invasion which needed no advocate to plead its cause before them, as it had already secured their sympathies. His mission needed an advocate, for it was a delicate task,—this work of social reform. The work of the Conference concerned our family interests, it touched the hearts of the people, and if not wisely carried on, it was sure to arouse opposition. His party could not adopt the rôle of dictatorship, and they never thought of adopting it. Mr. Ranade then went into the

history and constitution of the Social Conference, the importance of which, he said, could be easily understood by his saying that it sought to purify and improve their character as citizens and as heads of families. There were at present scattered over this large country a number of associations, which aimed at reforming the social institutions of the people, some three of them were registered under the Company's Act or under the Religious and Charitable Societies' Act; there were some thirty others which satisfied themselves with mere pledges. There was an equal number of those who did not take any pledges, but had been striving to agitate for reform. All of these worked for a common purpose, *viz.*, the amelioration of the social condition of the people. But each of these worked independently. And for each of these to carry on correspondence directly with the other associations, and seek to benefit by their experience, was a cumbrous process. To make this process easier and more effective, the Social Conference was brought into being. Each Reform Association required the co-operation of the rest, and each sought the benefit of the experience of others which were working in the same direction. This want the Social Conference supplied, for at the Conference, views were exchanged, experience was communicated, varied information was focussed, and additional light was thrown each year on many subjects, and a unity of purpose was secured in the work of the different associations. The Conference, he repeated, was not a dictatorial body commissioned to command subordinate associations, but it was a gathering where the representatives from different parts met to inform each other and help each other in the work of practical reform.

In this social problem more importance was paid to the methods of reform proposed than in the agitation for political reform, and rightly. For there was such a variety of communities amongst them that what suited the aspiration of one may not fit in with the needs of the other, what was desired by one was not necessary for the purposes of others. He would illustrate his remarks by taking the marriage question. There were people, in remote India (about many lakhs of them known as *Hindus*) whose custom and law allowed one wife for five

brothers,—a custom which would be considered a sin, if not a crime, by us on this side, but which passed there as a commonplace occurrence. Again, in other parts lower South, there are people who do not attach any sacred character, as we do here, to the marriage tie. For the purposes of religious law or civil law or any law, there is neither husband nor wife in Malabar. This custom prevails not in a small portion of this country, but in a populous region which measures 400 miles in length and 30 to 40 miles in breadth. The learned lecturer said that a friend of his who was present here to-day, and who was trying to make marriage a permanent life-long obligation there, was denounced by these people as aiming at a dreadful revolution. In the East, there was a class very prominent and much respected, among whom one man (whether he be a young or an old man) could be the husband of any number of girls, irrespective of age. Such are the various customs obtaining in different parts of the country, and what he said of the marriage custom applied equally to other customs. Hence there is the difficulty of prescribing one method of reform for all India. Necessarily the methods must be different for different communities, and they must be so framed that the old continuity of each with its past history may not be broken up. The Conference proposes some common methods, and seeks to animate the workers with a righteous purpose common to all. Happily all the disputes in this Social Reform agitation related to the question of the methods to be pursued. The existence of the evil was admitted by reasonable men of all parties, and the necessity for reform was recognized everywhere by those who gave thought to the subject. The dispute was how shall they do it? In studying the history of their country during the past 2,000 years, they would find illustrations of various methods of reform. There were some who said that they should preach reform, but that they should in practice only drift into reform, which means that we should close our eyes, shut our mouths, tie down our hands and feet, and wait and wait till the train of events transferred us from one stage to another. Things should be allowed to take their own course. There was a fallacy lying at the root of this whole view which was so apparent that it

was not necessary for him to spend many words to expose it. When one drifts into reform, he is not reformed, he remains exactly as he was. The fastest railway train does not give exercise to our body, if we do not ourselves move. Some there were who thought that when they were asked to lend their support to reform, there was some objective reality outside themselves that they had to deal with. There was no such thing. The thing to be reformed was their own self, heart and head and soul, their own prejudices were to be removed, their superstitions to be eradicated, their courage to be strengthened, their weaknesses to be conquered, in fact their character to be formed again so as to suit the times, so as to fit with the spirit of the age. Mr. Ranade appealed to each of his hearers if his conscience did not tell him that there was something lacking in him to make him what he desired to be. And if so what were the methods which could supply what was wanting in them? Mr. Ranade then named four methods of making a conscious effort to reform. The first method was what he could approximately describe as the method of tradition, that is to say, of basing reform on the old texts. The weapon of the school of tradition was interpretation, in other words, taking the old texts as the basis, and to interpret them so as to suit the new requirements of the times. This was the method followed by Dr. Bhandarkar recently; and the same was the method of the venerable founder of the Arya Samaj—Pandit Dayanand Saraswati—who believed that, in dealing with the masses, it would not do to follow any other method than that of taking the old texts, and putting new interpretation on them, so as to make all feel that there was an effort made to preserve the old continuity, and that there was no attempt at innovation, which, in the eyes of the ignorant, always meant revolution. This is the method the Social Conference follows in connection with the question of widow-remarriage. The next method was that of appealing to the conscience of the people. The first method, in the opinion of a good many people, leads to disputations, and therefore they advocate the method of appealing directly to their sense of right and wrong, good and bad, sinful and virtuous. The weapon of this school of reformers is to seek to bind men by

their own pledge or promise. The third method sought to enforce reform by means of penalties,—imposed either by the caste or by the State, in either of which case it is equally a constraint imposed by the wise upon the ignorant in their common interest. It has its merits as well as demerits, but it must be advocated only in those cases in which the first two have no chance of success, for it is a coercive method, which should not be resorted to, until other ways have been tried. The fourth method is that of dividing from the rest, and forming a new camp, and shifting for ourselves. This has its merits too, but many more demerits, the chief among which latter is the breaking of continuity. All lead to the same goal, and excepting the fourth one, all the three have been accepted by the Conference. The Conference is not, as has been misrepresented, a body aiming at carrying out reform by mere legislation. This is as inaccurate a description of it as could possibly be given. Legislation steps in only when the other methods fail. He would refer as an illustration to the practice of the sale of girls in marriage. The Madras High Court has given its support to it. The Bombay and Bengal High Courts have pronounced their opinion against it. In such a case comes the need of legislation. Mr. Ranade then exhorted his audience to lend their support and their active support to the cause of Social Reform. The Conference and the Congress, he said, were so closely united that they could not help the one and discountenance the other; they were two sisters,—the Congress and the Conference; and they must let them both go hand-in-hand, if they wished to make real progress. The cause of the Conference was the cause of the well-being of the people, even as the cause of the Congress was the cause of their country's progress.

The Sixth Social Conference—Allahabad—1892.

At a public meeting held on the 25th December, under the presidency of the Hon'ble Rai Bahadur Ram Kali Chaudhuri, Rao Bahadur M. G. Ranade gave an address on the subject of "Social Evolution." He said:—Mr. President and Gentles:

men, once more we meet in this busy week of December, this time in your historical and holy city, to take stock of our year's achievements, to count our losses and gains, and to pledge ourselves to help each other in the unceasing struggle to better our condition. When from our distant provinces we start on these annual pilgrimages, we are often twitted for our pains by those who take credit to themselves for superior wisdom, and the question is often asked, what mad freak lays hold of so many earnest minds in the country, which leads them to pursue this mirage of national elevation, which recedes further from our grasp the more eagerly we run after it. This same irreverent doubt also weighs down some among our own body in our weak moments, and it seems to me very necessary, before we enter upon more serious work, to purify ourselves by the discipline of a rigorous course of self-examination for the struggle. Nothing strikes our critics both European and Native, as more manifestly absurd than this our faith that these annual gatherings will prove helpful in attaining the objects we seek. Progress in the art of self-Government, both in its national and individual bearings, it is urged by some of our native friends, can never be secured by these half-confused gatherings of races and creeds and interests, and the jumble of tongues, and the tame imitation of methods not our own. Our European critics are more wise in their generation, and some of the wisest among them have demonstrated to their own satisfaction that all Oriental races have had their day, and that nothing is now left to them but to vegetate and die, and make way for their betters. Political elevation, and social emancipation, religious or spiritual enlightenment,—these gifts have not been, and will never be, according to their philosophers, vouchsafed any more to the Indian races. If these black forebodings were really inspired prophecies, our outlook would be dark indeed. Happily for us these prophecies are not true, and what is more, it is in our power to falsify them. History does not countenance them, and the teachings of science are not in their favour. No earnest prayer, no self-denying aspiration, no sincere battling with falsehood and ignorance, can ever under God's Providence, end in failure.

The methods may have to be changed, but the struggle is ever the same, and none need despair. It is not the gains that you make outside of you, it is not what you have, but what you yourselves become, that makes or mars a man's or a nation's destiny. Particular reforms may be out of our reach, or may not be for our advantage but the earnest desire for reform, and sincere efforts of self-sacrifice directed towards their attainment cannot but elevate us above our weaknesses, and strengthen our strong points, and plant the banner of union in hearts torn with centuries of strife and disunion. This is the moral interest of the struggle, and those who cannot appreciate this invaluable privilege of fighting in the ranks in such a struggle are,—what shall I call them—superior persons living in a Paradise of their own. If indeed history and science both declared against us, we might find it necessary to pause. But the history of this great country is but a fairy tale, if it has not illustrated how each invasion from abroad has tended to serve as a discipline of the chosen race, and led to the gradual development of the nation to a higher ideal if not of actual facts, at least of potential capabilities. The nation has never been depressed beyond hope of recovery, but after a temporary submerging under the floods of foreign influences, has reared up its head—absorbing all that is best in the alien civilisation and polity and religions. The testimony of science points in the same direction. If the environments determine the growth, a change in the environments must bring about a change in the political and social organism. There is thus no cause for despair if we only remember one great lesson of history and science, namely, that no development of the body politic is possible, unless the new heat animates all our powers, and gives life and warmth to all our activities.

When we meet at these annual gatherings to seek our political elevation, we must not lose sight of the fact that our social emancipation should go along with it, if we desire to be an individual consistent whole, with a just balance of power in all our movements. In other words, the social evolution must take place side by side, if it should not precede the political growth that we desire to achieve. What is it, some

of you will ask, that you require of us to do in this work of internal freedom? I would reply, the evolution that we should seek is a change from constraint to freedom—constraint imposed by our own weaker nature over the freedom of our higher powers. It is a change from credulity to faith, from credulity which behoves without grounds to faith which builds itself upon a firm foundation. Our station in life, our duties, and our limits of action are certainly fixed for most of us by circumstances over which we have no control, but there is still a large margin left for freedom of action. We voluntarily contract that margin, and bind ourselves by fetters, and glory in them as the Mahomedan fakir in Bombay, who thinks himself specially favoured because he bears heavy iron chains. The change which we should all seek is thus a change from constraint to freedom, from credulity to faith, from status to contract, from authority to reason, from unorganised to organised life, from bigotry to toleration, from blind fatalism to a sense of human dignity. This is what I understand by social evolution, both for individuals and societies in this country. Even if we accept the evolution view to be correct, it should not be forgotten that the environments which surround us have changed, and are not the same that they were a hundred years ago. Peace and order reign throughout the land instead of the old disturbances which made the preservation of life one's chief care. Instead of our country being a sealed book, we are now a part of the community of nations, feeling joy and sorrow in their prosperity or distress. In our own country distance and local barriers which so long separated us have been removed, and we are made more mobile and coherent than we ever were before. These are only physical changes. More important still is the discipline afforded us by the example and teaching of the most gifted and free nation in the world, whose rule guarantees to us a long continuance of these favourable conditions. The reign of law is supreme. Human skill and human sympathies are busy at work to correct all our failings, and it cannot well be that all this should have happened as a mere accident in human story. The European philosophers themselves admit that wholesale migration and infusion of new blood can alone revive

the old *effete* Oriental races. I contend that the changed order of things described above are the new environments in which, without change of place, we have been forced to migrate, they infuse new blood into our veins, and they bring down from heaven the spiritual fire which has strength enough to purge us of our grosser selves, if we only will do our duty. On their own theory, therefore, there is no cause for the despair which European thinkers feel. The process of growth is always slow, where it has to be a sure growth. The best natures naturally want to shorten this long process in their desire to achieve the work of a century in a decade. This temptation has to be resisted, and in this respect the teachings of the evolution doctrine have great force, because they teach that growth is structural and organic, and must take slow effect in all parts of the organism, and cannot neglect any, and favour the rest. There are those amongst us who think that, in this connection the work of the reformer is confined only to a brave resolve to break with the past, and do what our individual reason suggests as proper and fit. The power of long-formed habits and tendencies is however ignored in this view of the matter. "The true reformer has not to write upon a clean slate. His work is more often to complete the half-written sentence. He has to produce the ideal out of the actual, and by the help of the actual." We have one continuous stream of life flowing past us, and "we must accept as valid the acts which were noted in the past, and on the principles of the past," and seek to turn the stream with a gentle bend here, and a gentle bend there, to fructify the land; we cannot afford to dam it up altogether, or force it into a new channel. It is this circumstance which constitutes the moral interest of the struggle, and the advice so frequently given—that we have only to shake our bonds free and they will fall off themselves,—is one which matured and larger experience seldom supports. We cannot break with the past altogether; with our past we should not break altogether, for it is a rich inheritance, and we have no reason to be ashamed of it. The society to which we belong has shown wonderful elasticity in the past, and there is no reason for apprehending that it has ceased to be tractable

and patient and persistent in action. While respecting the past, we must ever seek to correct the parasitical growths that have encrusted it, and sucked the life out of it. This is, at least, the spirit in which the societies and associations which are represented at the Social Conference seek to work. They seek no change for its own sake, or because it is fashionable elsewhere. They seek their inspiration in the best traditions of our own past, and adjust the relations of the past with the present in a spirit of mutual forbearance. The Shastras they revere, but they respect the spirit more than the letter of the old law. The road is difficult and beset with dangers, but as it is the only sure road, there is no choice. Looked at in this spirit, we may now review the work of the past year, and although, as in the political sphere of our activity, we have both gained and lost ground, there is, on the whole, no cause for thinking that we have wasted our opportunities during the year that is about to close. Being in touch with friends in all parts of the country, I can speak with some authority, and I am glad to testify to the fact that it cannot be laid at the door of the different local Associations that they have been idle all the year round. In the Bengal Presidency an agitation initiated by Kumar Bonoy Krishna Bahadur, and supported by such men as Sir Romesh Chandra Mitra and Pundit Mahesh Chandra and Babu Surendra Nath Bannerjee, has been carried on in the matter of removing hindrances in the way of the free admission of men who go to foreign countries. Vyavasthas numerously signed by Pundits and others, have advanced the solution of that question to a sensible extent. In the N.-W. Provinces and Oudh, the Kayastha Associations and their Conference have done a great deal for that community in the way of checking intemperance and extravagance, and promoting education. In the Panjab, the healthy activity of the local Arya Samajas has given to that body a position of great usefulness in the education and training of the community of the country. Two re-marrriages, one in high life and the other in consonance with the old practices, have taken place with the apparent approval of many orthodox leaders. Lower down in Rajputana the Walerkrit Rajputra Sabha has developed its

organization, and enforced its rules with greater success than before, and the movement is now spreading among other classes of the community. The leading Native States are lending their support to the cause of reform officially. In Guzerath in our own Presidency, His Highness the Maharajah Gaikwar has been appealed to for help by the Mahajans of thirty leading sub-castes to help them in raising the limit of marriageable age, and checking extravagance. In the British territory in the same province, the Kunbi population has been similarly profiting by the operation of the rules framed under the Infanticide Acts. In the rest of the Presidency, the Marwadi Jains at Nasik and the Kayastha Prabhus have held Conferences for the promotion of reform in their own community. In Bombay a re-marriage was celebrated the other day which was also an inter-marriage. In Poona, owing to local distractions, much has not been done, but the Poona Association has received several more pledges, and some of the highest families in the city have arranged mutual marriage alliances, the actual celebration of marriage being postponed till the girls arrive at puberty. Even the local distraction had a higher moral interest than what people, looking superficially, would be prepared to admit. As the question is, however, still undecided, it would be premature to prophesy the final results. But there are evident signs that the struggle has commenced in earnest, and it will end in a compromise creditable to both the parties. In Mysore His Highness the Maharajah's Government is prepared to undertake legislation in respect of marriage reform, and has been good enough to show His Highness's appreciation of the work of the Conference by deputing a learned Shastri of his Court to help us in our deliberations. In Malabar the proposed legislation of marriage among Nairs has made some progress. In the Madras Presidency, three re-marriages took place, one of them being an inter-marriage. A new association of earnest workers has also been formed there, which represents the young Madras party, and promises the happiest results. Two of our most prominent workers undertook missionary tours in the Punjab, in the Central Provinces and in the Berars, at great self-sacrifice. In the Central Provinces, a Native

Christian was taken back into his caste by the leading Pandits of Jubbulpore. Taking things as they are, this is not, I hope, a very unsatisfactory account of the year's work, and it shows that the conscience of the country is touched in all great centres, and with better organization, greater courage of conviction, and more faith in Providence, we may hope that this process of social regeneration or evolution, if you like so to call it, will continue to grow in strength and in power. To help that growth, by bringing all workers together once a year to exchange views and sympathies, is the object with which we meet here. Last time the people of Allahabad gladly welcomed our efforts, and we feel quite sure of a similar welcome on this occasion.

The Seventh Social Conference—Lahore—1893.

Speaking on Social Reform, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade said—MR. CHAIRMAN AND GENTLEMEN,—This is not the first time that I have come to visit this beautiful city of yours. Nearly 20 years ago I first visited Lahore, and saw the sights and made myself acquainted with the notables of the city. One generation has passed away since then, and many of my old acquaintances have departed, and their place has been taken up by others who were then perhaps attending your schools and colleges. During these 20 years, a spiritual wave has swept over your province, and I see signs and indications which satisfy me that you have been all the better for the operation of this most elevating influence. I visited this place again 7 years ago; but my visit then was only for a short time, and now you find me here before you in your midst on the occasion of this great gathering of the Indian nations, which has been held annually for the past nine years in the great capitals of the British Indian Empire. I come this time in connection with a mission of peace, which the General Secretary of the Conference, Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao has been pleased to assign to me, namely, to bespeak your favourable attention to the consideration of matters which more intimately concern the true welfare of the great Empire to which we all belong

than many others with the noise of which the air is singing all about us here. Perhaps few of you have been privileged to see Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao. He is the father and the patriarch of this movement. The respect due to age and rank and education is sanctified in his case by the charm of a highly spiritual life, a temper so sweet, a heart so warm and sympathetic, that I am not exaggerating when I say that many of you might well undertake a pilgrimage all the way to Madras to see him once in your life. By reason of old age and infirmities he has been unable to come over here, and has deputed me to deliver to you this message of peace, and to seek your co-operation in the great work of social reform, which has a claim upon your attention as legitimate as the more stirring political aspirations which for the time engage your attention. This reminds me of a story which I happened some months ago to read in a biography of the prophet of Arabia. You all know that Mahomed's first wife Khadja was older than himself, and that in later life when he became a power in Arabia, he took a second and a younger wife named Ayesha. This younger wife once asked the old prophet the reason why he did not give all his heart to the wife of his choice, so beautiful and so young, who had brought him accession of power and wealth, and why he still shared that affection with one who was old and decayed. Mahomed gave a reply which has a moral true for all eternity. He said to his young wife that though he loved her, he could not well give up his whole affection to her, for his old wife's claims on his love were stronger and far more legitimate than any that she could plead. Khadija had accepted him when he was poor and unknown, she had tended him, advised him, and helped him in his cares and anxieties, and her place could not be filled by any woman however lovely, whom he chose for her charm of age and beauty.

This beautiful little story has a moral, the significance of which we should not forget on occasions like this. Those who know me know full well that I should be the last person to condemn the political aspirations that have been created in our minds as the result of British rule and liberal education. They

represent a department of human activity, to the claims of which the people of this country have been long indifferent. No man can feel the full dignity of human existence, who is dead to the duties of the citizenship of a great empire. At the same time this new love, that has sprung up in us, ought not to dry up the fountains of our affection for the old claimant, who accepted us when we were poor and helpless, without whose anxious care and watchfulness we can never hope to be in a fit condition to undertake the higher responsibilities that we seek to deserve. It was a sense of this necessity of developing with equal care the whole of our being, both in its family and social relations, as also in its relation to the body politic, that impelled Dewan Bahadur and myself as his helpmate to attend these gatherings ever since their inception in Bombay in 1885. The Congress leaders have also, after some preliminary difficulties, recognized the fact that this old claimant upon our affections could not be entirely ignored, and have granted us permission to carry on in their camp our propaganda on our own responsibility. I hope these introductory observations will give you an insight into the nature of the message that I have been deputed here to communicate to you, and it is this mission that brings me and others of my friends to this great distance, at this by no means to us at least agreeable season of the year. About 135 years ago my ancestors came to your parts of the country for a brief interval, but then their mission was different. Our hands were at each other's throats then. The *Pax Britannica* has now released those hands for other and nobler work. We now meet as brothers and friends. You have treated us as your welcome guests, and we meet here to discuss, in a language that we all understand and with complete freedom, the many evils that we all more or less suffer, and which are so deep-rooted in the very vitals of our family and social system. Do I exaggerate in any way the character of this disorder in our system of family life? I am not given to exaggeration, and the subject is too serious to admit of such light treatment. I appeal to every one of the many hundreds of the men before me,—I appeal to them most solemnly,—I ask them to lay their hands on their hearts, and stand up before

this meeting and say, if any one can muster courage to say it,—that our family and social arrangements have not been out of joint for centuries together? Are we or are we not conscious that many of us, under the narcotic influence of custom and usage, too often violate the feelings of our common human nature and our sense of right and wrong, stunt the growth of our higher life, and embitter the existence of many of those who depend on us, our wives and children, our brothers and sons, our relatives and friends? Are we prepared to point out any single hour of the day when we do not unconsciously commit injustice of a sort by the side of which municipal injustice is nothing, when we do not unconsciously sanction iniquities by the side of which the most oppressive tyrant's rule is mercy itself? We resent the insult given by the oppressor. We protest against the unjust judge. Here however we are judge and jury and prosecutor and accused ourselves, and we are sometimes consciously and more often unconsciously committed to a course of conduct, which makes tyrants and slaves of us all and, sapping the strength of our resolution, drags us down to our fall—to be the laughing stock of the whole world. Till we set these matters right, it is almost hopeless to expect that we can have that manliness of character, that sense of our rights and responsibilities without which political and municipal freedom is hard to achieve and impossible to preserve.

I want you to recognise this fact. I have no authority to suggest to you remedies. These will suggest themselves to you. The fetters of the mind once realized as fetters, will drop off themselves. They cease to be fetters, and even become a discipline for a better existence. It may take years and generations to achieve this result. We may all have to die and become manure for the seeds of life in future generations. But once we enter upon the right path, the torch of light blazing inside us, which we only seek to darken with our artificial rushlights, will show to those who come after us the way to heaven. The way to heaven is a narrow path, and one has to tread upon sharp-edged instruments, carefully balancing the weak limbs and spirits. The way to

hell is, as you all know, a road well paved with good intentions, and we have only to close our eyes and shut our ears, to be listless and indifferent, lead a butterfly existence, and die intellectually and spiritually. We have pursued that way too long, and it is time now that we should take due care to set our houses in order, as no mere whitewashing and no plastering would remove these hidden sources of our weaknesses. The whole existence must be renovated. The baptism of fire and not of water must be gone through by those who seek a renovation of heart such as this.

Perhaps some of you might think, and in this favoured land of yours you have good reason to think, that things are not so bad as they seem. That is also my own hope; and this faith in us alone makes us feel that if we all pull strongly and heartily, we may yet achieve our regeneration. I profess implicit faith in two articles of my creed. This country of ours is the true land of promise. This race of ours is the chosen race. It was not for nothing that God has showered His choicest blessings on this ancient land of Aryavarta. We can see His hand in history. Above all other countries we inherit a civilization and a religious and social polity which has been allowed to work their own free development on the big theatre of time. There has been no revolution, and yet the old condition of things has been tending to reform itself by the slow process of assimilation. The great religions of the world took their birth here, and now they meet again as brothers prepared to welcome a higher dispensation, which will unite all and vivify all. India alone, among all the countries of the world, has been so favoured, and we may derive much strength of inward hope from such a contemplation. Change for the better by slow absorption—assimilation not by sudden conversion and revolution—this has been the characteristic feature of our past history. We have outlived Buddhism, and we conquered it by imbibing its excellences and rejecting its errors. We have outlived Mahomedan repression, and have conquered it by being the better for the hardy discipline in the suffering we went through under its domination. The old world looseness of the relations of married life and of affiliation of sons has been

purged from us. The old world slavery of the Sudra millions has been quietly abandoned, the erstwhile Sudra classes have been elevated into Vaishyas, our Brahmins have become warriors and statesmen, Kshatrias have become philosophers and guides, and our Vaishyas have become our prophets and saints. The old world fetichism has given place to idolatry. The old world polytheism has given place to a full recognition by the humblest of our people of the unity of the godhead. Our voracious love of flesh and wine has made room for an ideal of abstinence, charity, and mercy, unknown all over the world. The old sacrifices of man and beast have given place to the holier sacrifices of the passions in us. The patriarchal forms of society have made room for communal organizations all over the country. The sanctity of woman's place—if not as wife, yet as mother, daughter, and sister,—has been realized in a way unknown before or elsewhere.

All these changes have been brought about consciously or unconsciously without any violent struggle, and without breaking up the continuity of the old life. If the guiding hand of God in history has so favoured us hitherto, why should we despair now when we have been brought under influences of a still more elevating kind? The Old Testament testifies to the truth and benignity of the promise of the New Gospel. It is the Gospel which teaches us the supreme duty of unification in place of dissension. It teaches us by example and precept the supreme virtue of organization and self-reliance. It holds before us a brighter ideal of the dignity of the individual soul—the image of the God in us. It seeks to bridge the chasm we otherwise would have been unable to span by our own unaided efforts, and holds us out a hope of a more hopeful future than we have ever enjoyed in the past.

I hope thus to have shown the urgency of the work of social reform and the grounds which justify our hope that honest and united efforts will surely lead to success. Thanks to the Arya Samaj movement in your part of the country and the Brahmo Samaj organizations in other parts of India,—good and noble work has been accomplished within the past genera-

tion or two. I am here however speaking as a representative of no particular Samaj, but as a member of the great Hindu community which peoples this land and forms one-sixth of the human race. The true test of progress must be seen in signs which show that this vast mass of humanity is being vivified by the sacred fire which burns only to purify and elevate. There are those who think that no such signs can be seen, and that our highest duty is to separate ourselves from the decaying mass and look to our own safety. I have battled with this idea for the last 30 years and I shall protest against it, till life is spared and my voice permits me to speak. The Hindu community is not a lestering mass of decay and corruption. It is no doubt conservative to a degree, but that conservatism is its strength. No nation has any destined place in history which changes its creed and its morals, its customs and its social polity, with the facility of fashions. At the same time our conservatism does not prevent the slow absorption of new ideas and the gradual assimilation of new practices. You will naturally expect me to produce my credentials for such a statement. If you will not do it there are others who will, and I shall therefore pass briefly in review the social history of the past year, just reminding you of its leading features in support of my statement (1) First and foremost in the list of such events I would put the action taken by the Mysore Government in the matter of improved Legislation for checking infant and ill-assorted marriages. The matter was taken up at the instance of the Representatives of the Mysore Assembly and after obtaining the consent of the heads of the great Mutts, the subject was discussed formally and, though the numerical majority was against this reform, the minority was respectable and was sure to carry the day sooner or later. (2) The example of Mysore was followed also by the enlightened ruler of Baroda whose help was asked by the leading Mahajans of that city to strengthen their efforts at reform by legal sanction. An infant Marriage Bill and also a Bill to encourage the formation of social improvement societies have been framed and published, and are now under consideration. (3) The Rajput Hitkarini Sabha has as you all know been the pioneer in these reforms,

and its work has been growing in scope and power. The example of the Rajputs is being followed by other castes in that Province. We have thus had three experiments conducted on different methods by the ruling authorities of Rajputana, Gujarath, and Mysore,—all tending towards the same end by different directions. This variety of methods is the best test of the genuineness of the reform movement. (4) While these leading Native States show clear signs of advance, the great Ecclesiastical Heads are not backward. In our part of the country the Shankaracharya of the Sankeswar Mutt has been moved by a petition signed by many thousands of persons to express his disapproval of the practice of the sale of girls in the form of marriage. (5) The Madras High Court three years ago gave some sanction to this illegal practice, and its action was commented upon in a formal Resolution at the Nagpur Conference. Since then it has seen reason to change its views and has disowned the inferences suggested by its previous decisions. (6) Another Shankaracharya at Dwarka in Gujarath has promised his support to a movement for the improvement in the native calendar about which discussion has been going on for a long time in our part of the country. (7) Sringeri Shankaracharya has been distinguishing himself on the same side by removing the hindrances to foreign travel, and advising the Maharajah of Mysore to undertake a trip to Calcutta by sea instead of by land. You will thus see that both the Civil and Religious heads of the community are feeling a new responsibility in this matter, which is surely a sign we cannot but welcome. It shows that the movement is not confined to a heterodox minority, as some people are pleased to call it. (8) In further proof of this progress I would draw your attention to the movement in Malabar for legalizing marriage,—a want which the Nairs had not till now felt. The question is still under the consideration of Government, and thanks to the efforts of my friend the Hon'ble Sankaran Nair, an improved marriage law will sooner or later be passed for that province. (9) Another of my friends the Hon'ble Bhashyam Aiyangar has brought in a Bill for relaxing the rigidity of the joint family system by extending the scope of self-acquired property. The Hon'ble Rash

Behari Ghose has actually carried a small measure of improvement in the ancient law of equal partition in his province. (10) It might be urged that all this was the work of the authorities and that people generally took no part in it. This was, however, not true. The meetings of the Social Conference from year to year would have no value by themselves, if they did not reflect considerable local activity in the same direction. The Kayastha community in the North-West Provinces may well claim the honor of leading this popular movement. In the North-West Provinces and the Punjab, their Sadar Sabhas, provincial and local Sabhas, their journals, their educational Institutions and benevolent Funds, are a feature of this activity too marked to be passed over. Their methods of operation are suited to their needs and they have fought successfully against intemperance and extravagance in their community. (11) Their example has been followed by the Bhargavas of the North-West Provinces, the Jains, the Agarwalas or Vaishyas, the Jats, the Malis in Rajputana, and the Sarins in the Punjab and by many other smaller communities, who meet in Conferences every year to provide for the education of their children, both boys and girls, and frame rules against early marriages and extravagance in expenditure. (12) The tendency of all these local bodies, especially the Kayastha Sabhas, is to break up the smaller divisions and promote inter-marriage and inter-dining among sub-sections of the same caste. The Jaitpur-Mahajans in Kathiawar have expressly proposed this latter object for the consideration of their caste. (13) Following the example of the North West Provinces, the Audicha Brahmins in Gujarath, the Oswal Jains in Nasik and the Kayastha Prabhus in Thana have held similar meetings of their castes for the same objects with equally good results. These caste organizations do not reflect heterodoxy, but are intensely orthodox and yet they feel the necessity of reform and organized efforts. Many of these organizations are not regularly affiliated as societies represented at the Social Conference, but some of them are so affiliated and the Conference is chiefly of value in that it stimulates these local efforts. (14) There are regular circles, in which Associations exist, who send their delegates to the Conference; as for

example I might refer to the Bellary Sanmarga Samaj, the Berar Association, the Dharwar Samilani Sabha, the Madras, Poona and Ahmedabad Associations, the Gaziapur, Meerut, and Ajmere circles, and the Sind Association. Several of these are registered Associations and others are taking steps to register themselves. (15) These Associations while taking up social reform join with it a general movement in favour of purity of conduct, and of purging the community of vicious practices. The Madras Sabha has taken the lead against the dancing girl institution. Many others take pledges against intemperance incontinence and polygamy (16) The Bengal Presidency while it is the centre of the Brahmo Samaj movement, has unaccountably shown a strange tendency towards bigoted conservatism among the masses in a way not known in other parts of India. Even there, however, the sea-voyage movement has been taken up in right earnest, and organized efforts are being directed to facilitate the admission into caste of persons who have crossed the seas. (17) On our side of the country the same movement has found greater favour with orthodox people, and admissions into caste have taken place in Ahmedabad and the Konkan, and Rajkot on terms, which show a great relaxation of the former prejudices. (18) Our Presidency has also been distinguished by the favourable reception it has given to the re-marriage movement. As many as seven re-marriages took place last year in our Province—spontaneous marriages not brought about by organizations. (19) Madras and the Punjab have also shown some activity in this direction. As might be expected these re-marriages frequently involve the breach of strict caste exclusiveness, and they thus serve a double purpose (20) The Arya Samaj has distinguished itself by the re-admission into their community of repentant converts to other religions. (21) In my part of the country among the highest caste Brahmins two virgin girls respectively of 13 and 15 years were married last year, reflecting the highest credit upon their parents. Two or three other girls of the best families have had the Vakdan ceremony performed at the age of 12 or 13, and the marriage ceremony postponed till maturity. (22) The Baroda Government has taken steps to enforce

compulsory education in one part of its territory as an experiment.

I think I have said enough to show that this movement in favour of social reform is neither confined to any one province, nor to any class of the community, but is a general and popular movement all over the country, and embraces all castes. It covers a wide programme, encouraging foreign travel, re-marriage of widows, interfusion of castes, the admission of converts, and checking infant and ill-assorted marriages, polygamy, sale of girls, intemperance, and incontinence. The methods on which it is conducted are varied, but all are animated by a common purpose. There is the method of legislation and of executive action, there is the method of strengthening caste organizations, and the method of appealing to the consciences of men by pledges. There is also the method of interpretation, and public preaching and popular enlightenment are also relied upon as helps. All these methods of work are carried on together with a common aim. There is thus no reason for feeling hopeless about the ultimate success of efforts so directed and so general. There is no other sphere of activity, political or educational or industrial, which seems to have taken such hold of the popular mind. Of course admission is slow, and change is gradual; and ardent and earnest minds desire to see the work accomplished in their own life-time. The method of rebellion, i.e., of separating from the community, naturally suggests itself to such minds. I am constitutionally inclined to put more faith in the other methods mentioned above. They keep up continuity, and prevent orthodoxy from becoming reactionists out of a mere spirit of opposition. There are disadvantages in this slow process of working, but they have to be put up with. This has been the characteristic line of action followed by our ancestors, and there is no reason to think that they were essentially mistaken. The Social Conference meets every year to focus all this information and make it available to all local workers. By this mutual exchange of views, each circle and association is stimulated by example and precept to higher efforts, and these efforts are guided in the proper directions by the experience of those provinces

which are more advanced than others in particular matters. Its resolutions express the ideals to be aimed at. Each local association is recommended to approach these ideals in its own way, and is required to give an account of its work every year. This may seem to many a very small progress, but it is eminently practical. A few advanced reformers from all parts of the country meeting together will not be able to accomplish their purpose, because, as at present situated, they are separated from one another in all relations of life in a way to make joint action impossible. The resolutions are strictly binding upon those who accept them in the same way as the dictates of conscience are binding; and they cannot be made more binding in any other way except in small local organizations. I hope I have made the aims and purposes of the Conference clear to you, and with this explanation I feel confident that you will join with us and promote the work we all have at heart. I thank you heartily for the patient hearing you have given me, and hope that our session here will interest you, and enlist your sympathy in this good cause.

The Eighth Social Conference—Madras—1894.

The subject of the lecture was "The Past History of Social Reform." Mr. Justice Ranade said:—GENTLEMEN,—It is a source of unmixed satisfaction to me and to my friends interested in the cause of social elevation that after seven years' wanderings far and near over all the chief provinces of India, we have been spared to visit the Southern Presidency, which has for a thousand years and more maintained its reputation as the fountain source of all higher spiritual, social and moral development in this great country. Your Dravidian civilization has been always strong enough to retain the stamp of its individuality in the midst of Aryan inundations, which submerged it for a time. You thus possess an advantage over us, hailing from more northern provinces,—which advantage has been utilised by your Alwar saints to an extent unknown to us. By the side of the four Vedas, your Tamil songs of devotion constitute the fifth Veda, which is chanted by your priests

on occasions of festivals and religious celebrations. Twelve hundred years ago, the great Acharya of the Adwait philosophy finally overturned the Atheistic philosophies of the Buddhistic and Jain systems, and established the revived Hindu faith on the comprehensive basis on which it now stands broadened and deepened all round. Two hundred years after has another Acharya founded the Visishtadwait and Dwait philosophies, which have so profoundly modified modern Indian society and subordinated *jnan* and *yoga* finally to the religion of love. These great Acharyas were the fountain sources of all the higher wisdom and spiritual elevation, that have distinguished the religious history of the last 1,000 years and more. Ramanand, who was the teacher of so many divers Vaishnava sects, and Chaitanya, who was the saintly leader of Bengal, and Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, derived their illumination from the philosophers of the South. The successors of Ramanujacharya were the first social reformers. They felt compassion for the hard lot of the poor and disfigured widow, and did their best to carry comfort to her. They also took pity upon the fallen condition of the lower strata of the social system and conceded to them the privilege of admitting them into a community of faith with the higher classes. It was not therefore without reason that the Conference movement was first started in this city, under the auspices of the late Sir T. Madhava Rao. Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunath Rao blessed the child and gave it into our hands, and we now bring it back to you after a lapse of seven years. These seven years have worked a great, and I believe, a hopeful change in the attitude of the community of races, who are represented in this gathering, towards questions of social reform. There are those who think that these seven years have been years of fruitless task, and that the heart of the nation has not been touched by the appeals made to it either from the political or social platforms. Some of you are better judges about the success of the work done on the political platform. I think it was Lord Salisbury, who observed that small maps are very delusive guides, when we have to decide on questions of frontier troubles. As regards social

progress I may say, with equal reason, that short spaces of time are similarly deceptive, and yet I shall venture to ask our despondent, though earnest, self-examining judges to pause and contemplate the change these seven years have witnessed. If the heart of the nation can be traced anywhere in its ancient strongholds, you will certainly see it strongly entrenched in the Native States. If any movement stirs the Native States, which are impervious to your political and industrial propaganda, that is a sign that the heart of the nation has been touched. Now what do we see has been the character of the change effected in these seven years amongst some of our premier States? Seventeen States in Rajputana—Odeypore, Jaipur, Jodhpore, Pratapgad, Sirohi, Tonk, Ulwar, Jeselmere, Kotab, Bundi, Ajmere, Kerowli, Kishengad, Jhallawar, Bansdah, and Dongarpore,—have been members of the *Walterkita Sabha*, whose annual reports show how strong is the organization that has been set up in that province for the curtailment of extravagant expenditure on marriages and funerals and the regulation of child-marriages, not only amongst the Rajputs, but among many other castes allied to and subordinate to them. The ruler of Baroda has similarly exerted himself in the work of social elevation, not so much on his own motion, but at the instance of the Mahajans and Kunbi cultivators in his own and the neighbouring British territory. The Cambay ruler has also followed suit. Lower down and much nearer we have the Mysore Darbar. It has set an example of legislation, which cannot fail in time to be copied elsewhere. After full deliberation and consultation with his Parliament, the Maharajah of Mysore has passed into law this year the first instalment of measures intended to put a stop to marriages of girls below eight years of age and ill-assorted marriages of young girls below fourteen with old men above fifty. The Maharajah of Cashmere has also this year not only presided over a Social Reform Association founded in that State, but has taken steps to discourage the practice of hired crying and beating of the chest as also the custom which in those parts was supposed to prevent the father from seeing the face of his daughter after she was married. The rulers of Baroda, Indore, Kapurthala,

Bhavanagar, Morvi, Gondol, Wadhwan, Cuch Behar, Kolhapore and many other States have crossed the seas, some with large retinues and some with their wives and children. We do not claim any credit for all these movements in the name of the Conference. I only allude to them here as indicating the fact that these reforms have all been initiated and carried out during these past seven years or more by the same earnestness of spirit, which working on a lower sphere makes this Conference necessary and possible from year to year as an humble sister of the National Congress. The genuineness of the feeling is borne witness to by the fact that in inaugurating the new social regulations, different methods of procedure have been adopted by different states to accomplish the same end. The method of direct legislation has found favour with Mysore, of caste initiation in Baroda, and of executive regulations in Rajputana. This is a point which is but little understood, though this variety bears on its face the stamp of sincerity and shows that the movement is spontaneous and of indigenous origin. The foreign Government which rules over us, cannot but be encouraged by the results of such spontaneous action on the part of the rulers of Native States who reflect the higher wisdom of their population. We do not want it--and the Government is naturally averse to meddle with social matters in the way it did when it put down *Suttee* and infanticide. And yet in its own cautious way it is educating the people to a higher sense of their responsibility in this connection. It has by a formal notification abolished hook-swinging, directly legislated for several backward classes, and regulated the marriage expenditure of the Kuaris and the Rajputs and Jat population in several parts in the Bombay Presidency and in the North-West Provinces. It ventured indeed to pass the Age of Consent Act, but the agitation that the measure provoked has weakened its hands and it now fights shy of further legislation on that line, and it has refused to amend the law regulating religious endowments in the way some of you desired. I am glad, however, to learn that it is prepared to consider the Malabar Marriage Bill on the lines recommended by the Honourable Muthuswami Iyer's Committee and to abolish im-

prisonment in execution of decrees for the restitution of conjugal rights. It also permitted the Honorable Babu Behari Lal to carry through the Bengal Council a new partition law, which is a very great improvement on the general Hindu law of equal compulsory division. Both Native States and the British Government have thus paid homage to the supremacy of the new spirit that is actively working in our midst, and it is in this general fact and not in its particular manifestation that I see the hands of Providence at work for our good.

Perhaps some of you would say that after all kings and ministers should have no place on this platform, and that I must adduce some better evidences of the fact of an awakened conscience among the people rather than appeal to the acts of States. There is some truth in that observation. The work of social reform cannot be an act of a State. It is chiefly valuable when it is the work of the people. I shall therefore now appeal to the popular movements, which have been started during the past seven years and more, and which are so characteristic of our new life. If there had been no such background of popular effort behind its back, the Conference, in which we propose to meet here, will no doubt be an empty show. The fact however is far otherwise. Grander and more enthusiastic meetings than those we hold here are held just about this season in half-a-dozen cities in Northern and Western India. The great Kayastha community of the North met last year at Mathura,—the Vaishya Conference met at Lahore and meets this year at Shahjahanpur under the guidance of my friend Lala Baij Nath,—the Bhargavas met at Lucknow last year, and the Andichyas in Bombay. The Jains in our parts met at Ahmedabad, and at the same place a Mahomedan Conference, in which Hindus joined, was held and passed resolutions condemning nautch and extravagance in marriage expenditure. In the Punjab there is a regular cobweb of Baradari and caste associations, the most prominent of which are the Sarin Sabhas, the Kayastha Sabhas, and the Khalsa or Sikh Sabhas. In your own part of the country the Sri Madhwas met similarly at Tirupati about this time. All this work is done within the sphere of each caste organisation, and

their regulations are enforced by the sanction of caste rules. The reports, which most of these communities and caste associations forward to this Conference, are in my opinion the most interesting part of the year's work. The Conference focusses these reports for general information, points out the limits of practical work and suggests the lines of further development. These Associations furnish, as I have said above, the background of the work, which the Conference takes in hand in a more comprehensive spirit. At any rate these are some of the constituencies, to which the Conference hopes to appeal for help and guidance.

Of course while the Baradaris or caste systems of organizations prove useful in certain parts of the country, in other parts religious organizations, such as the Arya Samaj, the Brahmo Samaj, the Prarthana Samaj, the Dharma Mahamandal, the Sanatana Sabhas undertake the work of social reform on independent lines. These Samajes work towards the same end as the Baradari Associations, but with different sanctions. The Arya Samajes have done great wonders in this connection. They have started Temperance movements and Bands of Hope, and composed temperance songs, which are being sung by women on festive occasions. They have encouraged re-marriage, adopted reformed rites, which presuppose and enforce late marriages. They have founded Girls' and Boys' Schools and Colleges. They have organised charity on a large scale. They in a word constitute all that is most hopeful and worth living in the new life of the province of the Punjab. On the Bengal side the Brahmo Samajes, with their special marriage law, have gone far in advance of us all in many matters.

Next after the Baradari societies and the religious bodies engaged in the work of reform, we have a third class of organizations such as those represented by the Hindu Social Reform Association of Madras, whose annual gathering we have met here to-day to celebrate. There are innumerable other bodies such as the Sanmarga Samaj of Bellary, the Berar Social Reform Association, the Ahmedabad and Sind Associations and the re-marriage Associations in Bombay, Madras, Wardha and

other places, which rely not so much upon the sanction of caste rules or the religious sense of duty, but upon trust in the honour of members, who pledge to give effect to certain improvements in our social condition. As might be expected, these voluntary Associations have not the strength and efficiency of the first two organizations, though it may be noted as a sign of the times that they are slowly taking steps to register themselves with a view to strengthen themselves. They lack the strength of the sanction, and have wider grasp of the problem before us. There are also Purity Associations working on the same lines in all parts of the country; they also have a great field of usefulness before them. I have already noted the fact that Native States are working on different lines. The popular Associations are also trying to carry out their ends in three different ways—by caste action, by the sanction of religion, and by the method of pledges, and appeal to the sense of self-respect and love of public esteem and fear of public criticism. The voluntary Associations again are following different methods of practical work. Some place their reliance chiefly on an appeal to the ancient law, others prefer plans of forming a schism, and a few are for the method of open revolt. Then this is the situation, and much of the activity that we have noted above in these matters has been developed during the past seven years.

The result of all this awakening is best seen in the keener appreciation of the moral law of purity and charity. This constitutes in my view the most instructive and hopeful feature of the past ten years. Even the Government has been forced to acknowledge the force of this new feeling. It is at the root of the agitation against vivisection, the Contagious Diseases Act, the compulsory examination of women, in which last respect the Government here has had to yield to Indian and English public opinion. The same feeling also finds expressions in the great Temperance agitation, which has led to the appointment of two commissions of inquiry. The agitation against the abuse of Temple Endowments may be traced to the same source. The agitation against the ~~and~~ girl and loose habits of family life is explained by ~~rather~~ on

the same principle. The movements intended to help the Pariah classes are due to the same potent cause. The miserable condition of the child-widow is now more keenly recognised as a problem, which must be solved. Widows' homes are springing up in Allahabad, Calcutta and Poona, and the question of the re-marriage of child-widows has passed through the preliminary stage of a trial experiment. Polygamy and the sale of girls in marriage are also slowly disappearing from the land, though they will, I fear, fight hard to the end. More than 75 re-marriages have taken place in our Presidency and 25 similar marriages during the last 20 years in the Madras Presidency and the cause has shown a steady rule of slow progress all over the country.

I hope I have said enough to justify my position that the last seven years have not been fruitless of results, not measured by the standard of Western races, but by the conservative strength of our prejudices and by the rule of improvement observable in our political and industrial spheres of work. The members of the Madras Hindu Social Reform Association may therefore comfort themselves with the consolation that, although the number of its members may be few, they represent much that is hopeful and living in the present constitution of our society. They are the burning coals snatched out of the hearth, the fire of which will not be smothered by the ashes of indifference and discouragement. They have their representatives in every house and province of India, and they are sure to win in the end, however unpleasant may be the struggle in the present.

Their movement against the Nautch girl approved itself to the sense of the Lahore Conference, and since then many Associations have given their adhesion to the cause. I need only mention the names of a few provinces and places here. The Punjab is one of them. The Hindus and Mahomedans at Ahmedabad recorded the same vote. The Associations in Rawalpindi, Berar, Dharwar, Salem, and Bellary, Chikacole, Masulipatam and Gubbarga have accepted the principle and are trying to enforce it.

regards infant marriages, the Mysore Government has

crossed the Rubicon and broken the ice of the prejudices of centuries. The Rajputana rulers have set the same example by State regulations, and throughout the country there is a growing sense that this evil practice has been tolerated too long and that the time has come for a cautious retracing onwards of our steps. In our part of the country many castes are moving in the matter of the education of girls, and the the minimum marriageable ages of girls and boys are being slowly raised all round. The Deshi laws of Bamas have fixed the ages of girls at 13, the Bhargavas at 12, the Mathma Chobar at 13, and the Mahajans at 12. It cannot be long under these hopeful circumstances before we shall find a permanent change in this matter. As regards re-marriages there have been 12 re-marriages celebrated in the course of the year—1 in the Punjab, 2 in Madras, and the rest in our part of the country. The Bama caste at Surat actually went so far as to pass a resolution at a caste meeting that the second marriage of child-widows should be permitted. This resolution was again brought before the caste by those who opposed it, and even then the caste expressed its acceptance of the principle and deferred its experiment till other Bama castes joined. This circumstance clearly shows how the wind is blowing, and it must be a source of satisfaction to us all.

As regards social intercourse and the admission of people who had changed their religion or who had returned from England, three cases of special interest occurred in Bengal and Madras, which show a very happy change in the attitude of the caste-bound society. Mr. Chetty and one Deshastha Brahmin were taken back into their castes without much serious misgivings. In Bengal the Kayasthas admitted Babu Upendra Nath Das, who had not only gone to England but had married an English wife and had children by her. In the Punjab the Arya Samajas and Sikh Associations admitted as many as twelve Mussulman converts. Recently alliances have been formed between orthodox and heterodox reformed families under very favourable circumstances, both in Madras and in our part of the country.

I fear I have taken up your time too long, and that I should

not overtax your kind patience. We have need above all of two great virtues over and above our earnestness. We must have inexhaustible patience, which faith in an over-ruling Providence and the final triumph of right alone inspire, and we must have charity. Hope, faith and charity—these are the three graces we must all cultivate, and if we keep them ever in mind and hold steadily by them, we may be sure that we may still regain our lost position and become a potent factor in the world's history. The turn of life and light is in the individual. We have to purify it to feel the heat and the light of truth in us; and if we care each for thus acting in the faith of duty, we may be sure that God's helping hand will come to our relief. If we suffer misery, we have earned it by our sins in the past and present. If we purge them off, the bright rays of glory will shine in their old splendour. In that hope we rest assured that in the good work we share, and according as we share, we shall succeed.

The Ninth Social Conference—Poona—1895.

Speaking on "The Cause of the Excitement at Poona," the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade said.—

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—It has been a custom for many years past on the occasion of these annual gatherings to deliver an introductory address on the aims and the scope of the Social Conference movement, and before its regular work is taken in hand to bespeak the favourable attention of the public of the place, in which we meet, to its claims upon them. In conformity with this practice I stand before you here on this occasion. Before, however, I proceed with the address proper, circumstances have rendered it necessary that one or two personal-explanations should be offered. The first explanation that I have to place before you on behalf of those who have been taking an interest in this Conference movement is in regard to the position of the General Secretary, Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao, in connection with the Conference. Some of you may have read a letter from a correspondent of Tanjore published in a paper here, in which it was stated that Dewan Baha-

dur Raghunatha Rao has ceased to be the Secretary, has resigned his office, and that he thinks the Conference a farce, if not a clever deception. A statement like that appeared a fortnight ago, and I was surprised to find that it should have been accepted as true without question. Because, until last October, when the subjects for this Conference were first proposed provisionally, in accordance with usual practice. I sent a list of them to him and he returned it with some suggestions. So I was quite sure till 27th October last things were all right. As the statement had appeared in a local newspaper, it became necessary in the opinion of some of my friends that we should ascertain what the truth was. And here is the reply which Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao has sent to a letter that I addressed to him.

[Here Mr. Justice Ranade read the letter which is as follows. — "The facts of the case are that Mr. Joshi of the American celebrity about a week ago called upon me at Kumbhakonum. He said in exultation that the Congress had rightly refused its *pandal* to the Social Conference. This rather startled me, as I had thought that he was a social reformer. I told him that I was glad that the *pandal* was not allowed to be used by the Social Conference, for the deception that used to be practised by the Congress upon the English people that it worked in conjunction with the Social Conference was unveiled, and the English people would now clearly understand that the Congress really did not mean to work with the Social Conference. I added I was therefore glad that the Congress refused their *pandal* to the Social Conference. With regard to my connection with reference to this year's Conference, I said I was too old, too weak to attend it, and that it was meet for me to spend my time now quietly without troubling myself with public controversies. My state of health prevents my going to Poona, I am sorry to say"]

I hope this reply will remove the apprehensions created in the minds of some friends as to whether the connection of Dewan Bahadur R. Raghunatha Rao still continues or has ceased and how far the opinions attributed to him were justified by the evidence of his own writing.

The other explanation that I have to give relates to the circumstances under which this Conference has to be held in another place this year. The controversy has been very bitter for the last five or six months, and I do not want to allude to that controversy. But as the matter has a sort of official character about it, it is necessary that a public statement should be made on an occasion like this, in order that there may be no room for misapprehension on either side. I shall now ask my brother, with the President's permission, to read a letter that was written and the replies that have been received. (Here the circular addressed to the various Standing Congress Committees asking their opinions on the question of the loan of the Congress Pandal to the Conference, together with their replies was read.)

There is a third matter and a very important matter which relates to the President-elect of this year's Congress.

(An extract from the Honourable Babu Surendra Nath Banerjee's letter was read in the meeting which was as follows:—‘The *raison d'être* for excluding social questions from our deliberations is that if we were to take up such questions it might lead to serious differences ultimately culminating in a schism, and it is a matter of the first importance that we should prevent a split. The request of the other side is very unreasonable; but we have sometimes to submit to unreasonable demands to avert greater evils.’)

The question which I propose briefly to consider on this occasion is—how it has happened that while Bombay and Calcutta, Lahore and Nagpur, Madras and Allahabad had not shown such an excitement over this matter during the last nine or ten years—how has it happened that in this city of ours, which at least we all take a natural pride in, as being equal to all these other cities, if not superior to them in some respects—how has it happened that this city and this part of the country was made to feel such an unusual excitement over this subject. This is a subject to which we ought to devote some portion of our time. It is a phenomenon which requires an explanation. It is an event, which, I must say after twenty-five years' experience of Poona, surprises me—why it should have been so. I need hardly

say I was also pained that it should have been so. But whether we feel surprised or not, there is the objective fact before us. People got excited not only here, at Sholapur, Ahmednagar, Nasik, Bombay, but at Satara, Nagpur, Dharwar, and in many parts of the country, as you will see from the telegrams that have been read to you. I am quite aware, one most obvious explanation that occurred to many is, that this excitement is due to personal differences and party quarrels. This is a very convenient way of disposing of this question. Personal differences there are. Party quarrels and party misunderstandings there will be to the end of time, just as they have been from the commencement of the world. Wherever a dozen men meet together or a number of people go to work together, there will be misunderstandings. But that does not satisfactorily account for what we have seen—the loss of temper, the absolute waste of energy, the absolute waste of what I would call high powers on a subject on which it was not necessary to spend a word. And yet there is the phenomenon that on both sides our publicists and writers, our thinkers and preachers were all engaged in this matter, thinking every day and devoting all their attention in a way which almost provoked a cynical feeling whether we had all lost our wits. Party differences and personal misunderstandings, I believe you will find, are not confined to Poona. I have personal experience of nearly every large city in the country, having visited them three or four times and spent a good deal of time in making myself acquainted with their party differences. It is a characteristic of our people that where a dozen people work together one-half will call the other half mad or wicked. It is our general habit to misunderstand one another. People think that there is no good man among their opponents. But party differences and personal misunderstandings have never made a whole nation mad. It will not be fair to the intelligence of this city, or to the intelligence of other places in the country of which this city boasts to be the capital, to accept this explanation. This way of brushing away inconvenient questions may, be very satisfactory to some, but we cannot

yourselves in the position of a naturalist, and try to see why so many otherwise intelligent animals should have lost themselves in a passionate mood for the last six months. Or think you are an anatomist and see what is there in the body of this nation which could have produced such disorganization. It would not be fair on an occasion like this to brush away this question and merely laugh over it. There is a serious significance which we must all lay to our hearts, if we want to derive the lesson which the exhibition of the last six months offers us. The question before us is, why should men otherwise intelligent get so much excited over petty matters like this Pandal question. The two assemblies as you know had nothing whatever to do with each other. Their organizations are separate, their modes of work are separate, their publications and objects are separate, but as so many people come from all parts of the country, it has been found convenient that those among them who cared for one or both, who cared for social and political reform, should have a common meeting ground provided for them at one and the same place and time, at common expense. While the rest of India has shown a good deal of prudence and wisdom, why is it that we were not able to show that wisdom and moderation of temper, which we naturally claim the right to command? I confess I am not at all satisfied with the explanation usually offered. There must be something deeper which we must study, some weakness or strength whatever you may call it which alone can satisfactorily account for this phenomenon. According to some, Poona has done what no other place had the courage or folly to attempt, and this is the cause why this contest should happen here and not elsewhere. When we dive beneath the surface, I believe we do come to the traces of certain differences which mark this part of the country from others. Those differences require our most anxious consideration on this occasion.

Taking a bird's eye view of the social history of India, you will find that there are various methods of working out social reform questions adopted in different parts of the country by different races, into which this Continent has been divided. If you go to Bengal, you will find there that the religious (theistic)

development has taken up and absorbed all the more serious men who think about these matters. On the basis of their new religious ideas, they have developed a social organization and also formed a community by themselves. This community naturally attracts to itself all those among other classes of the people who feel seriously about these matters, and they strengthen and grow into a separate section, which has little or no connection with the rest of the orthodox or the general community from which they spring. The Brahmo Samaj there with all its sects takes up into its rank all those who are eager in the work of social reform. Outside the Brahmo Samaj the only name that figures prominently in connection with social reform is the name of Pundit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. This Pundit did inaugurate a great reform, but as you know that outside the Brahmo Church or Churches that movement has failed not only since his death but even during his lifetime. Pundit Vidyasagar was one of those who felt aggrieved in his old age that he had taken part in a matter in which his hopes were not crowned with success. So far as the orthodox community is concerned, Bengal is more orthodox than any other part of India. So far as the reformed community is concerned, Bengal is more reformed than any other part of India. They form in fact two separate camps. Kulinism and the Kali worship thrive in all their extravagance on one side, and puritanical theism on the other. The great weakness that I attribute to the Brahmo Samajists is that they are so absorbed with the religious side of their creed and are so separated from the orthodox community that they fail to feel warm interest in other matters, which concern the people in the same way as reformers elsewhere feel. On the other hand the orthodox community also feels no interest in the Brahmo Samaj people. There is every day an attempt on both sides to make the difference as great as the difference between the Mahomedans and the Hindus. What the Brahmo Samaj has done in Bengal, the Arya Samaj has been attempting to do for the people of the Punjab with greater advantages. The Sikh development of the 17th and 19th centuries naturally elevated the Punjab people. The basis of their elevation is the religious development, and

on it you find based a social organism, which absorbs all the more serious and more thoughtful people. The Arya Samaj is a religious organization based upon a social superstructure into which a few people here and there find their resort, and the rest of the community slowly gets itself more and more hide-bound and more and more wedded to the old ways of thinking about these matters. In the North-West Provinces neither the Brahmo Samaj nor the Arya Samaj has produced any effect. They are a very slow mass to move. The present condition of the North-West Provinces with all their natural advantages of position and climate is characterised by lethargy and backwardness. The Brahmins there occupy a very unimportant position. But the rising generation and the fruit of the University education are devoting their best attention to this question and are trying to reform the usages of their caste. The reports of the Kayastha, Jat, Khatri, Bhargava and other Associations show us that they desire to promote reform within the sphere of their own castes.

The Social Conference does not wish to kick the old ladder, but it is composed of those who are eager to give and receive information on social matters, and to exchange thoughts on social reform. The present tendency of Hinduism is to throw off its exclusive character. (Here the speaker related the story of a hundred Hindus who had been converted to the Moslem faith and who were taken back into the Sikh community in the Punjab this year. Another story was told of fifty born Mahomedan converts who were converted into Hinduism. A Rangari at Mudhol was said to have been induced to become a convert to Mahomedanism, but in sober mood repented and wished to come back. But the Brahmins were not ready to take him back into his former community. So the Rangari caste at Mudhol appealed to Swami Nityananda, an Arya Samaj preacher, who consented to perform the ceremony of admitting him into his caste and gladly went there and performed it.)

You may think here that we are of course perfectly unconcerned with all these events which happened in other parts of the country. But time and tide wait for no man.

Social evolution will not allow you to rest where you are. There are stages in which a diseased mind is so filled with melancholy and hypochondria that the doctor finds that the only remedy is cure by faith, and to put more faith in him electrifies the patient from top to bottom, and when he is so shaken he feels himself relieved. We—every one of us—men and women—require that those of us who are working on different lines in this country should work harmoniously. Conservatism is a force which we cannot afford to forego or forget. You may talk and act in a way that appears to be the result of your voluntary efforts, but you are unconsciously influenced by the traditions in which you are born, by the surroundings in which you are brought up, by the very milk which you have drunk from your mother's breasts or influenced by those things in the world which you cannot disown. To say that it is possible to build up a new fabric on new lines without any help from the past is to say that I am self-born and my father and grand-father need not have troubled for me. That is the way in which things strike me at least.

One of the ways in which reform movements are being worked out in India is the method of rebellion. We go into another camp on a religious basis and a social structure is built upon it. The other way of introducing reform is by utilising caste organisations for the purpose of reform. The third is to go to the Acharyas and try to see that they are animated with a high purpose and move about the country and purify us and themselves in the bargain. The fourth way is to appeal to men's sense of honour and make them pledge themselves to certain reforms. The fifth and the least eligible way is to seek legislative help. But in order to work out reforms on any of these lines all of us must work together. We must meet at least once a year to derive what lessons we can from each other and exchange mutual help and sympathy—this is the reason why we go to the Conference. The rebellious method may be the most suitable for one reform, the traditional method for another, the pledge method for a third, and the legislative method may be the final solution of a fourth reform. There may be all these different lines not parallel but tapering

towards one point in the end ; but till they meet we must work together separately.

I have now a register of 50 Associations, the registered members of which are not very many. They may not exceed ten thousand, but they are the hope and the strength of the future. They all work on their own lines, and in doing so they are likely to commit mistakes, from which their friends should try to help them. Now I have told you how things stand in Bengal, the North-West Provinces and the Punjab. On the Madras side the Brahmin element is preponderant, and as a result the lower classes are borne down with a weight which they are not able to bear. But there are thoughtful men among them for whom we all feel the highest respect. The most favoured method in that Presidency is of voluntary pledges. That being the condition of things in Madras, what is our position on this side? Are we working on a religious basis to which a new social superstructure is added, or are we proceeding on the more orthodox method of caste regulations? Are we proceeding on the lines of legislation, or of voluntary efforts? There are societies in this Presidency who have registered themselves under the Indian Companies' Act or the Religious and Charitable Endowments Act, and they find that their provisions do not suit their convenience and they want more facilities. In other places, the religious and caste leaders are appealed to for help. There are also those who prefer the method of revolt and schism.

The peculiar feature of the movement in the Presidency is that we want to work on no single line, but to work on all lines together and above all not to break with the past and cease all connection with our society. We do not proceed on the religious basis exclusively as in Bengal. We have the different Samajes, but somehow or other there is something in our nature which prevents us from bodily moving into another camp. We do not desire to give up our hold on the old established institutions. Some might say this is our weakness—others think in it consists our strength. Reform work has not been carried on in this Presidency on any one definite line, but we are trying all the methods which I have placed before you. If we were

to follow any one method, our quarrels would cease. If we were distinctly prepared to stand in a camp of our own, leaving the whole community to do what they like, we might be at peace; for this is exactly what our friends—the reactionist and the orthodox community—are desiring us to do. We do not put our faith exclusively in the caste method of work. We are not limited to the method of what I say is the method of pledges, *viz.*, each man taking a pledge to do what to him seems right. We differ from other parts of the country in our pursuit of this work of social reform on various lines,—we do not prefer any one method of work and try to utilise, adopting each as it is most suited for our purposes, all these ways, and this of course brings us into conflict with our orthodox and reactionary friends. I hope I have satisfied you that it is not mere personal differences or party quarrels or anything of that sort that explains the situation, but it is our systematic attempt to do the thing not on one definite line, which has intensified the conflict. We are not disposed to follow any one method to the end, and we apply a number of methods to a number of problems, and we do desire above all not to occupy a separate camp for ourselves. This is in my opinion the chief reason why there has been so much misunderstanding and such exhibition of temper, and when you add to that personal and private differences, you will understand why the unfortunate opposition which was not offered elsewhere was exhibited in this beloved city of ours. I hope on another occasion to give a retrospect of the work of reform carried on in different provinces of India during the year about to close.

Speaking on the "History of Social Reform," the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade said:—MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES and GENTLEMEN,—On Wednesday last my time was so taken up with personal explanations and a review of the general tendencies of the reform movement in the different provinces, that I was not able to present to you a brief retrospect of the year's work as I had at first intended to do. It is very necessary on an occasion like this to direct public attention to the more notable events of the year, and to see how far they mark out foot-prints on the

sands of time in our journey onwards. We are so scattered and so little in touch with one another that single workers in this field are too often disposed to look upon the work before them as a task beyond human endurance in which failure is certain, while the chances of success are well nigh hopeless. This sort of despondency would be impossible if we had more faith in an over-ruling Providence, and if we contented ourselves with the immediate work before us, leaving the final issue in His hands. The Conference gathering brings the individual workers together from all parts of the country, and when we exchange notes with one another, those of us who may have lagged behind are encouraged to persevere in the work by the example of their fellow-workers, who have attained better success or struggled more manfully with their difficulties. Viewed in this light the present gathering has to my mind a holy character, full of encouragement and hope, to all who come to it from far and near. The year that is about to close has not been altogether an uneventful one. I propose with your permission to travel from south to north and briefly direct your attention to the new social leaven which is stirring the apparently dormant and lifeless mass of the Indian community.

You will note with satisfaction that on the Malabar Coast, including the Native State of Travancore, a most healthy movement has for sometime been at work to legalise the institution of marriage in the great Nair community. Throughout this extent of the country marriage, as an institution recognised by religion and law, has no footing, except among a very small proportion of the Brahmin population. Men and women cohabited together but without the sanctity and sanction, which marriage confers upon man and wife. In this part of the country only the eldest representative in Brahmin families can marry in our sense of the word. The rest of the community both Brahmin and non-Brahmin have lived from ancient times till now in theory at least with the wild license, which lets the male and female members of the animal world consort together in temporary connections. Of course human beings cannot practise this license without submitting to some restraint of custom, and there are such customs which have supplied the place indifferently of

the indissoluble life-long alliance which constitutes the essence of marriage. This state of things did well enough as long as Malabar and Travancore were cut off from the rest of the world. With better communications and with the greater spread of education a new sense dawned upon the minds of the thinking portion of the Nair community, and a general desire was felt among these people to rise to the social level of their fellow countrymen in other parts of India. An agitation was set up and after meeting with some opposition Government appointed a Commission to inquire into the matter, and on the basis of the report of this Commission a draft Bill was drawn up and this Bill has this year been introduced into the Madras Legislative Council by the Hon'ble gentleman who is now presiding at this meeting (the Hon'ble Mr C Sankaran Nair). The chief credit of this movement and the practical turn given to it belongs to the Hon'ble Mr. Sankaran Nair and his fellow-workers, and you will be glad to find that their labours have been crowned with success. The principle of the law is now safe and the Bill has been referred to a Select Committee to settle the details. Following the example in British India, the Travancore Government have also sanctioned the introduction of a Bill subjecting the customary connections to the pains and penalties of the Indian Penal Code. Both on the Malabar coast and in Travancore the movement has been entirely of popular origin, the officials and Governments reluctantly yielding to the pressure brought upon them by the people concerned.

Turning northwards you will be glad to learn that the marriage laws passed by His Highness the late Maharajah of Mysore have worked satisfactorily. The Dewan stated last October before the Representative Assembly that there were only four cases where the penal clauses had to be enforced during the course of the year, and in all these cases the prosecutions were instituted on the complaint of private persons and neighbours. This is a circumstance of great promise, as it shows that public conscience is on the side of the Government.

On the East or Coromandel Coast of the Madras Presidency the leaders of the social reform movement have been actively at work both in the Presidency town and in the ~~Motunail~~ in

promoting female education, and in the protest they have made in favour of purity of life and against degrading and immoral customs. One re-marriage was celebrated by the Rajahmundry Widow Re-marriage Association, which is guided by the venerable Viresalingam Pantulu Garu, whose zeal in this cause has been unabated, and who has earned justly the fame of being the Pundit Vidyasagar of this part of the country

Another notable event was the re-admission by the Chetty community of a young graduate, who had embraced Christianity and who afterwards desired to return back to his old faith. Another event of a similarly instructive character was the re-admission by his community of a Deshastha Brahmin, who had gone to England and who was admitted by the Deshastha caste at Coimbatore on easy conditions, which marked the growth of public feeling in this connection. To the West of Mysore in the Palghat country a very vigorous agitation has been set on foot by some earnest workers to fix the minimum marriageable age of boys at 18 and secure popular support for legislation on this subject. You will thus see that on the Madras side there are signs of very earnest efforts made to promote reform in all the main heads of our programme, such as higher female education, purity of morals, widow marriage, and the admission of foreign travelled persons and of converts to other faiths, and the improvement of marriage laws and of the condition of the Pariahs. These movements are directly of popular origin in all parts, and have in some cases support of both the British and Native Governments.

Going next to Bengal, the change is not a very agreeable one, as I observed on last Wednesday. Reform here is confined chiefly to those who have become members of the Theistic churches, while the rest of the community shows a retrograde tendency in the direction of reaction. The sea-voyage movement stirred Bengal two years ago. But apparently no progress was made in regard to it in the present year. The only visible movement attempted this year was about the reduction of extravagant expenditure on marriage occasions and even this movement was instituted by the Government of that part of the country. Meanwhile female education outside the presi-

dency towns showed no progress. Kulinism still flourishes in the land; the widow-marriage movement started by Pundit Vidyasagar evokes no interest; and things generally are at a standstill. I am afraid my statements about Bengal may appear to many as exaggerating the faults of our friends there. For Bengal is generally associated in our minds as the foremost province in matters of progress. I can only say in my defence that I depend for my sources of information on four or five friends in that province. One of them is a missionary of the New Dispensation Church, and another a social reform preacher, who belongs to no church. The other two gentlemen are of the old school. There are no social reform associations in Bengal, and I only received two reports from local bodies, who appeared to devote their attention chiefly to temperance and primary female education. Nothing will give me greater satisfaction than to find that my information about Bengal is not accurate up to date, but until this correction comes from proper sources, I must depend upon my own authorities, and you will join with me in regarding this state of things as very discouraging indeed.

Advancing northwards, we find in the North-West Provinces and Oudh more hopeful signs of a desire for social improvement. Here as I have stated in my first address the work is carried out on caste lines, and the great communities which constitute the middle and upper classes of these provinces, the Kayasthas, the Bhargavas, the Agarwalas, the Jats and the Jains are each heaving with new life, though that activity is restricted within very narrow spheres. These communities hold their Conferences from year to year. These Conference meetings are largely attended. They chiefly devote themselves to the work of reducing customary marriage expenses and also try to raise the marriageable age limits. Temperance also occupies a prominent place in their programme and the Kayastha Temperance movement has especially shown a good record this year. The Purity movement also occupies attention in these parts and some progress is also made in intercommunion between subcastes. The education chiefly of boys and in some cases of girls and the establishment of Boarding-

houses have occupied their attention to some extent. The movement is not based on any departure from the old religious creeds and the Arya Samajes established in different parts are not showing much zeal in their work. For certain purposes these caste organisations are very valuable, but they have their own weakness. They cramp and narrow the sympathies of those who belong to them, and the sphere of action is restricted within very defined limits. Such as they are however, they cannot fail to effect considerable change for the better in the social condition of the country, if only these separate caste movements work together for the common good. In regard to the question of widow marriage and foreign travel and female education, these provinces are very backward. Though they came under the British rule early in the century, the system of public education prevalent in these parts has been less permeated by Western influences and is more oriental in character than in Bombay, Madras and Calcutta. The Allahabad University was established in 1887, *i.e.*, 30 years after the other universities were founded soon after the mutiny. Proceeding further on to the Punjab, the social movement is seen to be more energetic in character and more fruitful of results. The rise of the Sikh power, based as it was on a religious upheaval which tried to assimilate the better elements of Mahomedanism and the ancient Hindu faith, has secured for the Punjab a very favourable start. The caste restrictions against interdining are not so strictly observed as in other provinces. The supremacy of Brahmins is not so oppressive in its weight of authority, and altogether a healthy and manly tone distinguishes the people of those parts. No wonder, therefore, that the Arya Samaj movement found a soil already prepared for its reception, and nowhere else has it produced on the whole such beneficial changes. Though the founder of the Arya Samaj did not favour the marriage of widows except with the brother of the deceased husband, the Arya Samajes in the Punjab have for many years past shown greater liberty in this matter, and this year was distinguished in the annals of the Punjab by a most important accession to the strength of the reform party represented by the celebration of the marriage of Dewan Sant Ram's

widowed daughter. As this family is one of the most respectable among the Khatri community, it is expected that this movement will have a new strength in that part of the country. As a matter of fact, there were two other re-marriages in the Punjab this year, one according to the Brahmo rites, and the other according to the Arya Samaj ritual. As regards foreign travels, the people in the Punjab have quietly solved the problem by openly receiving men who have gone beyond the seas into caste. The Punjab also has taken the lead in another matter, which shows more than anything else the advance made in their province. A portion of the Sikh community has been actively engaged in the work of conversion of Mahomedans into the Sikh faith, and the Arya Samajes also have shown readiness to make conversions from other religions. Some 150 converts were thus admitted back into communion with the Sikhs. Outside the Arya Samaj and the Sikh community, the Khatrias, the Vaishyas, and the Agarvalas have also been carrying on good work in the fusion of subcastes, in cutting down extravagant expenditure, in promoting temperance, and raising the marriageable age of girls. The Purity movement in the Punjab is also conducted with great energy, and the crusade against intemperance is more systematic there than elsewhere. The Punjab has also earned the distinction of holding provincial social Conferences every year. Altogether the social movements in these parts are of a character to inspire hope and afford encouragement to all who take interest in this work. In the province of Sind we have some honest workers. Notable among them Mr. Dayaram Gidumal holds the chief place. The registered Social Reform Association of Hyderabad is the oldest of its kind, though this year it was unable to show much work. At present the Sind reformers are devoting themselves chiefly to the promotion of female education, which is in a very backward condition in that province. The Walterkrit Rajputra Sabha, representing twenty small and large States, has maintained its character as a most effective organisation for the promotion of the two reforms to which it chiefly devotes its attention, namely, the reduction of the marriage expenses and raising the marriageable age of girls and boys.

The example of the Rajput class, is slowly working a change in the other communities such as Brahmins, Agarwalas, and Jains. An attempt is being made by the Talukdars in North Gujarath to have a Sabha of their own based on the same model. This brings us back to our own Presidency with its two divisions, the Gujarath and Maharashtra districts, the latter including the Berars and Central Provinces. In the Berars there is a very vigorous Social Reform Association at work consisting of 400 members, and it has been the means of popularising the work of social reform in that part of the country. The members of the Berar Association have pledged themselves to certain reforms, including nearly the whole of the programme of the Conference, and their example and advice have resulted in directing public attention to these subjects. The Central Provinces have not shown equally good work this year. The widow marriage movement, however, has found considerable support in these provinces, and a band of young reformers has been formed at Nagpur, which promises better work next year. In the Gujarath districts of the Presidency, Ahmedabad has put forth considerable efforts in the promotion of female education. It is also the head-quarters of the re-marriage and temperance movements in those parts. The misfortune of Gujarath is the multiplicity of sub-divisions of castes and sub-castes. Among the Kunbis and the Brahmins alike there are higher and lower sections of the community, the lower aspiring to form alliances with the higher at any cost and the higher disdaining to form such alliances for their daughters with people of the lower sections. This unfortunate state of things leads to extortions in the shape of heavy dowries, polygamy, infanticide, and unmarried old spinsters. The efforts of Government under the Infanticide Act and of the communities themselves to check these evils have not been very successful, but it is expected that these mischievous customs will work out their own ruin by the rebellion of the lower sections against the tyranny of the higher especially the Kunbi Patidars and the Anavala Brahmin Bhathelas. There was one widow marriage in the Ahmedabad district among the Audich people, and three young foreign-travelled men of the Brahma Khatri caste found admis-

sion into their community without difficulty. The Audich Brahmins also have been holding annual Conferences of the caste on the North-West Provinces model. His Highness the Maharajah of Baroda has been moved by the Mahajanas in the Baroda territory to legislate with a view to strengthen the hands of the castes in enforcing their own regulations about reform, and two Bills framed for this purpose are still under the consideration of His Highness the Maharajah. In the Maratha country proper the work of reform has been carried on all along the line by utilising all available resources. The widow-marriage movement has been taken up actively by the Association at Poona, and its missionaries have travelled about the whole of the country securing sympathy and support. In all, four re-marriages were celebrated in Bombay and Poona this year, the celebrations in Bombay being confined to the Gujarath community. Foreign-travelled men returning back to the country are slowly finding admission into their caste without experiencing the difficulties that stood in their way before. The marriageable age limits are being sensibly raised, nearly half-a-dozen of the best families in Poona have practically shown that after betrothal the girls can remain unmarried till fourteen and boys till twenty without serious caste opposition. The sale and exchange of girls in marriage is also condemned by the head Acharya, who is prepared to inflict caste punishments on those who may be guilty of a breach of the order. Female education is also being encouraged by the success of the High School at Poona and by the Society's schools in Bombay. The Temperance cause also is actively propagated by Temperance preachers, and already there is a sensible change in the attitude of young men towards this indulgence. It will be seen from this review of the social history of the year that things are not so hopeless as they seem to casual on-lookers. The conflict between the reformers and reactionaries in the Deccan Districts has been especially useful in drawing public attention to the claims of the Conference upon public sympathy. In all towns wherever the Mahrathi language is spoken including the Berars and the Central Provinces, the struggle between the two parties has been keen and active throughout the year. For reasons which I have stated in my

first address, such a conflict, based on principles and not on personal differences, is not, under existing circumstances, possible in any other part of India. In view of this conflict it becomes the duty of all to consider what should be the attitude of the reformers towards those who are opposed to them. Strength of numbers we cannot command, but we can command earnestness of conviction, singleness of devotion, readiness for self-sacrifice in all honest workers in the cause. Even though these workers may be few in number, they will in the end succeed in overcoming opposition. We have above all to learn what it is to bear and to forbear—to bear ridicule, insults, even personal injuries at times, and forbear from returning abuse for abuse. In the words of the Prophet of Nazareth, we have to take up the cross not because it is pleasant to be persecuted, but because the pain and the injury are as nothing by the side of the principle for which they are endured. We may differ as individuals, but these differences are after all due to the weakness of the human temperament and to the errors of the human judgment. It is the mind which after all holds intercourse with other minds, and there is a basis of union in the common divine element present in all of us, which is the spirit, which binds together all men in a common bond of love and help. The waters of the heavens get their colour from the soil over which they flow; but after all these colours are not the water; they may conflict with one another for a time, but in the end they meet and flow in one pure stream into the great ocean, leaving the earth and the mud and the silt behind them. If we only work in this faith, the opposition to reform, which so much disturbs us at times, will only be an incentive to more sustained efforts. This should be the spirit in which I would wish you to regard the events of the last few months, and if anything I have said from this platform inspires you with such a spirit, I feel sure that you will not have attended the Conference sittings in vain.

The Tenth Social Conference—Calcutta—1896.

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade delivered his inaugural address which was as follows :—MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—After an interval of six years, during which period we have completed our round of the continent of India, we meet here again this time under the shadow of a great calamity—I might almost say in the midst of national tribulation and sorrow. At one time, indeed, the presence of this calamity suggested to many the thought that gatherings such as these had better be postponed to a more favoured season. On further consideration, however, it was forced upon our minds that visitations such as these had a deeper meaning, and that there was a solemn obligation on us all to make a confession of our errors and sins and as the Jewish prophets of old called upon the chosen people in distress and in peril to renew their covenant with their Lord, we—the men who can read the signs of the times and feel the burden laid upon us—should meet to urge from this and other platforms the necessity of self-correction and self-exertion, in a spirit of pious resignation, joined with a fixed resolve that, come what may, ourselves and the generations to come after us shall suffer as brave men suffer—their very suffering making them braver still and better able to cope with danger than they ever were before. It was this feeling which prevailed over the better minds amongst us not to yield to the panic of the hour, and, while not making light of the danger that threatened us, to see in that danger the very best reason for taking counsel together how to provide against its recurrence in the future.

I submit to you, gentlemen, the question which you will all, each in his place, consider for yourself—why it is that famine and pestilence, poverty and distress, have the appalling terrors which they carry with them in this land? We cannot, of course, make the winds blow as we list, nor can we force the rain-clouds to shower their plentiful blessings as we need or desire. But with the advantages we enjoy, it should certainly be possible so to garner up our resources of health and wealth as to enable us to pass through such a crisis with a tolerable

assurance of safety. Visitations, such as these we suffer from, will lose half their horrors, if we could discount them in anticipation. If we were stronger and more manly, more prudent, more abstemious and more thoughtful, millions would not live and breed as if they were members of the brute creation, and not men and women made in the image of God for a higher purpose than to live and die like the butterflies. It may well be that these visitations are intended as warnings of our duty in this respect, to set our house in order and not to sin against the laws of our existence. Of one aspect of this question of our duties I have nothing to speak from this platform—the aspect in which we deal with it as citizens of a great Empire. But the sphere of our duties is not exhausted when we discuss the question as a question of State policy only. The State after all exists only to make individual members composing it nobler, happier, richer and more perfect, in every attribute with which we are endowed; and this perfection of our being can never be insured by any outside arrangement, however excellent, unless the individual member concerned is in himself prepared in his own private social sphere of duties to co-operate in his own well-being. It is this latter aspect of our duties with which we are more immediately concerned here, and it is to this side of the question that I bespeak your favourable attention on this occasion.

You will ask, gentlemen, what message has this Conference to deliver on an occasion of the kind which brings us here together? This is the tenth meeting of the Conference, and one has a right to expect that, after ten years of ceaseless activity, any movement with a vitality of its own should be able to allow itself to be judged by its fruits. Two years ago, at Madras, I turned a similar opportunity to account in presenting to you a brief survey of our seven years' work in the different provinces of India. It is, therefore, not necessary that I should go over the same ground here again. It will, however, interest you equally well if I give you a brief outline of the work of the year which is about to close—in some sense a very remarkable year indeed. In all such matters the first step towards betterment is to realise the fact that our social

conditions are not exactly as they should be, and that they stand in need of a healthy change, which can only be brought about by every one of us making the effort to pull himself out, and helping others to step out from the mire of false self-satisfaction or helpless despondency, than which there is nothing more dangerous by way of obstacle to our deliverance. Until the conscience is stirred up nothing great or good can be accomplished by the agencies from outside, which hardly touch the surface. It is not an easy thing to stir up the conscience of a nation such as ours; but to judge from the signs around us, there are obvious indications that the dead bones are heaving with a new life, and that the cold limbs are reviving with a new warmth hitherto despaired of. This is but a mere commencement, full of hope and promise to those who are gifted with patience, but with little significance to those who, like children, are impatient to see tangible results. During the course of the year this awakening manifested itself, not only among the classes who are generally credited or discredited as reformers, but also in the very strongholds of orthodoxy, and the defenders of the established order of things. On our side of the country, the Sanatan Dharma Rakshani Sabha, presided over by the Goswami Maharajah, and attended by the most orthodox enemies of reform, met in solemn conclave, and sided with the reformers, whom they disliked, in condemning some of the existing customs, such as the sale of girls in marriage and infant marriages. On the Madras side, the Srivaishnava Conference and the Godavari District Conference, both very orthodox bodies, met also under similar circumstances and joined hands with the reformers in many questions over the gulf which separates them. There are some who think that the reform movements to be effective must be confined to each great caste or sub-caste. Judged by this test, we may draw consolation from the fact that full trial is being given to this view: for the Bhargava and the Kayastha and the Agarwal or Vaishya Conferences in the North-West Provinces, the Sarin and Kayastha and the Aurora Banas Societies in the Punjab, the Audich and the Kayastha Prabhu Conferences in Bombay, and the Sri Vaishnava Conference in

the Madras side, were all bodies which met each in its own place, and will meet again under very encouraging circumstances. It is proposed to have a meeting of the Sanatan Dharma Rakshani Sabha in Bombay under the presidency of the principal Acharya of that part of India who, be it said to his credit, has set his face against the sale of girls in marriage, and is prepared to enforce prohibition on a proper case being made out. The Acharya of the Saraswat Brahmins is at this moment discussing with his followers, what treatment should be given to England-returned men; and the Berar people, led by very orthodox gentlemen, have asked the Sankeshwar Swami to relax the restrictions against widow-marriages. A very learned Shastri at Jubbulpore has been discussing the much vexed question of the admission back into the community of men who have returned from England, or joined other faiths and desire to return within the pale of Hindu society. Moved by the same feeling, the Nasik priests have in one instance admitted an England-returned gentleman back into his caste. The Lohana community in Bombay, who had for many years excluded the philanthropic gentleman, Sett Damodardass Goverdhan Dass from their communion, admitted him freely this year, in consideration of his many and great benefactions to the community and to the public at large. The Jain community in Bombay have not only welcomed Mr. Virchanda Gandhi on his return from America, but they gave him a grand farewell when he went out as a missionary to that country. Gentlemen, you will admit that these are all very hopeful signs; scattered and few though they are over this vast country, they show evidence of a desire to breathe a new life in quarters where you would least expect it; and they show also that the desire for reform in our social conditions is now penetrating below the surface to the very heart of the nation.

Of course this sort of activity is more manifest among the younger generation everywhere. I hold in my hand a list of Associations and Sabhas, which have been good enough to send to the General Secretary of the Conference reports of their work. Our appeal for such reports does not reach all who

work in the good cause, and even those to whom the appeal is made do not respond in time. I have, however, with me a list of Associations which have sent in their Reports, and their number comes nearly to sixty—the largest number that has been yet reached. We were hitherto unable to tap Bengal, but this year we have received reports from ten Associations from this part of the country, twenty-three from the Bombay Presidency, eleven from Madras, two from Mysore, four from the Punjab, two from Deccan Hyderabad, one each from the Central Provinces and the Berar, and five from the North-Western Provinces. The reports of these Associations have been summarised, and the summary will be placed in your hands when we meet to-morrow to discuss our plan of operations. Of course, these Associations do not subscribe to all the points to which the Social Conference draws attention from year to year. Some of them favour female education chiefly, others purity and temperance; others again, improvement in the condition of child-widows; a fourth class favour interdining and intermarriage between sub-castes; many more favour the further raising of the marriageable age limit—some by compulsory legislation, others by caste regulations, and others, again, by means of pledges. Many similarly interest themselves in curtailing the expenditure on marriage and death ceremonies. A few are striving to admit men returned from England and converts from other faiths, and some interest themselves in elevating the lower classes. Gentlemen, you will thus see that in part or in whole the Conference programme is one which covers the whole field of our activities in social questions, though there is, as might be expected, every variety of method, and full room for choice of different subjects according to the needs of each province and community. Such a variety is natural, and I should regret if there was not this difference of lights and shades and we were all echoing the same cry throughout the country.

There are, however, some general features of similarity which might be noticed here with advantage. Bengal, though it gave birth to Rajah Ram Mohan Roy, as well as to Pandit Iswara, Chandra Vidyasagar, seems at present (outside the

Brahmo Samaj) to be content with helping female education chiefly. Polygamy and Kulinism, widow-marriage and unequal and infant marriages—these subjects have not excited the same attention here as in other parts of the country. In the North-Western Provinces the method of working through caste organisations finds most favour. Female education is not much attended to, but extravagance in marriage expenses and temperance occupy the chief attention. The Punjab takes the lead this year in the matter of the widow-marriage movement, re-admission of converts from other faiths and inter-marriage in sub-castes. In the Madras Presidency the Purity and the Anti-Nautch movements find their chief advocates. On the Bombay side, including Berars and Central Provinces also, to a certain extent, the Reform Associations are more catholic in the number of subjects to which they direct their attention. Bombay took the lead in the widow-marriage movement till last year. It comes out second this year with eight widow-marriages, while the Punjab takes the first place, showing a total of twenty-five such marriages, Madras having contributed two, the North-Western Provinces one, and Bengal one. In the matter of foreign travel, the Central Provinces are coming to the forefront, as many as nine young men having been sent last year to England for study. In this connection we may note with satisfaction the fact that as many as one hundred and sixty-seven Hindu students are studying at this time in England; fifty-six from Bengal, forty-two from Bombay and Central Provinces, thirteen from Madras, thirty-six from Punjab, one from Mysore, three from Kathiawar, and five from the Nizam's State.

These figures show that year after year the pilgrimage to foreign lands, unhampered by domestic restrictions, and the substitution of Oxford and Cambridge for the old venerated cities of Benares and Nuddea, must inevitably take place, and they will be wise in their generation who remove the thorns from the way of the young pilgrims, and welcome them back on their return.

As regards inter-marriage and inter-dining—in other words the fusion of sub-castes into larger aggregates—the year about

to close has a good record to show. Among the noticeable events of the year was an alliance between a Madras graduate and a Marathi lady brought up in Poona and educated in our schools there. Two inter-marriages of a less noteworthy kind occurred in the Central Provinces, and twenty inter-marriages took place among the several Khatri sub-divisions in the Punjab. In the Province of Bengal, you will all be glad to learn that, owing to the exertions chiefly of Babu Ragh Behari Mukerji, of Vikrampur, the artificial divisions between the several *mels* among the Kulins of this province have been made to give way to a better feeling of the essential union of the Kulin caste in one hundred cases during the course of the last twenty-five years. Our friends at Madras, in the course of the year, have set an example of practically popularising the claims of this reform to general adhesion by instituting what are called reform-dinners, where all sects of Brahmins are welcome as brothers. The exclusiveness of caste shows evident signs of gradual relaxation. This is, however, nowhere so manifest as in the province of Punjab, where, owing to the exertions chiefly of the cultured Hindus, Sikhs and members of the Arya Samaj, the admission into the Hindu community of Mahomedan and Christian converts has made a great advance, and as many as two hundred and fifty or three hundred persons were admitted during the course of the year. This movement has found support in unexpected quarters. I refer here to the advocacy of this reform in the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of this place. Nothing could be more pathetic, nothing more profoundly true than the appeals made by this exponent of conservative opinion to the Hindu community generally to drop their ancient spirit of exclusiveness, and receive with open arms those who may desire to come back to the old religion, and thus ward off the danger of national suicide, which otherwise is inevitable. I would make the same appeal on the ground of the devotion we owe to truth and reason and the supremacy of the claims of conscience upon our allegiance, to allow free liberty in the matter of this interchange of faiths.

In regard to the claims of purity, temperance, and

economy in marriage and other ceremonial expenditure, much need not be said here, as these are matters in which both the reform and the orthodox parties in all the provinces of India are at one in their desire for change. About the question of infant and unequal marriages, there is also unanimity of public sentiment which is being slowly but surely educated to perceive the necessity of adopting a higher standard of age both for boys and girls than what satisfied the generation that is past. Thanks to the marriage laws passed in Mysore, in Southern India, the sentiment in favour of legislation on the subject is ripening gradually to action. Meantime private efforts to raise the marriageable age to fourteen for girls and to twenty for boys and more are being actively pushed forward by the more advanced reformers in all parts of the country, among some of the very highest families, without meeting with much opposition from the orthodox classes.

This then, gentlemen, is a summary of the work done and recorded during the year in various directions and channels, in which the reform movement is proceeding. You will all admit that it is, on the whole, very creditable. What is the inner spring of action which is setting in motion both reform and orthodox workers almost against their will, even where their will does not consent to move? That inner spring, the hidden purpose not consciously realised in many cases, is the sense of human dignity and freedom, which is slowly asserting its supremacy over the national mind. It is not confined to one sphere of family life. It invades the whole man, and makes him feel that individual purity and social justice have paramount claims over us all, which we cannot ignore long without being dragged down to a lower level of existence. This or that particular reform or revival of ancient practices, as some would like to call them; the removal of this or that particular defect or vice, is not and should not be the only end and aim of the agitation to improve our social condition. The end is to renovate, to purify, and also to perfect the whole man by liberating his intellect, elevating his standard of duty, and perfecting all his powers. Till so renovated, purified and perfected, we can never hope to be what our ancestors once were—the

chosen people, to whom great tasks were allotted and by whom great deeds were performed. Where this feeling animates the worker, it is a matter of comparative indifference in what particular direction it asserts itself, and in what particular method it proceeds to work. With a liberated manhood, with buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty, with a sense of justice that deals fairly to all, with unclouded intellect and powers fully cultivated, and, lastly, with a love that overleaps all bound, renovated India will take her proper rank among the nations of the world, and be the master of the situation and of her own destiny. This is the goal to be reached—this is the promised land. Happy are they who see it in distant vision, happier those who are permitted to work and clear the way on to it, happiest they who live to see it with their eyes and tread upon the holy soil once more. Famine and pestilence, oppression and sorrow, will then be myths of the past, and the Gods will then again descend to the earth and associate with men as they did in times which we now call mythical. This is the message which the Conference has to deliver to you, and I thank you all for having listened to it with such patience.

The Eleventh Social Conference—Amraoti—1897.

Addressing on "Revival and Reform," the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade said:—MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN,—This time last year, when we met in the metropolis of India, I ventured to say that the gathering of the Conference was held under the shadow of a great calamity. Few of us then fully realised the accumulation of miseries and sorrows which this unhappy year now about to close had in store for us. The shadows darkened and deepened in their horrors as the year advanced, and it almost seemed as if the seven plagues which afflicted the land of the Pharaohs in old times were let loose upon us, for there is not a single province which had not its ghastly record of death and ruin to mark this period as the most calamitous year of the century within the memory of many generations past. No province has suffered more from these dire visitations than the Presidency of Bombay, and we are still carrying the yoke

of this hard discipline of sorrows with a patience, and, I might add, courage, which baffle all description. The fight has been very unequal, and we have been worsted at every point, our activities have been paralysed, and our losses great beyond all previous anticipations. Speaking on an occasion like this, I cannot but give expression to the grief which presses heavy on our hearts, as we remember the faces, once so familiar in these Conference gatherings, conspicuous by their absence here to-day—soldiers of God in the great fight with evil, who have been taken away from us in the full bloom of their manhood, and whose places we can never hope adequately to fill up. One such earnest soul, the late Rao Bahadur Chintaman Narayan Bhat, was the life and light of this movement. I had fondly hoped that it would be my privilege to hand over to him the charge of this great service, for which the many great and good qualities of his head and heart fitted him so well. But this was not to be, and we have now to console ourselves with the mournful satisfaction that he died a martyr to his self-imposed labour of love and charity. In another place I have described our sense of the loss suffered by us by the death of another veteran in the fight—the universally lamented Mr. Waman Abaji Modak. Though disabled for a time for active work, his soul was ever alive to the call of duty for which he lived and died. Friends who knew Mr. Gokuldas Leula of Sind have paid a similar tribute of their sorrow to the memory of this sincere worker, who died a victim to the plague, while administering relief to those who suffered from its ravages. A tribute of respect is also due to the memory of Mr. Kasinath Punt Nattu of Poona, and Mr. Vaman Daji Oka, well-known in these parts. I might recall to your mind the names of many more whom it has pleased Providence to take away from us, but this is hardly necessary to convince you that the year's casualties in our ranks have been very heavy. When people in their impatience complain that our friends here and elsewhere are only glib talkers, and fail badly when they are called on to act, they seem to forget the most prominent feature of our experience of these great visitations—namely, that in every town and city, where distress in any form prevailed, whether it

was due to famine, or plague, or earthquake, or floods, or hurricane, the members of the various Reform Associations and their sympathisers have always been the first to volunteer their help, and if they have lost heavily, this loss is due to the perseverance with which they maintain the fight. We, who have been spared till now, may well pay this tribute of respect to their memories on an occasion like this, when we meet together to reckon our gains and losses for the year.

As might be expected, the reports of this year's work which have been received from nearly sixty Associations, large and small, and which have been summarised up to date, complain that their work for the year has not been as successful as in the previous two years. And yet to those who can read between the lines, there are manifest signs which show that the work has been as earnestly pursued as ever. To instance a few cases:—Under the head of female education, the Bethuen College of Calcutta, the Girls' High Schools at Poona and Ahmedabad, the Kanya Maha Vidyalaya at Jullundar, the Sing Sabha's Girls' School at Lahore, the Maharani's Girls' School at Mysore, the Mahakali Patshala organised by Mataji Tapaswini Bai, a Maratha lady in Calcutta, and the Sylhet and Mymensingh Unions, all show a record of progress each in its own line of development. There is not a single Reform Association of any position in the country which has not lent its best efforts to raise the standard and popularise the system of female education. Many Associations, Sabhas and Samajas maintain independent girls' schools of their own, and others have their home classes more or less actively employed in carrying on the work of the schools to educate the more advanced students. Others again have their lectures for ladies, and Ladies' Associations, such as at Ahmedabad, Bombay, and Madras, started and maintained by the ladies themselves. Though the condition of female education is still very backward, and though the experiments that are now carried on are on different lines, the signs are clearly visible that throughout India, the national awakening to the necessity of developing the moral and intellectual capacities and aptitudes of our sisters has found universal recognition.

As regards another sign of this liberal movement which seeks to do equal justice to the rights of the female as of the male sex, it is satisfactory to note that though the number of widow marriages this year has been smaller than that of the previous years, still all the provinces have taken part in the movement. The reports show that in all 25 widow-marriages were celebrated throughout India during the past year:—Punjab 10, Bombay 6, Central Provinces 4, Madras 3, North-West Provinces and Bengal 1 each. The widow-marriages in the Central Provinces have been all brought about directly or indirectly by the persistent efforts of Rao Bahadur Kolhatkar, the President of this gathering. For the re-marriages in Punjab the credit is due to Dewan Santaram and his friends of the Widow Marriage Association there, and in regard to Bombay the same honour is due to Mr. Bhagawandas, the son of the late Madhavdas Raghunathdas in whose house two re-marriages were celebrated. The credit of the widow-marriages celebrated in Madras is due to Rao Bahadur Viresaliugam Pantulu. There was thus not a single province in which friends of the cause did not manifest their active interest in it, which remark does not equally hold good for the previous years. The paucity in the total number was partly due to the calamities of the year, and partly to the prohibition of all marriages due to the year being a *Sinhast* year. Another good sign of the times which may be noted is the fact that some of the castes, in which no re-marriages had been celebrated before, joined in the movement for the first time this year. It was also reported in the papers that the Maharajah of Nabha, in the Punjab, had exercised his influence in favour of bettering the condition of Hindoo widows, and inducing influential Hindoo gentlemen to support the widow-marriage movement. In the Chandraseniya Kayasth Prabhu caste of Bombay, a similar pronouncement was made by the leaders of the community in favour of re-marriage, and it was resolved to bring up the subject before the next Kayasth Prabhu Conference to be held at Baroda. Another satisfactory indication of the times is furnished by the fact reported from Guzerat, that the Audieh Brahmin community at Daman made a similar pronouncement in favour

of widow marriage in their caste. The Widows' Homes at Baranagar and Poona have also been successfully maintained notwithstanding pecuniary difficulties, and the number of widows attending the homes has slightly increased, thanks to the efforts of Mr. Sasipada Banerjee of Baranagar and Professor Karve of Poona.

As regards foreign travel, the year has had a good record to show. Several Saraswata gentlemen have returned from England, and though the *Guru* of the caste has refused admission to them, the reform party at Mangalore and in North Canara have succeeded in openly showing their sympathy with these men. Raja Nowlojee Rao Gujar, a scion of the princely house of Nagpur, returned from England, and was well received, and Messrs. Booti and Alonikar of Nagpur, Mr. Krishna Rao Bholanath of Ahmedabad, Professor Gokhale of Poona, and Mr. Ketkar of Gwalior, have similarly, though not formally, been admitted by some of their caste people, and the opposition has not ventured to place any difficulties in their way. Two Bhatia gentlemen, for the first time in that community, left for England with the full support of their caste. In the Punjab, several young men in the Biradari castes, who had been to England, were admitted back without any opposition. Two young men from the Aurorbans caste went to England last year. The liberal section of the Cashmere Pundits' Sabha is strongly in favour of foreign travel. These instances show that slowly but surely in all parts of the country, the prejudice against foreign travel is on the wane, and that before long the orthodox community or the communities will learn to tolerate these departures from custom as an inevitable change.

In regard to the question of inter-marriage, the Bengal papers announced an inter-marriage in high life between two sub-divisions of the Kayastha community, which hitherto kept aloof. In the Punjab, there was a betrothal between two sub-castes of the Serin community. This was the first instance of an inter-marriage between these two sub-divisions. Many of the widow-marriages have also been instances of inter-marriages, and for the first time last year two instances of inter-marriage between Madrassie and Bengalee gentlemen

and ladies occurred. The North-West Provinces reports show instances of similar fusion between sub-divisions of the Kayastha caste there, and in Guzerat there is a similar tendency manifest in some of the castes to amalgamate together.

As regards the postponement of infant marriages, the reports from all provinces show a decided tendency to increase the limits of marriageable ages of girls and boys. In the Punjab, the Aurorbars Sabha has passed a resolution that no girl belonging to the caste should be given in marriage unless she has completed her twelfth year. In the Madras Presidency, the opinion is gaining ground that the time has now come for applying to Government for legislation on the subject to fix at least the marriageable age for boys, if not for girls and to lay down a maximum limit of age for old persons who marry young girls, on the plan adopted by the Mysore Government. The Madras Provincial Social Conference and the Godavari District Conference expressly passed resolutions on this subject. The Hindu Social Reform Association at Madras has also appointed a committee to draw up a memorial with the same object. The Hon'ble Mr. Jambulingam Mudaliar is reported to be contemplating the introduction of a Bill into the local Council there on this subject. There have also been individual instances in some parts of the country where grown-up girls have been married without experiencing any very bitter opposition from the caste.

Nearly all the Associations have been pledged to support the Purity movement, including the anti-*nautch* and temperance agitation and the work done during the year shows considerable progress under both these heads.

To turn next to another question in which the Conference has been interesting itself for the past few years,—the admission of converts from other faiths—some progress has been made during the year. The Shuddhi Sabha admitted nearly 200 Mahomedan converts this year. Hitherto the movement for the re-admission of converts to other faiths back into the Hindu society was chiefly confined to the Punjab. This year, however, there have been also instances of such conversions in Bengal, the North-West Provinces, and far away in Burmah,

one of them being a convert Christian and the others Mahomedans. The Shuddhi Sabha of Lahore and the Arya Samaj there have deservedly taken the lead in this movement, and it will be a source of great strength to them that the movement has been taken up in the other Provinces also. The Central Provinces Reports for the year show that Mr. Shanker Shastri of Jubbulpore has published a pamphlet on the subject, and it is a strange coincidence that Professor Rajaram Shastri Bhagwat of Bombay read this year a paper before the branch of the Asiatic Society there, showing how in old times the non-Aryan races were brought within the fold of the Aryan system.

As regards the reduction of extravagant expenses in marriage, a very important movement was started in Calcutta under the auspices of leading Kayastha gentlemen, including such men as Sir Romesh Chandra Mittra and the Hon'ble Mr. Chunder Madhub Ghose, who met at Babu Ramanath Ghose's house, and passed several resolutions which are likely to be attended with good results. Nearly every one of the reports of the North-West Provinces contain details of the manner in which the Kayasthas, the Bhargavas, the Chaturvedis, Vaishyas, the Jains and other castes have tried to lay down sliding scales of marriage expenditure, curtailing extravagance under many heads, abolishing *nautch* parties fireworks, and other useless items. In the Punjab, the Aurorbans have very considerably reduced the extravagance in marriage expenses. On the Bombay side, the Bhatia *mandal* and the Dasa Oswal Jains have successfully worked in the same direction. Even in far off Baroda, the Dasa Porwad Bania caste people have been moving in the matter. Following the example of the Rajputra Hitkarni Sabha, many non-Rajpoot castes in Rajpootana and Malwa have laid down rules which are enforced by the same sanctions as those of the principal Sabha.

As regards Conference work generally, it may be noted that caste Conferences are the order of the day in all parts of India. I have, on previous occasions, mentioned the gatherings annually held this week in several large towns in the North-Western Provinces of the Kayastha and the Vaishya community. This year was distinguished by the holding of the first

Provincial Social Conference in Madras, in which Presidency also we have had two district Conferences, one on the East Coast in the Godavari District, and the other on the West Coast at Mangalore. New associations are being formed under very favourable auspices in many parts of the country, notably in the Bombay and Madras Districts, to support the work of the Conference, and to give effect to its resolutions.

Encouraged by the success which has attended the efforts of the Mysore Government, and the Malabar Marriage Law passed in the Madras Council, two Bills of great social importance have been introduced, one in the Imperial Council, to bring under better control religious charities and endowments, and another has been introduced in the Madras Council to remove all doubts in and codify the law in regard to what constitutes self-acquired property under the Hindoo joint family system. Both these Bills have suggested subjects for discussion at the ensuing Conference this year, and it is not therefore necessary for me to enlarge upon their importance. There is a third measure before the Viceroy's Council which, though it relates to a particular section of the Mahomedan community, has a wider bearing which interests us all. The Memon section of this community in Bombay were originally Hindoo converts, and though they embraced Mahomedanism, they retained their old Hindoo customs in regard to inheritance and succession, and these customs were recognised by our Law Courts. A majority of that community, however, now desire that in place of the Hindoo customs, the Mahomedan Law should govern their succession to the property of deceased persons. The Government of India accordingly intend to pass a sort of a permissive measure, by which a member of this community may retain or abandon the old rules by a formal declaration of his choice, which choice, once made, will be final. The subject bristles with difficulties, but the permissive legislation, if it proves a success in actual operation, will furnish a precedent which may prove of considerable help to those who wish to have more liberal laws of inheritance and succession without change of religion.

Such, gentlemen, is the brief record of the principal social

events of the year. Many ardent spirits amongst us will no doubt be very much dissatisfied with the poverty of this record. At the same time, we must bear in mind that hundreds and thousands—nay millions of our countrymen will regard this poor record as very revolutionary, and condemn this as one of the unseen causes which has brought about physical and moral catastrophes upon the land by way of punishment for the sins of the reformers. These are two extreme sides of the question, and it is not for me to say to an audience like this on which side the balance of truth may be found. The *Arya Patrika* of the Punjab, which is a recognised organ of the Arya Samaj there, has in its words of advice to the Conference expressed its view that we are radically in the wrong in seeking to reform the usages of our society without a change of religion, and it seriously suggests that we should, in the first instance, become members of their Samaj and this conversion will bring with it all desired reforms. Many enthusiastic friends of the Brahmo Samaj entertain similar views and give us similar advice. All I can say to these welcome advisers is that they do not fully realise the situation and its difficulties. People have changed their religion, and yet retain their social usages unchanged. The Native Christians, for instance, especially the Roman Catholic section among them, and many sections of Mahomedans are instances in point. Besides, it has been well observed that even for a change of religion, it is too often necessary that the social surroundings must be liberalised in a way to help people to realise their own responsibilities and to strengthen them in their efforts. Lastly, these well-meaning advisers seem to forget that the work of reform cannot be put off indefinitely till the far more arduous and difficult work of religious conversion is accomplished. It may take centuries before the Arya or Brahmo Samaja establish their claims for general recognition. In the meanwhile what is to become of the social organisation? Slowly but surely, the progress of liberal ideas must be allowed to work its way in reforming our social customs, and the process cannot be stopped even though we may wish it. In the case of our society especially, the usages which at present prevail amongst

us are admittedly not those which obtained in the most glorious periods of our history. On most of the points which are included in our programme, our own record of the past shows that there has been a decided change for the worse, and it is surely within the range of practical possibilities for us to hope that we may work up our way back to a better state of things without stirring up the rancorous hostilities which religious differences have a tendency to create and foster. There is no earthly reason whatsoever why we should not co-operate with these religious organisations, or why they should not rather co-operate with us in this work in which our interests are common, because the majority of our countrymen hold different views about religion from those which commend themselves to these Samajas. I am speaking these words with a full sense of my responsibility, for I am in my humble way a member of one, if not of both the Samajas, and I am a sincere searcher after religious truth in full sympathy with the Arya and Brahmo Samaj movements, and I hope therefore that these advisers of ours will take my reply in the same spirit, and will not misunderstand me. Schismatic methods of propagation cannot be applied with effect to vast communities which are not within their narrow pale.

On the other side, some of our orthodox friends find fault with us, not because of the particular reforms we have in view, but on account of the methods we follow. While the new religious sects condemn us for being too orthodox, the extreme orthodox section denounce us for being too revolutionary in our methods. According to these last, our efforts should be directed to revive, and not to reform. I have many friends in this camp of extreme orthodoxy, and their watch-word is that revival, and not reform, should be our motto. They advocate a return to the old ways, and appeal to the old authorities and the old sanction. Here also, as in the instance quoted above, people speak without realising the full significance of their own words. When we are asked to revive our institutions and customs, people seem to be very much at sea as to what it is they seem to revive. What particular period of our history is to be taken as the old? Whether

the period of the Vedas, of the Smritis, of the Puranas or of the Mahomedan or modern Hinda times? Our usages have been changed from time to time by a slow process of growth, and in some cases of decay and corruption, and we cannot stop at a particular period without breaking the continuity of the whole. When my revivalist friend presses his argument upon me, he has to seek recourse in some subterfuge which really furnishes no reply to the question—what shall we revive? Shall we revive the old habits of our people when the most sacred of our caste indulged in all the abominations as we now understand them of animal food and drink which exhausted every section of our country's Zoology and Botany? The men and the Gods of those old days ate and drank forbidden things to excess in a way no revivalist will now venture to recommend. Shall we revive the twelve forms of sons, or eight forms of marriage, which included capture, and recognised mixed and illegitimate intercourse? Shall we revive the Niyoga system of procreating sons on our brother's wives when widowed? Shall we revive the old liberties taken by the Rishis and by the wives of the Rishis with the marital tie? Shall we revive the hecatombs of animals sacrificed from year's end to year's end, and in which human beings were not spared as propitiatory offerings? Shall we revive the Shakti worship of the left hand with its indecencies and practical debaucheries? Shall we revive the *Sati* and infanticide customs, or the flinging of living men into the rivers, or over rocks, or hookswinging, or the crushing beneath Jagannath car? Shall we revive the internecine wars of the Brahmins and Kshatriyas, or the cruel persecution and degradation of the aboriginal population? Shall we revive the custom of many husbands to one wife or of many wives to one husband? Shall we require our Brahmins to cease to be landlords and gentlemen, and turn into beggars and dependants upon the king as in olden times? These instances will suffice to show that the plan of reviving the ancient usages and customs will not work our salvation, and is not practicable. If these usages were good and beneficial, why were they altered by our wise ancestors? If they were bad and injurious, how

can any claim be put forward for their restoration after so many ages ? Besides, it seems to be forgotten that in a living organism as society is, no revival is possible. The dead and the buried or burnt are dead, buried, and burnt once for all, and the dead past cannot therefore be revived except by a reformation of the old materials into new organised beings. If revival is impossible, reformation is the only alternative open to sensible people, and now it may be asked what is the principle on which this reformation must be based ? People have very hazy ideas on this subject. It seems to many that it is the outward form which has to be changed, and if this change can be made, they think that all the difficulties in our way will vanish. If we change our outward manners and customs, sit in a particular way or walk in a particular fashion, our work according to them is accomplished. I cannot but think that much of the prejudice against the reformers is due to this misunderstanding. It is not the outward form, but the inward form, the thought and the idea which determines the outward form, that has to be changed if real reformation is desired.

Now what have been the inward forms or ideas which have been hastening our decline during the past three thousand years ? These ideas may be briefly set forth as isolation, submission to outward force or power more than to the voice of the inward conscience, perception of fictitious differences between men and men due to heredity and birth, passive acquiescence in evil or wrong doing, and a general indifference to secular well-being almost bordering upon fatalism. These have been the root ideas of our ancient social system. They have as their natural result led to the existing family arrangements where the woman is entirely subordinated to the man and the lower castes to the higher castes, to the length of depriving men of their natural respect for humanity. All the evils we seek to combat result from the prevalence of these ideas. They are mere corollaries to these axiomatic assumptions. They prevent some of our people from realising what they really are in all conscience, neither better nor worse than their fellows, and that whatever garb men may put on, they are the worse for assuming dignities and powers which do not in fact belong

to them. As long as these ideas remain operative on our minds, we may change our outward forms and institutions, and be none the better for the change. These ideas have produced in the long course of ages their results on our character, and we must judge their good or bad quality, as St. Paul says, by the fruits they have borne. Now that these results have been disastrous, nobody disputes or doubts, and the lesson to be drawn for our guidance in the future from this fact is that the current of these ideas must be changed, and in the place of the old worship we paid to them, we must accustom ourselves and others to worship and reverence new ideals. In place of isolation, we must cultivate the spirit of fraternity or elastic expansiveness. At present it is everybody's ambition to pride himself upon being a member of the smallest community that can be conceived, and the smaller the number of those with whom you can dine or marry, or associate, the higher is your perfection and purity, the purest person is he who cooks his own food, and does not allow the shadow of even his nearest friend to fall upon his cooked food. Every caste and every sect has thus a tendency to split itself into smaller castes and smaller sects in practical life. Even in philosophy and religion, it is a received maxim that knowledge is for the few, and that salvation is only possible for the esoteric elect with whom only are the virtues of sanctity and wisdom, and that for the rest of mankind, they must be left to wander in the wilderness, and grovel in superstition, and even vice, with only a colouring of so-called religion to make them respectable. Now all this must be changed. The new mould of thought on this head must be, as stated above, cast on the lines of fraternity, a capacity to expand outwards, and to make more cohesive inwards the bonds of fellowship. Increase the circle of your friends and associates, slowly and cautiously if you will, but the tendency must be towards a general recognition of the essential equality between man and man. It will beget sympathy and power. It will strengthen your own hands, by the sense that you have numbers with you, and not against you, or as you foolishly imagine, below you.

The next idea which lies at the root of our helplessness is

the sense that we are always intended to remain children, to be subject to outside control, and never to rise to the dignity of self-control by making our conscience and our reason the supreme, if not the sole, guide to our conduct. All past history has been a terrible witness to the havoc committed by this misconception. We are children, no doubt, but the children of God, and not of man, and the voice of God is the only voice which we are bound to listen. Of course, all of us cannot listen to this voice when we desire it, because from long neglect and dependence upon outside help, we have benumbed this faculty of conscience in us. With too many of us, a thing is true or false, righteous or sinful, simply because somebody in the past has said that it is so. Duties and obligations are duties and obligations, not because we feel them to be so, but because somebody reputed to be wise has laid it down that they are so. In small matters of manners and courtesies, this outside dictation is not without its use. But when we abandon ourselves entirely to this helpless dependence on other wills, it is no wonder that we become helpless as children in all departments of life. Now the new idea which should take up the place of this helplessness and dependence is not the idea of a rebellious overthrow of all authority, but that of freedom responsible to the voice of God in us. Great and wise men in the past, as in the present, have a claim upon our regards, but they must not come between us and our God—the Divine principle enthroned in the heart of every one of us high or low. It is this sense of self-respect, or rather respect for the God in us, which has to be cultivated. It is a very tender plant which takes years and years to make it grow. But there is the capacity and the power, and we owe it as a duty to ourselves to undertake the task. Revere all human authority, pay your respects to all prophets and all revelations, but never let this reverence and respect come in the way of the dictates of conscience, the Divine command in us.

Similarly there is no doubt that men differ from men in natural capacities, and aptitudes, and that heredity and birth are factors of considerable importance in our development. But it is at the same time true that they are not the only factors

that determine the whole course of our life for good or for evil, under a law of necessity. Heredity and birth explain many things, but this law of Karma does not explain all things. What is worse, it does not explain the mystery that makes man and woman what they really are, the reflection and the image of God. Our passions and our feelings, our pride and our ambition, lend strength to these agencies, and with their help the Law of Karma completes our conquest, and in too many cases enforces our surrender. The new idea that should come in here is that this Law of Karma can be controlled and set back by a properly trained will, when it is made subservient to a higher will than ours. This we see in our everyday life, and Necessity, or the Fates are, as our own texts tell us, faint obstacles in the way of our advancement if we devote ourselves to the law of Duty. I admit that this misconception is very hard to remove, perhaps the hardest of the old ideas. But removed it must be, if not in this life or generation, in many lives and generations, if we are ever to rise to our full stature.

The fourth old form or idea to which I will allude here is our acquiescence in wrong or evil doing as an inevitable condition of human life, about which we need not be very particular. All human life is a vanity and a dream, and we are not much concerned with it. This view of life is in fact atheism in its worst form. No man or woman really ceases to be animal who does not perceive or realise that wrong or evil-doing, impurity and vice, crime and misery, and sin of all kinds, is really our animal existence prolonged. It is the beast in us which blinds us to impurity and vice, and makes them even attractive. There must be nautches in our temples, say our priests, because even the Gods cannot do without these impure fairies. This is only a typical instance of our acquiescence in impurity. There must be drunkenness in the world, there must be poverty and wretchedness and tyranny, there must be fraud and force, there must be thieves and the law to punish them. No doubt these are facts, and there is no use denying their existence, but in the name of all that is sacred and true, do not acquiesce in them, do not hug these evils to your bosom, and cherish them. Their contact is poisonous, not the less deadly because it does not kill,

but it corrupts men. A healthy sense of the true dignity of our nature, and of man's high destiny, is the best corrective and antidote to this poison. I think I have said more than enough to suggest to your reflecting minds what it is that we have to reform. All admit that we have been deformed. We have lost our stature, we are bent in a hundred places, our eyes lust after forbidden things, our ears desire to hear scandals about our neighbours, our tongues lust to taste forbidden fruit, our hands itch for another man's property, our bowels are deranged with indigestible food. We cannot walk on our feet, but require stilts or crutches. This is our present social polity, and now we want this deformity to be removed ; and the only way to remove it is to place ourselves under the discipline of better ideas and forms such as those I have briefly touched above. Now this is the work of the Reformer. Reforms in the matter of infant marriage and enforced widowhood, in the matter of temperance and purity, inter-marriage between castes, the elevation of the low castes, and the re-admission of converts, and the regulation of our endowments and charities, are reforms only so far and no further, as they check the influence of the old ideas, and promote the growth of the new tendencies. The Reformer has to infuse in himself the light and warmth of nature, and he can only do it by purifying and improving himself and his surroundings. He must have his family, village, tribe, and nation recast in other and new moulds, and that is the reason why Social Reform becomes our obligatory duty, and not a mere pastime which might be given up at pleasure. Revival is, as I have said, impossible ; as impossible as mass-conversion into other faiths. But even if it were possible, its only use to us would be if the reforms elevated us and our surroundings, if they made us stronger, braver, truer men with all our faculties of endurance and work developed, with all our sympathies fully awakened and refined, and if with our heads and hearts acting in union with a purified and holy will, they made us feel the dignity of our being and the high destiny of our existence, taught us to love all, work with all, and feel for all. This is the Reformer's true work, and this in my opinion is the reason why the Con-

ference meets from year to year, and sounds the harmonies in every year which can listen to them with advantage.

The Twelfth Social Conference—Madras—1898.

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade delivered an address on "Southern India a Hundred Years Ago." He said :—

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Once more within a cycle of 12 years we meet for the third time in this holy region of Southern India, the birth-place of the Social Conference. Men and things have moved fast since we first met under the leadership of the late Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao, the first President of the Conference.

The shadow of the great calamity which has been dogging our foot steps for the last three years, is still upon us, and its dark clouds are still thickening on the Southern horizon, while it has not yet stopped its destructive work in our part of the country. The persistency with which these calamities succeed one another and intensify our suffering has made some wise men among you prophesy still more dire calamities in the years to come. These prophets derive their knowledge from observations of the conjunctions of stars and planets. We, less gifted creatures, can but bow to them as we look at the signs below our feet, on the earth we live in and move and have our being in.

A Christian missionary who worked in your Province for 30 years, more than a hundred years ago, has left on record his impressions of Southern India as he saw it in those old days. and the words of despair he has uttered fill one's mind with graver forebodings than the prophecies of our astrological observers. Abbe Du Bois, whose work has been recently published, has in one of his chapters on the 'Poverty of India,' pronounced this curse upon the people:—"It is a vain hope to suppose that the English people can ever improve the condition of the Hindus. The efforts of a humane and just government may succeed up to a certain point, but as long as the Hindus cling to their civil and religious institutions, customs and habits, they must remain what they have always been, grovelling in

poverty and wretchedness. These institutions and customs are insurmountable obstacles in their path of progress. To make a new race of Hindus, you must begin by undermining the foundations of their civilization, religion, and polity, and turn them into atheists and barbarians, and then give them new laws, new religion and new polity. But even then, the task will be half-accomplished, for, we should still have to give them a new nature and different inclinations ; otherwise, they would soon relapse into their former state and worth."

This pronouncement by one who had no motive to judge us ill, and who had the best opportunities to judge us well, would, if true, be to my mind a far worse calamity than the physical sufferings and trials we are now enduring, and which according to some of our wise men we are fated to suffer a hundredfold more in the near future. It is strange that these Christian Missionaries and our wise men should thus join their hands over the wide expanse of time and space that separates them. There are those among us who have firm faith, quite independently of the planetary conjunctions, in the gradual decay of all virtue and piety in this land, when the fatal limit of 5,000 years from the commencement of the Kaliyuga has been reached, and according to whom we are now just on the verge of crossing this Rubicon which separates law from anarchy, and virtue from impiety, and nothing that men can do in the work of their own salvation will ever help to avert the crisis.

In this situation, gentlemen, we meet here under circumstances which are calculated to make us anxious and thoughtful, and to sober and moderate our enthusiasm. Here, we have met full of hope, and we find that Nature and Man, the latter as represented by an eminent Christian Missionary, and also by our own kith and kin, place this skeleton before our eyes in the midst of our rejoicings. Are we then all indulging in the fond dreams of a Fool's Paradise ? Is this ' Holy Land,' peopled by one-sixth of the human race, fit for no other use than to be the accursed desert of human hopes and wishes, without the fertilizing rains of divine favour to water its dry and parched up plains, and no green vegetation to bless the eyes, and no sweet sounds of music to lull the ears ? I, for one, refuse to believe

that such a doom is reserved for this favoured region, even though it is pronounced by reverend missionaries and our own revered religious teachers. I, for one, refuse to believe that we can make no headway in the path of progress, and that the British connection with this country, with all its humane, and just administration, will prove of no avail to lift us up from the mire of our wretchedness. The seeming alliance between the missionaries and our wise people has this weak point in its armour of defence. According to our people, the state of the country a hundred years ago, was much better in all respects, morally and socially than what it is now. The Missionary's despair was however forced upon him by the state of the country as he saw it a hundred years ago, and one can feel almost sure, from the way in which things have moved since he wrote, that, if he had lived a hundred years later, he would have joined with the contemporary men of his calling, in conferring on us his blessings instead of his curses. The formidable alliance thus turns out on examination to be not so formidable as it seems at first sight, and we can turn one of our assailants against the other, and await in hope the final result. What then was the social condition of Southern India a hundred years back, and have the past hundred years worked no permanent change for the better? This will be the theme to which I shall address my observations to-night, and I hope to be able to show that, if things are not all as bright as we wish them to be, they are not so dreary and cheerless as some would have them to be, and that the British connection and its 'just and humane' administration have brought about a change in our religion, law, and polity, of such a character as not to make it necessary that we should be all turned into atheists and barbarians, to be white-washed again into civilisation and manners, and that if we have not acquired a new nature, we have at least acquired inclinations and aspirations which will prevent our relapse into our former condition.

A hundred years ago, Abbe Dubois mentions that among the Nairs on the Malabar coast, the women had several husbands at one and the same time, and amongst the Nambudri Brahmins of that province, if a girl died unmarried, it was deemed

ed necessary for her salvation that the corpse should be married to some Brahmin hired for the purpose before it was burned. Then, in the Madura district, there was a caste called Totiyars, among whom brothers, uncles and nephews had a common wife among them, and in Eastern Mysore there was a caste in which the mother giving her eldest daughter in marriage had to puncture two of her fingers. On the Malabar coast in those days, all Sudras drank toddy and Brahmins used opium. In the Carnatic hills men and women did not wash their clothes till they wore away by use. In those days again, besides the caste and sect-divisions, there were what are called the right hand and the left hand factions in which the low-castes were divided upon such questions as the right to wear slippers, to ride on horse-back, or to pass certain streets, or to sound certain music before them. All these citations are made from the first chapter of Dubois' work, and the editor of that book has found it necessary, in his desire to state the truth, that all these customs of polyandry and uncleanness, and these factious feuds have ceased to exist. In the second chapter of the same work, mention is made of the condition of the Pariahs. That condition is bad enough even now, but the details given of their wretchedness in this work baffle all description. They were forbidden to cross Brahmin streets, or to come in Brahmin neighbourhood. On the Malabar Coast, the Pariahs were attached to the land as serfs and sold with it. In those good old days adultery was punished with death inflicted on the woman, and that death was inflicted by the members of the caste. Expulsion from caste for breach of caste-rules was irrevocable unless a rival faction was created by the friends of the person excommunicated. Even when thousands of Brahmins of those days, as well as Sudras, were forcibly converted by Tippu Sultan, the Brahmins who were applied to for re-admission found it impossible, even with the help of the Brahmin Government of Puna, to effect their restoration, while many thousands of Christians who had been similarly converted by Tippu Sultan, were freely admitted back into the Christian community, by the intervention of Abbe Dubois, Colonel Wilks, and General Wellestley. The professors of the so-called Fine

Arts such as music, painting, and sculpture belonged in those days to castes which were held to be lower in the social scale than the Sudras, and their touch was pollution. These things have now been according to the editor of the work, all changed for the better. Adultery is not punished by death without trial, excommunication is not irrevocable, wholesale conversions by force are impossible, and there are movements to re-admit converts to other faiths when they seek such re-admission. This year, the Arya Samaj in Punjab admitted five such Christian and Moslem proselytes. And men of the highest caste are now engaged in the practice of the fine arts. As regards the Brahmins themselves, the power of the Gurus in those days in exacting Pada-Puja was something terrible. Dubois mentions without reserve that many had to sell their children for Gurudakshinas. Women dishonored by the Guru were called Garud Baswis or Linga Baswis, and had the stamp of Garud or the Ling branded, on tender parts of their bodies. And then, these women became wives of gods and served in the temple, till they became old and lost their attraction. In Dubois' time the girls were married at the age of 5, 7 or at the utmost, when they were 9 years old. Widows, of course, were not allowed to marry in the higher castes, and even the Sudras followed the example. On the fast-days people not only took no food, on the 11th day but also ate only once on the 10th and the 12th days. In Bengal the widows may not even drink water on the fast-days. People who happened to kill Nāg serpents had to expiate their offence by a ceremony called the *paradan*, which consisted of an incision made on the thigh or arm of the offender, or of some other person who might stand as substitute on the former's paying a large Dakshina. In the last case, the blood was sprinkled on the body of the offender.

As regards intemperance, Dubois says, that while the Europeans are noted for their drunkenness, the Brahmins are in their turn open to the charge of gluttony, and even as regards drunkenness he says, they were not altogether exempt from the vice, and gives an instance in which a Tanjore Brahmin's house caught fire, and among the things saved were one vessel of salted pork and another of *arrack* or native rum. Of course these Brah-

mins must have been Shaktee worshippers or *vam-margees*, among whom the use of forbidden food and drink, and promiscuous mingling of men and women in indecent gatherings were tests for admission into the secret society. The respect due from the Sudras to the Brahmins, and from women to men was in those days best shown by uncovering the upper part of the body of the inferior person before the eyes of the superiors. As regards *Suttee*, it was the commonest occurrence to witness. Dubois himself witnessed the deaths of several *Suttees*, among others the Ranees of Tanjore, who immolated themselves with the corpse of the deceased Raja. There were some seven hundred *Suttee* deaths in the year 1817 in the Bengal Presidency alone. As regards the belief in astrology, magic, omens and palmistry, Dubois states that there was in his time almost a general belief in these superstitious fancies. These beliefs are not still extinct but we have no idea of the influence they exercised a hundred years ago. Then again, turning to the popular religion of the country, the position of the Devadasees was recognised as so respectable, that even private gentlemen visiting each other on formal business had to be accompanied by these attendants. There were temples in Mysore belonging to the aboriginal gods where fairs were held, at which women cursed with barrenness made vows to get children, and in connection with these vows had resort to the most dirty practices, which cannot be described in decent language. Their gods and goddesses were carried in processions in those days being made to mimic obscene gestures to one another. These processions may still be seen in various parts of Southern India, but robbed of much of their obscene features. Walking on burning fire, hook-swinging, piercing the cheeks and the lips or the tongue with iron rods or silver wire—these were the received forms of devotion in many temples.

I think I have said enough to give you an idea of the state of things in Southern India which Dubois witnessed with his own eyes a hundred years ago. It is quite possible, that, being a missionary, he unconsciously exaggerated many points, and misunderstood many others. There are good reasons to think, that he was misinformed in many respects ; but

making allowance for all these defects, the general correctness of his description, especially of the ignorant classes of society, can hardly be impugned. There are fossil remains and vestiges of all these enormities and superstitions even still visible outside our larger towns in the mofussil. Even if one-tenth of the evils and vices, and obscenities, and enormities which met his eyes were true, they make up together a picture sufficiently disheartening to the most enthusiastic defender of the past. The fact is, that Brahmin civilisation, with all its poetry and philosophy, with strict rules of abstinence and purity, had hardly penetrated below the upper classes who constituted less than ten per cent. of the population. We can easily understand these phenomena from our own present experiences.

The practical question for us to consider is whence came this polyandry and polygamy; this brutal conception of gods and goddesses, this confessed cruelty to women, these superstitions, these feuds between castes and sub-sections of castes and factions? Abbe Dubois has been very unjust to the Brahmins when he holds them responsible for all these enormities. The Brahmin civilisation, whatever else it was, was certainly not a civilisation which favoured polyandry or polygamy, drunkenness and obscenity, cruelty and vice. We have records which mirror the thoughts of the Brahmin settlers in Southern India. The ideal of marriage was monogamy, and it is best typified in the story of the Ramayana, where the hero is distinguished above all men for his single-hearted devotion to his consort. The women as depicted in the early Brahmin records as also in the epics are respected and honoured, left to their choice to marry or to remain single and are oftentimes noted as composers of hymns, and writers of philosophical works. The wife, even in the rituals we now recite, is the sole mistress of the house and as free an agent as her partner in life. The immolation in the form of Satee was not only not recognised as a duty, but second marriage was prescribed as quite open to her if she so wished it in all the first three Yugas. Early marriage was not dreamt of, and one of the qualifications for marriage was developed womanhood. The castes were not so

strongly separated as to prevent inter-marriages in the order of the caste, and as for inter-dining, the first three castes among themselves observed no jealous distinction. And the better specimen of the fourth caste was specially commended as servants for cooking food. Ghost-worship and Devil-worship were unknown to the Brahmin cult. As for crossing seas on long voyages, there is historical evidence that the Brahmin missionaries and settlers established themselves, and their religion in far off Java, and Sumatra, and their Buddhist successors converted half the human race in Burmah, Siam, China, Japan, Tibet and distant Mongolia. Even in India itself the Aryan settlers found no difficulty in incorporating with them the non-Aryan races into fellowship in the profession of the Aryan faith.

The question thus recurs again how it happened that institutions and practices so essentially just and pure, so healthy and considerate, came to be deflected from their natural growth, and made room for the distortions which struck Abbe Dubois as so monstrous, and excite surprise in us even at the present day, how the chivalry and honour of our noble ancestors disappeared and their spiritual worship gave way to ghost and demon worship the ministers of which in many cases are the descendants of these same old Brahmins? Unless we find some working solution which satisfactorily accounts for this transformation, we shall never be able to find our way with sure steps out of this labyrinth. Abbe Dubois's explanation is obviously untrue. The fact appears to be, though I speak with diffidence and subject to correction, that the Brahmin settlers in Southern India and the warriors and traders who came with them were too few in numbers and too weak in power to make any lasting impression beyond their own limited circle upon the vast multitudes who constituted the aboriginal races in the Southern Peninsula. In North India where their power was more distinctly felt they appear to have been about the commencement of the Christian era submerged by fresh hordes of Scythians or Shaks, of Huns and the Jats or Goths who subverted the Roman Empire. In Southern India it was not foreign invasion, but the upheaval of the aboriginal Dravidian races

which brought about pretty nearly the same results. There is a tone of despondency and panic in the Puranas written about this time which can only be explained by some such phenomena. However this may be, this is certain that when Hinduism revived from the depression into which it had fallen, in consequence of the rise of Buddhism, it did not revive in its old, pristine purity, but in the more or less adulterated form as we now see it even at the present day. In their anxiety to destroy Buddhism, and later on the Jain faith, the Brahmins, allied themselves with the barbarism of the land represented in the countless multitudes, whom they had till then contemptuously treated as Sudras, and as out of the pale of their early institutions. From being sages and prophets, poets and philosophers, they descended to the lower level of priests and *purohīts*, and thus sacrificed their independence for the advantage of power and profit. The gods and goddesses of the Dasys or the Rakshasas who had no place in the old pantheon were identified with being more or less pure forms of the old Brahmanical triad or rather of the two divisions of Shaiva and Vaishnava cults. The old elastic system of the three divisions of the Aryas and the fourth non Aryan section became crystallised into local and professional castes, of which the Brahmins became the priests; and these sub-divisions became strict and insurmountable barriers. Such a change as this could not be brought about without a surrender all along the line to the brute force of barbarous influences. Woman ceased to be an object of respect and became the subject of distrust and jealousy who always must remain dependent on her relations. The institution of Satee found in all barbarous nations was introduced, marriage by choice gave way to the practice of sale in marriage, and polygamy and polyandry became legalised institutions. Brahminism having failed to conquer from want of power, allowed itself thus to be degraded and conquered by the multitudes whom it failed to civilize. As priests of the castes and the aboriginal gods and goddesses, it became their interest to magnify for their advantage the old superstitious beliefs; and with a view to justifying this action books called the *Mahatmyas* were composed in the name of the Puranas and new texts were

introduced, condemning all the old approved institutions such as celibacy, sea-voyages, late marriages, and widow-marriages as being unsuited to the new Kali-yuga, and therefore forbidden, though practised in old times. This seems to me to be the only possible explanation of the change of front which we see in the old records. Of course, in the midst of this degradation, the spirit of the old civilization was not entirely extinct, and the great Acharyas who flourished in Southern India, and the equally great saints and prophets who succeeded them, entered their protest against this cruelty and wrong and degradation of the priesthood, and held up the light on high with the independence of the old Rishis. Their labours bore no permanent result because of the eruptions of the Mahomedans which soon followed and the establishment of the Moslem power aggravated the old evils by the example which the Mussalmans set to the subject races. Even the Mahomedans, however, were not able to extinguish the old fire completely, and the spirit of righteous self-assertion and of faith in God which has distinguished Brahmanism from the first, only wanted an opportunity to regain its old liberty.

If this account of the deflection or corruption of Brahmanism be approximately correct, it furnishes us with a clue by which we can trace back our steps in this labyrinth of confusion. The opportunity so sorely needed has come to this country and slowly but surely priest-ridden and caste-ridden India is loosening its coils of ages. Abbe Dubois was unjust to the old civilization when he thought that we should have to unlearn all our past and to commence with atheism and barbarism, and then take our religion, law and polity from our foreign masters. Even if the task were possible, the remedy would be worse than the disease. We have not to unlearn our entire past,—certainly not—the past which is the glory and wonder of the human race. We have to retrace our steps from the period of depression, when in panic and weakness a compromise was made with the brute force of ignorance and superstition. If this unholy alliance is set aside we have the Brahmanism of the first three Yugas unfolding itself in all its power and purity as it flourished in the best period of our history.

This is the work of the reform movement. Last year I spoke of 'Revival and Reform' and I tried to show how *Reform* was not *Revival*. The line of thought developed above shows that the work of *Reform* is really the work of *Liberation*,—*liberation* from the restraints imposed upon an essentially superior religion, law and polity, institutions and customs by our surrender to the pressure of mere brute force for selfish advancement. Our nature has not to be changed. If that were necessary, escape would be hopeless indeed. Our inclinations and aspirations have to be shifted from one quarter to its opposite, from the more immediate past of our degradation to the most remote past of our glory. We need no foreign masters for this purpose. It is enough if they keep the peace and enforce toleration to all who work for righteousness. Super-imposed laws will not do service to us unless as in some extreme cases the Surgeon has to be sent for to stop hemorrhage and allow the Physician time to heal the patient. This work of liberation must be the work of our own hands, each one working of himself for his own release. It is in this spirit that the work has been carried on during the last thirty years and more.

For the last twelve years the Conference has been trying to establish a bond of union between the several associations and individuals who are working in this direction in this and in other parts of the country, and to publish the results of that work for the information of all concerned. Measured from year to year, the progress seems small, and in many years the harvests are not plentiful. The year about to close has been, on the whole, a lean year owing to causes which need not be detailed here, the plague being the principal cause among others. The results of this year will be placed before the delegates in a summary form at the first preliminary meeting to-morrow morning. One general observation may be made on this occasion. The question is often asked who are the heroes and martyrs in this reform work, the prevailing impression being that unless heroes and martyrs are forthcoming, no cause can make progress. I would say in answer that to the extent that this impression is true, the cause had its heroes and martyrs in Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Pandit Vishnu Shastri, Mr. Karandhas

Muljee and Mr. Madhavadas Raghunathdas, and even now we have Rao Bahadur Kolhatkar, our President of last year, Dr. Bhandarkar, our President of one of the previous years, our honoured President this year, Pandit Vireshlingam Pantulu, Prof. Karve, and others who require no mention, who have in their own lives set an example which shows that the fire is not yet put out altogether. Dr. Jaising and Mr. Dwarkantha Ganguli, who died this year, may also be mentioned, one as the life and soul of the Shudhi Sabha, and the other as a practical reformer from among the Brahmo community. It is not given to all to be heroes and martyrs in such a cause. But it is given to every one to be an earnest and genuine worker. In that capacity the names of hundreds may be mentioned who are unknown beyond their own circles and whose work therefore is one of pure love and self-sacrifice. Lala Devraj and Lala Munshiram of Jullundhur, Lala Hansraj and Lala Ruchiram of Lahore, the late Gokuldas of Succur, Mr. Dayaram Gidumal of Sindh, Mr. Lal Shankar of Ahmedabad, Mr. Damodardas Goverdnandas, the late Dr. Atmaram Pandurang, who died during the year, Babu Shashipad Bannerjee, Babu Rash Behari Mukerjee who also died this year, Dewan Bahadur Raghunath Rao, Mr. R. Venkataratnam, of your part of the country, Mr. Vishnu Pant Mahajani of Berar and Lala Baijnath of N. W. P. may be mentioned in this connection as persons about whose genuine devotion to the cause there can be only one opinion. In spiritual, if not in temporal matters, the remark is true that a man's wealth is measured not by what he has in the way of possessions outside himself, but by what he is or may become in the way of his own development, from year to year into higher and fuller life. Liberties bestowed on us by foreigners are concessions forced on us by the force of circumstances. These are not really ours; they are possessions only and not developments. But when multitudes of people in different parts of the country yearn for a change in their social surroundings, and each in his place seeks to work it out at great sacrifice of his present interests, it can hardly be but that those yearnings and struggles must bear fruit. One of our most popular saints has in his own inimitable way described

this fruit to be the strength which comes from the resolve to be better; and judged by this test there can be no reason to doubt that this desire to be better, and this resolve to strive for it are both growing in all the many races that dwell in this land. Other influences co-operating help on the work and make it smoother and easier of accomplishment. But without such a desire and such a resolve these forces would be powerless to act. We have therefore no reason to be depressed by the calamities and by the prophecies of evil to come and of our unalterable doom pronounced by our own or other people. The harvest is ready to the hand of every one who is prepared to give his honest labour for the day, to earn his rest for the night, in life and after life.

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade, in bringing the proceedings of the Conference to a close, said:—LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I am glad that all these expressions of thanks have been given by the Secretary of the Conference Committee. I now beg to propose that the General Secretary and the Joint Secretaries be re-appointed for the next year and that the next year's Conference be held in some place in the North-West Provinces, most likely at Lucknow. The General Secretary has written to me that on account of his advanced age and delicate health he has been unable to be present at this Conference, but he has sent his blessings and words of advice which I believe will sink deep into the hearts of those present. He says, "The work that is being done is holy work. We do not seek to advance our temporal interest, we seek to promote our spiritual welfare." If we look at the programme that we have gone through, some of us may be inclined to ask what, after all, has been done. But suppose in place of the several resolutions that have been moved, seconded and supported during this day, we put in their negatives, suppose instead of saying on this day, the first day of the new year, "I shall take for myself a vow that, as far as lies in my power, I shall undertake the education of my female relations," we say "I shall not undertake the education of my female relations," shall we be the better or the worse for our resolution? Suppose instead of saying "I shall take a vow

not of temperance which is without much meaning for most of us, but of total abstinence," you put it the other way, and say "it shall be our pleasure and convenience not to observe these restraints which our forefathers had placed upon us"; will our resolution be to our advantage or loss, spiritually or morally? Suppose instead of saying, "I shall, as far as possible, protract and prolong the period of celibacy amongst men and women," we were to say, that "as far as possible, that period shall be shortened", shall our country be the better for our efforts or the worse? Suppose we ask ourselves what plan of life we are to follow; shall we not be just and merciful to those who need justice and mercy at our hands? Shall we not be more considerate to those whom we have hitherto treated as if their very touch was pollution, and help them in rising higher, or shall we say to them, "Do not stand near and cast your shadow on us"; will the inner man in each one of us grow stronger, braver and more charitable and humane, by reason of our resolve in one way and not in the other? The issue is thus, a choice between life and death, we live or we die according as we make the choice. We all desire to live, and yet most of us, by our course of conduct show as if we welcomed death. Whether reformer or non-reformer, let each one in the seclusion of his home, when he retires into his own hearth, ask himself the following question:—Does he feel the desire that he should grow in purity, temperance, justice and mercy, and that these virtues be more and more incorporated into the practical life he leads from day to day? I believe every one of us, whatever be his particular views as to different points and methods we have discussed, realises the importance of the main issue. That issue is not this or that particular reform about which people have so much controversy, but the general spirit of purity, justice, equality, temperance, and mercy, which should be infused into our minds and which should illuminate our hearts. Is it to be the spirit of justice, charity, mercy, toleration and appreciation of all, or is it to be exclusiveness, haughtiness, pride, cruelty and misery of all kinds? The choice lies with us and we may choose whichever we prefer. It is not on this platform only but wherever we go, and whatever we do, these two paths are

constantly coming across our vision. One of them asks us to go one way, the other the other way. We have to make the choice, and as we make the choice, we succeed or fail in our lives. Of course, the failing in life may not seem to many, to be a very serious affair when they do not come to any positive trouble. But whether we are great in riches and possession, and whether we are great in the estimation of the world, the only thing that is really ours is how far during the short time that has been allowed to us all, we succeed here in making ourselves better fitted for the existence that is to come. If we can gauge our advance from day to day and from year to year, by this standard, then I believe we shall find the true reward of our work. We are spending unnecessary breath in thinking that the strife lies between the one and the other party in these matters. There is really no strife and there are no parties outside us. If those, who do not agree with the methods that are pursued here, think they can attain the same objects by other methods, then they should adopt those other means. Somebody here said we are in a minority, but when we embrace the whole world in our vision, the minority is turned the other way. If we may not at present be in a position to assert the strength of the majority which is represented by the sentiment and the sense of the world, still you may depend upon it that wherever you go, this sense and these sentiments must carry the day in the end. It is on such considerations that we must rely for our ultimate success. Majority and minority I keep absolutely out of sight. I put the question to myself, "Do I feel any yearning, any regret, any compunction, that there is anything wanting, anything wrong, anything cruel in me, and do I try to abstain from doing anything that I ought to, and feel inclined to do things which I ought not to do?" If I feel this sort of compunction, this sort of struggle, if I feel noble impulses, if I feel at the same time that these noble impulses have been weakened by nature, the work before me of reform is clear. Remember, the work of this Conference and of gatherings like this is really this work—to make men feel that they have duties and responsibilities for which alone, life and health are given to them. That is the sort of philosophy which comes upon me at times.

and which I believe comes upon every one of us when we look seriously at these things. If any of us feel in our hearts that we have to make amends for the past, I believe that man is the better for his attendance here, even though he may disapprove of any particular items of our programme.

We have every reason to thank the Conference Committee for the great trouble they have taken in providing for all those small matters which to strangers from outside represent no end of small inconvenience. We have every reason to be thankful to the Secretaries of the Committee, to the Volunteers, to the Reception Committee of the Congress, to the lady visitors, and above all, to the President of the Conference and his lieutenant, the Hon'ble Mr. Subba Rao, who have done their work to-day with such efficiency and success. On behalf of the larger India which is not represented here, we have every reason to thank our Madras friends for the hospitable and enthusiastic way in which they have conducted the work of this day. (*Loud cheers.*)

The Thirteenth Social Conference—Lucknow—1900.

The Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade delivered his inaugural address on "India a Thousand Years Ago." He said:—

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—This time last year, I had occasion, at the inauguration of the Conference held at Madras, to speak on the subject of "Southern India a Hundred Years Ago." To-day I find myself far away in the North, surrounded on all sides by the traditions of a civilisation older than the oldest known to history, the land of the Aryan race settled in India, tracing its descent from the self-born Swayambhu Manu, where the Solar dynasty flourished for thousands of years, the land of the Ikshvákus, of Dilip and Raghu, of Dasharatha and the incarnate hero Rama, with his illustrious brothers and the still more honoured wife Sita, the land where Vashistha and Vishvamitra lived and flourished, the home of all that is beautiful and true, and lovely and godlike in Aryan history. This favoured land of yours gave birth also in later times to Sakhya Muni Buddha who has been well des-

cribed as the perfection of humanity in its highest and noblest development, and whose "wheel of law" still regulates the thoughts and feelings of half the human race in its efforts to attain beatitude. The South and the North thus contrasted together suggest recollections that are so overpowering, that I am tempted on this occasion when we meet to inaugurate the work of the Conference at Lucknow, to dwell for a few moments on this subject, and I bespeak your thoughtful attention to the lessons it suggests. Far in the South, which is now the stronghold of Brahminical ideas uninfluenced by outside contact, the Aryan civilisation no doubt made its way, but it continued to be an exotic civilisation confined to a small minority of Aryan settlers, so few in numbers that they were overwhelmed by the influences of the earlier Dravidian dominion. It never made its home in those remote regions, and the common people continued their adhesion to their old worship and to their old faiths under new names. What the effects of this subordination were, was depicted in my address at Madras in the words of a foreign missionary who lived and worked a hundred years ago, and who had exceptional opportunities of studying these effects. I propose this time to draw your attention to the turn which the Aryan civilisation has taken under the influences represented by the conquest of this part of the country by the Mahomedans, nearly a thousand years back. The one factor which separates Northern India from its Southern neighbours, is the predominant influence of this conquest by the Mahomedans which has left its mark permanently upon the country, by the actual conversion to the Mahomedan faith of one-fifth of the population, and by the imperceptible but permanent moulding of the rest of the people in the ways of thought and belief, the like of which is hard to find on the Malabar or Coromandel Coasts. I propose to draw my materials from the Mahomedan philosophers and travellers who visited India, both before and after the Mahomedan conquest, had changed the face of the country. Owing to the absence of the historic instinct among our people, we have necessarily to depend upon the testimony of foreign historians. That testimony is however unexceptionable, because it was for the most part given before

the Mahomedan domination had effected the separation which distinguishes the Old India of the past from the Modern India in which we are now living. This domination also separates the line which marks off Southern India, of which I spoke last year, from the North, in one of the most representative centres of which we are met here to-day. At the outset, we must have a correct understanding of what Northern India was before Mahamad of Gazni made his numerous expeditions for the plunder of its far-famed cities and temples, at the commencement of the tenth century. Fortunately for us, we have a witness to this period of our history in the writings of Alberuni, whose work on India was written shortly after the time that Mahamad crossed the Indus as a conqueror of infidels. That work has been translated by Dr. Sachau, a professor in the Berlin University, and in its English form, is now accessible to us all. Alberuni was a native of Khorasan, his birth-place being near Khiva. Mahamad of Gazni conquered Khorasan, and Alberuni had thus to shift to Gazni which was then the seat of a flourishing empire, the rulers of which were great patrons of Mahomedan learning. Alberuni was in special favour with Masaud the son of Mahamad, and he was thus enabled to travel throughout India, where he spent many years, having mastered the Sanskrit language. He was a philosopher by profession and temper, and had a special liking for Indian philosophy, which he studied with the same care and attention that he bestowed on Plato and Aristotle. His work on India consists of 80 chapters, relating to Religion, Philosophy, Caste, Idolatry, Civil Polity, Literature, Science, Mathematics, Medicine, Geography, Astronomy, Cosmogony, Alchemy, and Astrology. He took great pains to give a full description of all that was known to the Hindus under these several heads, and being naturally not a bigoted Mahomedan, his book shows that he wrote his whole work with a single desire to promote the cause of true learning. While Alberuni shows a great regard for the Hindu Philosophy, Astronomy, and Medicine, he was not slow in finding out the weak points of the Indian character. In his chapters on caste and idolatry, in the condemnation he pronounces on the want of practical aptitudes of our people, and in their

devotion to superstitious observances, Alberuni did not spare his censures. He contrasted the democratic equality of the Mahomedan people with the innumerable divisions of the Indian races. He notices the helpless position of the women of India, and the filthy customs and the habits of the people in those days. He gives praise to the few educated Brahmins whom he separates from the superstitious multitudes, whose fallen condition he deplures. Even among the Brahmins, he notices the verbosity of their writings and the words-splitting which passed for wisdom. He notices the greediness and tyranny of the Hindu princes who would not agree to join their efforts together for any common purpose, and the timidity and the submissiveness of the people who, in his expressive language, were 'scattered like atoms of dust in all directions' before the invading Moslems. The prevailing feeling among the Mahomedans of the time was that the Hindus were infidels and entitled to no mercy or consideration, and the only choice to be allowed to them was that of death or conversion. Alberuni did not share in these views, but these were the views of his master Mahamad of Gazni and of the hordes who were led by him on these expeditions. Another traveller, Ibn Batuta, a native of Tanjiers in North Africa, visited this country about a hundred years after Kutubudin established the Afghan kingdom at Delhi. Like him he was taken into favour by the then Delhi Emperor, Mahomad Taghlak, under whom he acted for some time as Judge of Delhi. Ibn Batuta travelled more extensively than Alberuni. He travelled from the extreme west of Africa to the extreme east of China, and went round the coast from Malabar to Coromandel. He was however not a philosopher nor a scholar. His *Journal of Travels* is interesting, but he did not observe the manners and customs of the people with the same mastery of details that Alberuni's work shows on every page. The only points which struck Ibn Batuta in the course of his travels through India were the rite of Sati of which he was a witness, and the practice of drowning men in the Ganges, both of which struck him as inhuman to a degree he could not account for. He also notices the self-mortification of the jogees and their juggleries, in describing which last, he mentions the fact

that in the presence of the Emperor he saw a jogee raise his body up in the air, and keep it there for some time. Another traveller Abdur Razzak visited India about 1450 A.D. His travels lay chiefly in the southern peninsula, Calicut, Vizianagar and Mangalore. The narratives of two other travellers, one a Russian and the other a Venitian, who both visited India in the fifteenth century, are published by the Hakluyt Society which afford most interesting reading. The general impression left on the minds of these travellers was a respect for the Brahmins for their philosophy and attainments in astrology, but for the common people, the vast multitudes of men and women, their sense was one of disgust and disappointment. Abdur Razzak expressed this feeling in his own words in a reply to the invitation of the King of Vizianagar. He said to the king, "If I have once escaped from the desert of thy love, and reached my country, I shall not set out on another voyage even in the company of a king." In Southern India, these travellers found that both men and women, besides being black, were almost nude, and divided into innumerable castes and sects, which worshipped their own idols. This abase of idolatry and caste struck every traveller as the peculiar characteristic of the country, and gave them offence. The practice of self-immolation or Sati, and of human sacrifices to idols by being crushed over by the temple car are also mentioned. Finally, we have the testimony of the Emperor Babar who in his memoirs thus describes this country:—"Hindusthan is a country which has few things to recommend. The people are not handsome. They have no idea of the charms of friendly society or of freely mixing together in familiar intercourse. They have no genius, no comprehension of mind, no politeness of manners, no kindness or fellow-feeling, no ingenuity or mechanical invention in planning and executing their handicraft work, no skill or knowledge in design or architecture. They have no good horses, no good flesh, no good grapes or musk-melons, no good fruits, no cold water or ice, no good food or bread in their bazaars, no baths, no colleges, no candles, not even a candle-stick. They have no aqueducts or canals, no gardens, and no palaces; in their buildings they study neither elegance nor climate, nor

appearance nor regularity. Their peasants and lower classes all go about naked tying on only a *langoti*. The women too have only a *lang*." The only good points which Babar could find in favour of Hindusthan were that it is a large country, and has abundance of gold and silver, and there is also an abundance of workmen of every profession and trade for any work and employment.

Such was the picture presented to the Mahomedans when they entered India through the passes in successive hordes for three or four centuries. A great portion of the disgust and disappointment felt by these Mahomedan invaders may be set down to ignorance and the pride of race. At the same time, it is always of advantage to know exactly how India appeared in its strong and weak points to intelligent foreigners, such as those we have mentioned above. The question for consideration to us at the present moment is, whether in consequence of the predominance of the Mahomedans for five centuries which intervened from the invasions of Mahamad to the ascendancy of Akbar, the people of India were benefitted by the contact thus forcibly brought together between the two races. There are those among us who think that this predominance has led to the decay and corruption of the Indian character, and that the whole story of the Mahomedan ascendancy should for all practical purposes, be regarded as a period of humiliation and sorrow. Such a view however appears to be unsupported by any correct appreciation of the forces which work for the elevation or depression of nations. It can not be easily assumed that in God's Providence, such vast multitudes as those who inhabit India were placed centuries together under influences and restraints of alien domination, unless such influences and restraints were calculated to do lasting service in the building up of the strength and character of the people in directions in which the Indian races were most deficient. Of one thing we are certain, that after lasting over five hundred years, the Mahomedan Empire gave way, and made room for the re-establishment of the old native races in Punjab, and throughout Central Hindusthan and Southern India, on foundations of a much more solid character than those which yielded so easily before

the assaults of the early Mahomedan conquerors. The domination therefore had not the effect of so depressing the people that they were unable to raise their heads again in greater solidarity. If the Indian races had not benefitted by the contact and example of men with stronger muscles and greater powers, they would have never been able to reassert themselves in the way in which history bears testimony they did.

Quite independently of this evidence of the broad change that took place in the early part of the eighteenth century when the Mogul empire went to pieces, and its place was taken up not by foreign settlers, but by revived native powers, we have more convincing grounds to show that in a hundred ways the India of the 18th century, so far as the native races were concerned, was a stronger and better constituted India than met the eyes of the foreign travellers from Asia and Europe who visited it between the period of the first five centuries from 1000 to 1500. In Akbar's time this process of regenerate India first assumed a decided character which could not be well mistaken. No student of Akbar's reign will fail to notice that for the first time the conception was then realized of a united India in which Hindus and Mahomedans, such of them as had become permanently established in the country, were to take part in the building of an edifice rooted in the hearts of both by common interests and common ambitions. In place of the scorn and contempt with which the Mahomedan invaders had regarded the religion of the Hindus, their forms of worship, their manners and customs, and the Hindus looked down upon them as barbarous Mlenchas, whose touch was pollution, a better appreciation of the good points in the character of both came to be recognized as the basis of the union. Akbar was the first to see and realize the true nobility of soul and the devotion and fidelity of the Hindu character, and satisfied himself that no union was possible as long as the old bigotry and fanaticism was allowed to guide the councils of the Empire. He soon gathered about him the best men of his time, men like Faizi, Abul Fazel and their Father Mubarak, the historians Mirza Abdal Rahim, Nizamuddin Ahmed, Badauni and others. These were set to work upon the trans-

lation of the Hindu epics and Shastras and books of science and philosophy. The pride of the Rajput races was conciliated by taking in marriage the princesses of Jaipur and Jodhpur, and by conferring equal or superior commands on those princes. These latter had been hitherto treated as enemies. They were now welcomed as the props of the Empire, and Maharaja Bhagvandas, his great nephew Mansingh for some time Governor of Bengal and Kabul, Raja Todarmal and the Brahmin companion of the Emperor Raja Birbal, these were welcomed to court, and trusted in the full consciousness that their interests were the same as those of the Musalman noblemen. The Emperor himself guided by such counsel of his Hindu and Mahomedan nobles, became the real founder of the union between the two races, and this policy for a hundred years guided and swayed the councils of the empire. A fusion of the two races was sought to be made firmer still by the establishment of a religion of the Din-i-ilahi in which the best points both of the Mahomedan, Hindu, and other faiths were sought to be incorporated. Invidious taxation and privileges were done away with, and toleration for all faiths became the universal law of the Empire. To conciliate his subjects, Akbar abjured the use of flesh except on four special occasions in the year, and he joined in the religious rites observed by his Hindu Queens. In regard to the particular customs of the people relating to points where natural humanity was shocked in a way to make union impossible, Akbar strove by wise encouragement and stern control where necessary, to help the growth of better ideas. Sati was virtually abolished by being placed under restraints which nobody could find fault with. Re-marriage was encouraged, and marriage before puberty was prohibited. In these and a hundred other ways, the fusion of the races and of their many faiths was sought to be accomplished with a success which was justified by the results for a hundred years. This process of removing all causes of friction and establishing accord went on without interruption during the reigns of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahajahan. Shahajahan's eldest son Dara Sheko was himself an author of no mean repute. He translated the Upanishads, and wrote a work in which he sought to reconcile

the Brahmin religion with the Mahomedan faith. He died in 1659. This period of a hundred years may be regarded as the halcyon period of Indian history when the Hindu and Mahomedan races acted in full accord. If in place of Aurangzeb, Dara Sheko had succeeded to power as the eldest son of Shahajahan, the influences set on foot by the genius of Akbar would have gathered strength, and possibly averted the collapse of the Mogul power for another century. This was however not to be so, and with Aurangzeb's ascent to the throne, a change of system commenced which gathered force during the long time that this Emperor reigned. Even Aurangzeb had however to follow the traditions of his three predecessors. He could not dispense with Jaising or Jaswantsing who were his principal military commanders. In the reign of his son, whole provinces under him were governed by Rajput, Kayastha and other Governors. The revival of fanatic bigotry was kept in check by the presence of these great Rajput chiefs, one of whom on the reimposition of the *zizia* addressed to the Emperor a protest couched in unmistakable terms that the God of Islam was also the God of the Hindus, and the subjects of both races merited equal treatment. Aurangzeb unfortunately did not listen to this advice, and the result was that the empire built by Akbar went to pieces even when Aurangzeb was alive. No one was more aware of his failure than Aurangzeb himself, who in his last moments admitted that his whole life was a mistake. The Marathas in the South, the Sikhs in the North, and the Rajput states helped in the dismemberment of the empire in the reigns of his immediate successors with the result that nearly the whole of India was restored to its native Hindu sovereigns except Bengal, Oudh, and the Deccan Hyderabad. It will be seen from this that so far from suffering from decay and corruption, the native races gathered strength by reason of the Mahomedan rule when it was directed by the wise counsel of those Mahomedan and Hindu statesmen who sought the weal of the country by a policy of toleration and equality. Since the time of Ashoka, the element of strength born of union was wanting in the old Hindu dynasties who succumbed so easily to the Mahomedan invaders.

Besides this source of strength, there can be no doubt that in a hundred other ways the Mahomedan domination helped to refine the tastes and manners of the Hindus. The art of Government was better understood by the Mahomedans than by the old Hindu sovereigns. The art of war also was singularly defective till the Mahomedans came. They brought in the use of gunpowder and artillery. In the words of Bahar, they "taught ingenuity and mechanical invention in a number of handicraft arts," the very nomenclature of which being made up of non-Hindu words, shows their foreign origin. They introduced candles, paper, glass, and house-hold furniture and saddlery. They improved the knowledge of the people in music, instrumental and vocal, medicine and astronomy, and their example was followed by the Hindus in the perversions of both these sciences, astrology, and alchemy. Geography and history were first made possible departments of knowledge and literature by their example. They made roads, aqueducts, canals, caravansaries, and the post office, and introduced the best specimens of architecture, and improved our gardening, and made us acquainted with a taste of new fruits and flowers. The revenue system as inaugurated by Todurmal in Akbar's time is the basis of the revenue system up to the present day. They carried on the entire commerce by sea with distant regions, and made India feel that it was a portion of the inhabited world with relations with all, and not cut off from all social intercourse. In all these respects, the civilisation of the united Hindu and Moslem powers represented by the Moguls at Delhi, was a distinct advance beyond what was possible before the tenth century of the Christian era.

More lasting benefits have however accrued by this contact in the higher tone it has given to the religion and thoughts of the people. In this respect, both the Mahomedans and Hindus benefitted by contact with one another. As regards the Mahomedans, their own historians admit that the Sufi heresy gathered strength from contact with the Hindu teachers, and made many Mahomedans believe in transmigration and in the final union of the soul with the supreme spirit. The Mohorrum festival and saint worship are the best evidence of the way in which the

Mahomedans were influenced by Hindu ideas. We are more directly concerned with the way in which this contact has affected the Hindus. The prevailing tone of pantheism had established a toleration for polytheism among our most revered ancient teachers who rested content with separating the few from the many, and established no bridge between them. This separation of the old religion has prevented its higher precepts from becoming the common possession of whole races. Under the purely Hindu system, the intellect may admit, but the heart declines to allow a common platform to all people in the sight of God. The Vaishnava movement however has succeeded in establishing the bridge noted above, and there can be no doubt, that in the hands of the followers of Ramananda, especially the Kabirpanthis, Malikdasis, Dadupanthis, the followers of Mirabai, of Lord Gauranga on the Bengal side, and Baba Nanak in Punjab in the fifteenth and the sixteenth centuries, the followers of Tukaram, Ekanath and Namdev in the Deccan, Babalalis, Pranatanthis, Sadhs, the Satnamis, the Shiva-Narayans and the followers of Mahant Rama Charan of the last two centuries—this elevation and the purification of the Hindu mind was accomplished to an extent which very few at the present moment realise in all its significance. The Brahmo and the Arya Samaj movements of this century are the continuations of this ethical and spiritual growth. Caste, idolatry, polytheism and gross conceptions of purity and pollution were the precise points in which the Mahomedans and the Hindus were most opposed to one another, and all the sects named above had this general characteristic that they were opposed to these defects in the character of our people. Nanak's watchword was that he was neither Hindu nor Mahomedan, but that he was a worshipper of the Nirakar or the formless. His first companion was a Mahomedan, and his teacher is said to have been also a Mahomedan. Lord Gauranga had also Mahomedan disciples. Mahomedan saints like Shaik Mahomed, Shaik Farid and Mahomed Kazi were respected both by Hindus and Mahomedans. The abuses of polytheism were checked by the devotion to one object of worship which in the case of many of these Vaishnava Sects was supreme God, the Paramatma,

and the abuses of caste were controlled by conceding to all, Hindus and Mahomedans alike, the right to worship and love the one God who was the God of all.

In the case of the Sikhs, the puritanic spirit even developed under persecution, into a coarse imitation of the Mahomedan fanaticism directed against the Mahomedans themselves; but in the case of the other sectaries, both old and new, the tolerant and the suffering spirit of Vaishnavism has prevailed, breathing peace and good-will towards all.

Such are the chief features of the influences resulting from the contact of Mahomedans and Hindus in Northern India. They brought about a fusion of thoughts and ideas which benefitted both communities, making the Mahomedans less bigoted, and the Hindus more puritanic and more single-minded in their devotion. There was nothing like this to be found in Southern India as described by Dubois where the Hindu sectarian spirit intensified caste pride and idolatrous observances. The fusion would have been more complete but for the revival of fanaticism for which Aurangzeb must be held chiefly responsible. Owing to this circumstance, the work of fusion was left incomplete, and in the course of years, both the communities have developed weaknesses of a character which still need the disciplining process to be continued for a longer time under other masters. Both Hindus and Mahomedans lack many of those virtues represented by the love of order and regulated authority. Both are wanting in the love of Municipal freedom, in the exercise of virtues necessary for Civic life, and in aptitudes for mechanical skill, in the love of science and research, in the love and daring and adventurous discovery, the resolution to master difficulties, and in chivalrous respect for womankind. Neither the old Hindu nor the old Mahomedan civilisation was in a condition to train these virtues in a way to bring up the races of India on a level with those of Western Europe, and so the work of education had to be renewed, and it has been now going on for the past century and more under the *pax britannica* with results—which all of us are witnesses to in ourselves.

If the lessons of the past have any value, one thing is quite clear, *viz*, that in this vast country no progress is possible

unless both Hindus and Mahomedans join hands together, and are determined to follow the lead of the men who flourished in Akbar's time and were his chief advisers and councillors, and sedulously avoid the mistakes which were committed by his great-grandson Aurangzeb. Joint action from a sense of common interest, and a common desire to bring about the fusion of the thoughts and feelings of men so as to tolerate small differences and bring about concord—these were the chief aims kept in view by Akbar and formed the principle of the new divine faith formulated in the *Din-i-ilahi*. Every effort on the part of either Hindus or Mahomedans to regard their interests as separated and distinct, and every attempt made by the two communities to create separate schools and interests among themselves, and not to heal up the wounds inflicted by mutual hatred of caste and creed, must be deprecated on all hands. It is to be feared that this lesson has not been sufficiently kept in mind by the leaders of both communities in their struggle for existence and in the acquisition of power and predominance during recent years. There is at times a great danger of the work of Akbar being undone by losing sight of this great lesson which the history of his reign and that of his two successors is so well calculated to teach. The Conference which brings us together is especially intended for the propagation of this 'din' or 'Dharma,' and it is in connection with that message chiefly that I have ventured to speak to you to-day on this important subject. The ills that we are suffering from are most of them, self-inflicted evils, the cure of which is to a large extent in our own hands. Looking at the series of measures which Akbar adopted in his time to cure these evils, one feels how correct was his vision when he and his advisers put their hand on those very defects in our national character which need to be remedied first before we venture on higher enterprises. Pursuit of high ideas, mutual sympathy and co-operation, perfect tolerance, a correct understanding of the diseases from which the body politic is suffering, and an earnest desire to apply suitable remedies—this is the work cut out for the present generation. The awakening has commenced, as is witnessed by the fact that we are met in this

place from such distances for joint consultation and action. All that is needed is that we must put our hands to the plough and face the strife and the struggle. The success already achieved warrants the expectation that if we persevere on right lines, the goal we have in view may be attained. That goal is not any particular advantage to be gained in power and wealth. It is represented by the efforts to attain it, the expansion and the evolution of the heart and the mind, which will make us stronger and braver, purer and truer men. This is at least the lesson I draw from our more recent history of the past thousand years, and if those centuries have rolled away to no purpose over our heads, our cause is no doubt hopeless beyond cure. That is however not the faith in me; and I feel sure it is not the faith that moves you in this great struggle against our own weak selves, than which nothing is more fatal to our individual and collective growth. Both Hindus and Mahomedans have their work cut out in this struggle. In the backwardness of female education, in the disposition to over-leap the bounds of their own religion, in matters of temperance, in their internal dissensions between castes and creeds, in the indulgence of impure speech, thought, and action on occasions when they are disposed to enjoy themselves, in the abuses of many customs in regard to unequal and polygamous marriages, in the desire to be extravagant in their expenditure on such occasions, in the neglect of regulated charity, in the decay of public spirit in insisting on the proper management of endowments,—in these and other matters both communities are equal sinners, and there is thus much ground for improvement on common lines. Of course, the Hindus being by far the majority of the population, have other difficulties of their own to combat with; and they are trying in their gatherings of separate castes and communities to remedy them each in their own way. But without co-operation and conjoint action of all communities, success is not possible, and it is on that account that the general Conference is held in different places each year to rouse local interest, and help people in their separate efforts by a knowledge of what their friends similarly situated are doing in other parts. This is the reason of our

meeting here, and I trust that this message I have attempted to deliver to you on this occasion will satisfy you that we cannot conceive a nobler work than the one for which we have met here to-day.

The Bombay Social Conference—Satara—1900.

As President of the First Bombay Provincial Social Conference held at Satara in May 1900, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade delivered the following inaugural address:—

GENTLEMEN,—The idea of holding periodical gatherings in each Presidency for the discussion of provincial matters of public interests is a legitimate offshoot of the great national gatherings which have now become an institution of the land. This year these gatherings have been held in all the three Presidencies, and it is obvious that this success indicates a healthy growth of public sentiment. In the Madras Presidency, the political gatherings in that Province have always been accompanied by the friends of social reform utilising the occasion, on the analogy of the great national gatherings of the Congress and the Conference to meet together, for the discussion of social subjects, and though hitherto in the political Conferences held in this Presidency, it has not been found possible to follow this example, it is a matter of great satisfaction to find that our Satara friends have realised the necessity of supplementing the work of the political Conference by inviting the friends of social reform to come together and take stock of our gains and losses in the social sphere of our activities. Owing to the circumstances under which this work had to be undertaken at Satara, we have had to content ourselves with a very brief programme, but it is to be hoped that the seed sown to-day will bear a rich fruit hereafter.

ADVANTAGE OF SUCH GATHERINGS.

I know there are those among us who see no advantage in holding local or national gatherings of this sort for the consideration of social topics. There are others who think that though such gatherings may have their uses, they should

not be joined together in place and time with the political meeting, as they only serve to detract the attention of the workers, and lead to no practical results. It may be of use to attempt a brief reply to both these objections.

As regards the first difficulty, it seems to me to arise from a confusion of ideas, which is very prejudicial to the right appreciation of our duties, both in the political and social sphere. The underlying assumption is that in politics, our duties consist chiefly in stating our wants and grievances to strangers who have been placed by Providence in command over us, and who are ill-informed about our real condition. Politics in this sense means simply formulating claims for gifts or favours which require no other action on our part; while in the social sphere, our duties lie more exclusively with the regulation of our own actions, in which outside help is not needed for guidance or control. As I understand it, this distinction between the two spheres of our activities is based on a radical mistake. The integrity of any human being cannot be broken up into separate spheres of activities of the sort contemplated by those who raise this objection. For the sake of convenience, you may say that the rose has its beauty and its fragrance, but you can no more separate the fragrance from the beauty, and any attempt to do it can only end in the destruction of both. What is true of the individual, is true of the collections of individuals, whom we may call by any name, tribe, class, or community. These communities are organisations, and you can no more separate the activities, except provisionally, and for the time. Every little village in our land, however poor it may be, has its temple and its "chowdi," its resting place, and watering place, and every town or city must have its township or civic life made up of interests which are not wholly political, not exclusively social, or religious, or commercial. The shops and the bazaars, the temples and the theatres, the schools and the hospitals, the courts and the barracks, the young and the old, the men and the women, the poor and the rich—it is this variety and concourse which constitute the interest of village, town and city life. Some may rule, others obey; some may advise, others follow; but the dis-

tinction is only provincial, and not in the nature of things. You cannot even build a house of your own where you do not keep a place for strangers, or the way-farer. You have to provide for the God's place of worship, a place where the thirsty, hungry and the sick have to be cared, and there is no man so poor and so selfish that he does not share in all these varied interests and recognise their claims. Each concern has to be attended to in its own time, and in its own way, but it is the whole collection which makes it a human interest. What is true in our private concern is equally true of our public life. Politics is not merely petitioning and memorialising for gifts and favours. Gifts and favours are of no value unless we have deserved the concessions by our own elevation and our own struggles. "You shall live by the sweat of your brow" is not the curse pronounced on man, but the very conditions, his existence and growth. Whether in the political, or social or religious, or commerical, or manufacturing or æsthetical spheres, in literature, in science, in art, in war, in peace, it is the individual and collective man who has to develop his powers by his own exertions in conquering the difficulties in his way. If he is down for the time, he has to get up with the whole of his strength physical, moral and intellectual, and you may as well suppose that he can develop one of those elements of strength and neglect the others, or try to separate the light from the heat of the sun or the beauty and fragrance from the rose. You cannot have a good social system when you find yourself low in the scale of political rights, nor can you be fit to exercise political rights and privileges unless your social system is based on reason and justice. You cannot have a good economical system when your social arrangements are imperfect. If your religious ideals are low and grovelling, you cannot succeed in social, economical or political spheres. This inter-dependence is not an accident, but is the law of our nature. Like the members of our body, you cannot have strength in the hands and the feet if your internal organs are in disorder; what applies to the human body holds good of the collective humanity, we call the society, or state. It is a mistaken view which divorces considerations, political from social and econo-

mical, and no man can be said to realise his duty in one aspect who neglects his duties in the other directions.

THE FAMINE CRISIS.

As an example, the present crisis of the famine may well be considered. If our social arrangements were as perfect as they might be made, half the terrors of famine would vanish, and the political problem would be much simplified. There is no question which is purely political any more than social, or economical, or even religious and they make a fatal mistake who suppose that these are separate departments in our composite nature. The same forethought, the same resolution, the same historical spirit, the same comparative scrutiny and the same strenuous endeavours are needed, in all the spheres of our activity and, therefore, it will not do for us to say that in politics, our duties are clear, but not so in other spheres. The whole man has to be developed and perfected for his own advantage and the glory of God, and it is only a conception like this which can strengthen our efforts, and crown them with real success. It is on this account that when we take stock of our wants, our mind must be open on all sides, the eyes must see and the ears hear, the hands move, and the feet support. This can only be done by our devoting attention to all claims. Owing to our difficulties of every day life of toil and sorrow, we cannot always find time for all things. When we therefore meet for one purpose, of taking thought of our political condition, that is just the time when we have the spirit of unselfish devotion stirred up in us to approach our internal man in its most tender moments, and there is an obvious convenience in seeking to utilise the advantages of time, place, company, and the enthusiasm which springs from association with equals, and you will thus see why the Congress and Conference gatherings have been joined together. If I had the choice, we should long since have added other spheres of work so as to make the national gathering really national in name and aims. The claims of some kind of work might be more absorbing than those of others, but each must have its time and place and proportional attention devoted to it, and I am glad to

see that these considerations have weighed with our friends in inviting us to this gathering at Satara on the present occasion. But it may be said that our social fabric is not the work of human hands like the political institutions under which we live, and that in regard to these social customs, the law has been laid down from time immemorial, and we have only to follow it, and it is not for us to attempt changes to suit our exigencies. This is another of those misconceptions for which there seems to be no excuse except a false pride, which makes us cherish dangerous delusions. As a matter of fact, the social arrangements at present are admittedly not those for which we can plead the sanction of the great law-givers whose names we revere in lip worship, but whose behests we disobey at every step. Most of the customs which we now profess to follow run counter to the practices observed in the old times when the institutes were written. The dependent status of women, the customary limits of the age of marriage, the prohibition of marriage to widows in the higher castes, the exclusive confinement of marriage to one's own division of the sub-castes into which the country has been split up, the ignorance and seclusion of women, the appropriation of particular castes to particular professions, the prohibition to foreign travel, the inequalities made by the license enjoyed by men and the abstentions enforced on women, the jealous isolation in matters of social intercourse as regards food, and even touch, indiscriminate charity to certain castes, for all these, and many more alienations from the old standards, you cannot hold the old law-giver responsible. They are the work of human hands, concessions made to weakness, abuses substituted for the old healthier regulations. They were advisedly made by men whose names are not known to our ancient history. They are interpolations made to bolster up the changes introduced about the times when the country had already gone from bad to worse. They were innovations for which no sanction can be pleaded. It may be, they were made with the best intentions. Admittedly they have failed to carry out these good intentions, if any, then entertained; and in seeking to upset them, and restore the more healthy ideals, they were superseded. The reformers of the

present day are certainly not open to the charge that they are handling roughly with time-honoured institutions. It is rather for the reformers to take their stand as defenders of these ancient ordinances, and denounce those who have set God's law at defiance to suit their own purposes.

THE INEVITABILITY OF REFORM.

But even if this were otherwise, and even if it could be shown by a long special pleading that the changes made are, to some extent, proper deductions from the old texts, it is quite plain that no lapse of time can bar the way of reform where such is needed by the exigencies of our present difficulties. Above all mere ordinances and institutes, stands the law eternal, of justice and equality, of pity and compassion, the suggestions of the conscience within and of nature without us. We can no more resist the stream of these influences as working for righteousness than we can roll back the tide. All real prudence would dictate that we should take full measure of these influences and decide how far we must accommodate ourselves to the inevitable. All classes of society, reformers and anti-reformers alike, unconsciously admit the force of these considerations. The only difference between the two consists in the fact that while the latter yield unconsciously and under pressure, the former seek to use conscious effort to accomplish the same purpose; and between the two, the victory must be for those who do not wish to drift, but wish to be guided by the admonitions of their inward monitor, and the lessons of past history. People will visit England whether their elders like it or not; and the force of circumstances will prevail. The education of women will similarly be encouraged as each year rolls on. The limits of age for marriage will be raised. Intermarriage restrictions will be dissolved. Caste exclusiveness must relax, and greatest freedom predominate in all transactions between man and man. As prudent men, the question for us will be, shall we float with this current or resist it? As these influences are providential, our duty is clear, and this duty becomes more pleasant when we find that in so acting, we are not only obeying

God's law, but, also returning to the ways of our forefathers, overstepping the obstacles put in by our fathers in the way.

There is one objection still which hampers the way of reform. Granted that reform is desirable, it is still claimed that only the ecclesiastical heads of the different communities and the caste elders alone have legitimate authority to act in such matters, and that it is not for the miscellaneous crowd of people like ourselves to claim this privilege. To a certain extent the caste elders and even the Acharyas are moving in the right direction. In the great caste Conferences held in all parts of India, the Kayastha, Vaishya, and other organisations that might be named without number, there are visible signs of the dead bones heaving with the life of a new spirit. Even the Acharyas in the South, when moved by native rulers, and in some cases when not so moved, have spontaneously put forth efforts to promote what is right and proper. There is, therefore, no occasion to quarrel with these agencies. They, however, have their vested interests at stake, and it will be more than human if they look at these things in the same light as those who feel the pinch are disposed to regard them. Their co-operation should be welcomed, but the question does not close here. The duty is cast upon us to see that the commonwealth to which we belong, is not endangered by any vested prejudice. We can never forego the right of every human being to act in concert with others of his own way of thinking, and make the effort to better our condition with the light that is given to us, and with the help that religion and history afford us. Of course, our powers are limited, but the work of education consists in increasing the strength of those powers by propagating both by precept and example, what we feel to be right and proper. We may fail, or even miscarry, but the effort will do us incalculable good, and the very failure will serve as a warning. This is the law of all progress, and we can claim no exemption from it.

Lastly, it has been said that we are so split up into sects and divisions, castes and sub-castes, that no common concert is possible for the best of us, and that if we mean real work we must begin with castes and sub-castes, and not indulge in the dream of joint action at least for many centuries to come.

This argument is double-edged, and has been used by those who do not feel with us, to damp our energies in the political as also the social sphere of action. When we examine it more carefully, we find that it is more fallacious than true. Castes and sub-castes have, no doubt, their particular preferences and dislikes, their own evils and iniquities to account for, and as we see everywhere from the reports of the Social Conference, their best men are manfully struggling to cure these evils. It should, however, not be forgotten that this caste difficulty is the main blot on our social system. The great fight has to be maintained here, and not on the outskirts. Quite independently of this circumstance, the differences between the castes merge into minor matters by the side of their great similarities. In the social sphere of our activities, all castes and even creeds are alike defective in not recognising the claims of justice and equality, and according the respect and freedom due to the female sex and cherishing the abuses claimed by men as men; and by the members of one class of men to the disparagement of other castes. This furnishes the common platform on which all can act, and it is only by the education received on this common platform that we can command the elevation and freedom which alone will help us to be taller, wiser, and better individually and collectively.

I have thus attempted to forestall by anticipation many of the objections which might be, and are, urged by those who are not disposed to be friendly to the work of social emancipation. With the work that has been done in the different provinces by more than a hundred associations that are in full sympathy with the cause of social progress, it is not my purpose here to deal. The reports of the Conference for the last 13 years furnish a living record to which all can refer with advantage. It is a record which does not allow large achievements in accomplished facts, but to those who can read between the lines the spirit that animates this work, there is a land of promise opening its vistas before them in a way to encourage the most despondent. To go no further back than the past five months, I find from the notes of events kept with me that even in this year of distress some seven re-marriages took place, & in the

Punjab, 1 in Bombay, 1 in the North-West Provinces, 1 in Madras, and 1 in the Central Provinces. In Bengal, where the widow marriage movement commenced in Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's time, as many as 46 marriages were celebrated, 30 were celebrated since and 41 more were celebrated among the Brahmos, making a total of 117. Including the Central Provinces and the Berars, the Bombay Presidency has during the last 30 years, since the movement began, shown more than a hundred such marriages distributed equally between the Gujeratis and the Deccanis. The Punjab and the N.-W. Provinces show a total of more than thirty, and Madras presents nearly the same figure. The total of marriages would, therefore, be about 300 throughout India in the several provinces in the higher castes. Miss Manning's "Indian Magazine," in one of its recent numbers, gave the total number of Indian residents, mostly students studying in England, to be 315, of whom nearly half, 141 were Hindus, 61 Parsees, 79 Mahomedans, and 22 Native Christians. These figures show how the wind is blowing, and how the stream of events is steadily on the right side. The native papers in the Punjab show that during the last five months some 7 admissions of converts from Christian and Mahomedan faiths were made by the Arya Samajas, and there is an active controversy going on for the wholesale admission of some hitherto despised castes. The success of the Bethune College in Calcutta, the female schools and colleges at Jullunder, Poona, Ahmedabad, and Mysore has been full of promise in this as in previous years. Among the legislative events, next after the passing of the Mysore marriage laws, the most noteworthy event during the past five months has been the enactment of the Hindu Gains of Learning Bill by the Madras Council. The local Sabhas such as the Deshamukha and Kunbi Sabhas in Berar, the Rajput in N.-W. P., the Sowashtra in the Madras Presidency, and Khatris in the Punjab have held their meetings, and passed resolutions in favour of marriage reform under good auspices. Many instances of late marriages have taken place throughout the country, also of intermarriages in different parts of India, the most noticeable on our side being Mr. Javeri's daughter's marriage the

other day, and the intermarriage between the families of Malad Bhagvat last year. This is, no doubt, a brief record, but as observed before it is full of promise.

The present crisis through which our part of the country is passing under the stress of plague and famine has intensified the necessity of taking adequate steps for alleviating the distress suffered by all classes. There are particular directions in which all social reform organisations might work with advantage in such a crisis. Many thousands of poor orphans have been rendered homeless, and although they are supported through famine by private and Government charity, the time is coming when, with the rains on us, this charity will cease to flow, and the unclaimed orphans will have to be provided for when the distress is over. The Missionary societies have pledged themselves not to effect conversions while the distress is at its height, and they are prepared to give over the children to those who will claim them. The rest who will be unclaimed will have to be cared for by these societies, and people everywhere must consider the question of how to deal with these poor children. Freedom to return to their community is a charity which we all can display if we have the largeness of heart to understand the issues involved. The economical question here becomes one of religion and social amelioration. Equally affecting is the claim which has been urged on behalf of hundreds of child-widows who have been rendered miserable in consequence of the famine and the plague visitation. In normal times their condition was bad enough; but their misery has been aggravated by the misfortune of these hard times, and those who have any heart to feel for their wrongs, might well be asked to take thought as to how their misery might be alleviated. The question of postponing marriages to the latest limit of marriageable age, the age of puberty while these visitations are upon us, will not fail to attract the attention, both of the reformers and of those who profess to be indifferent to this subject. These and other matters will, I doubt not, engage the attention of friends who are assembled to-day. We shall not be able to take any immediate action, but if these matters are allowed their claims on our thoughtful consideration when we go to our places, the work of

reform cannot fail to lead to some useful results. For this, and work like this, concerted action is needed, and concerted action is only possible, under existing circumstances, when we think and work together. A committee consisting of all those who sympathise with the progress of reform, is, therefore, sorely needed in this part of the country to co-operate with similar workers elsewhere and it is with this view that our work to-day will chiefly consist in forming such a committee, and laying down the lines on which it is to work. This is a duty in which, I trust, you will all join, and join with a heart that will suffer no disappointment, but will strain every nerve each within his own sphere to bring about the practical well-being of our people in which the well-being of every individual is involved. This is the message that I was commissioned by friends elsewhere to communicate to you here, and I now commend this subject to your anxious care, in the full conviction that the work is one in which we can all co-operate with advantage, and in which no progress is possible without such co-operation



THIRD PART.

The Presidential Addresses at the Social Conferences.

The Third Social Conference—Mr. Justice K. T. Telang's Address.

In opening the proceedings of this meeting, I should like to make a few preliminary remarks. At first everybody must admit it to be a matter of sincere congratulation, that at this third meeting of the Social Conference, we have present among us a few ladies of our own community. The question has been doubtless raised in England, whether women ought or ought not to enter into the heat and dust of political warfare. But whatever the true answer to that question may be, there can be no possible doubt, that in the sort of work we are to discuss to-day, the presence and co-operation of women is most desirable. And in order to carry out any of the reforms, which may be discussed at such gatherings, the help and co-operation of our ladies is absolutely essential. Therefore I think we may say that we have this year been enabled to take one step forward. It may not be a long step. I don't think it is a long step taken by itself. But we may fairly look forward with hope to further progress and advancement, along the road on which the first short step has now been taken. Those who have hitherto criticised the National Congress and its proceedings, have, as we are aware, often twitted us with not paying sufficient atten-

tion to social reform and devoting our energies exclusively to the political improvement of the country. I think I may fairly say that such gatherings as these, which have met every year since the time of the Madras Congress, afford an adequate and conclusive answer to those criticisms. But while I think this answer conclusive, I must also say that I think there is something in the criticisms from which we ought to derive some useful lesson I have myself noticed, in the writings and speeches of many of our countrymen, a strong tendency towards devoting, I cannot say exclusive, but I must say an overwhelming share of attention to political matters. Social matters thus get entirely eclipsed, so to say, by political in some quarters, and that is the basis of truth in the criticisms to which I have alluded. Well, I think that to this extent, we ought in time to take warning from these criticisms, and as far as may be, set our house in order. There is one other remark I wish to make. And that relates to a tendency which has also been noticeable in recent discussions to assume that social and political activities can be entirely dissociated, and to ignore the fact that the underlying principles in both groups of activities are in substance the same. We often hear propositions confidently asserted by many persons in the course of discussions on social topics, which when applied to politics, must lead to results that those persons entirely repudiate. No one will charge me with being an out and out imitator of European ways. I have not the slightest desire to adopt bodily the whole of the European social economy for myself or for our community. But at the same time I do hold most strongly to this view, that it is our bounden duty to study English social institutions, in the same way that we study English political institutions, so that we may consider how far they will suit the conditions among which we live and move. The adoption of English methods of work and of English ideals to be worked for, to which on the political side, we are so partial, is not a thing to be entirely scouted on the social side, in the way which may be observed in some quarters. The need for improvement in political matters is not greater than in social; and the principles of improvement in both are in substance identical, whatever dif-

ferences there may be in their applications. And therefore it is my conviction that it is our duty to learn, correctly appreciate, and apply the real principles adopted by those who stand in the forefront of civilisation as much in our social as in our political concerns. (*Loud cheers.*)

The Fourth Social Conference—Babu Norendro Nath Sen's and Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar's Addresses.

Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, the President-elect, not having come in time, Babu Norendra Nath Sen was elected President. He said —I feel extremely flattered by the honour that you have done me by unanimously voting me to the chair. I have always held the opinion that political, social, moral and religious reforms should go hand in hand (*cheers*), and that political reform means nothing unless it is accompanied by social, moral and religious reforms (*cheers*). It is said that Congressmen are opposed to social reform. This is not so (*cheers*). I myself am an active member of the Congress, and no one is in greater sympathy with the cause of social reform than myself (*cheers*). Most of those who are present at the Conference to-day are Congress-men. I am entirely in sympathy with the objects of the Conference, and with most of the resolutions that will be brought forward for consideration and adoption to-day. The people of India owe a great deal to the British Government for their political advancement, their intellectual advancement, and, to a certain extent, even for their moral advancement (*cheers*). They must be grateful to the Government also for the anxiety that is now being shown by it for their social advancement (*hear, hear*). I was very glad to hear that our beloved Queen-Empress (*cheers*) is most anxious to see that we should take interest ourselves in the cause of social reform, and that we should take every step to advance ourselves socially (*hear, hear*). Nobody can deny that we are in several respects socially degraded or at least that we are not advanced socially to that extent as we ought to have been. Such being the case, I think every true Indian patriot should take some interest in the

cause of social reform (cheers). I am glad to see that the gathering on the present occasion is a large and influential one. Probably it would have been much larger, if the people had been assured betimes that this Conference would not ask for legislative interference in the matter of Hindu marriage customs (cheers). You will find from the copy of the Resolutions placed in your hands that we do not ask legislative interference in any matter except as regards the amendment of Act XXI of 1860, so as to include voluntary Social Reform Associations within its scope. The subject was referred to a Committee appointed at the last year's Conference. This is a simple matter, and the law that is sought for is a permissive and not a compulsory one. Nobody can have the least objection to such a law. I do not know why the Hindus should be at all opposed to social reform, because all the reforms that they want are sanctioned by their own religion (cheers). The Vedas, which are the earliest records of the Aryas and which have the highest authority among them, teach us that we should not marry early (cheers). As regards females, the Vedas say that they should not marry before the age of sixteen years, and as regards males, that they should not marry before the age of twenty-five at least. With a larger dissemination of the knowledge of the Vedas among us, the very reforms that are now being advocated in many quarters will be most gladly accepted by the Hindus. It is only because the study of the Vedas has been neglected that many social evils have crept into Hindu society. I say that if our own religion sanctions the reforms asked for, I do not see why you should hesitate in the least to accept them (hear, hear).

(At this stage of the proceedings Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar having arrived, Babu Norendra Nath Sen vacated the chair in his favour.) Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, who was received with cheers, said:—Ladies and Gentlemen,—I must thank you for the cheers with which you have greeted me, but I am sorry you shall soon find that your cheers have been quite mistaken. You have dragged from his sick-bed a man, who was for the last

few days on the verge of his grave. Such a man can scarcely be deemed fit to preside on this solemn occasion. However, as it is your pleasure that I should occupy the chair, I will just make a few remarks. Ladies and gentlemen, this is a meeting of the Social Conference, and I see that this is the Fourth Social Conference that has been held in this country. That we all feel that we are the victims of some social custom or other, is such a patent fact that it needs no words from me to prove. My reluctance in taking the chair to-day proceeds from other grounds also than the state of my health. You have not only dragged me from the verge of the grave as I have said, but you have taken me out of my groove. Social matters have not been in the line of my studies. All my life I have been a humble practitioner of medicine, and the only other matter I have been engaged in, has been to introduce a study of the physical sciences among my countrymen, and therefore I am not in any sense at all competent or fit to discharge the duties of the office of President of the Social Conference. But I have all my life been a victim of the tyranny of social custom in my own country (Laughter). Ladies and gentlemen, I see before me a very lengthy programme, but all the Resolutions that are before us hinge upon one chief social custom, which has acted most injuriously upon the development of the Hindu race and that is child-marriage (cheers). This pernicious custom has done what nothing else could so effectually do, namely, it has deteriorated the once noble and glorious Hindu race,—a race that gave enlightenment to the whole world (cheers). How has it done this? Since it has taken a deep root in our country, whatever might have been its original philosophy, this custom has ruined us, and has been working detrimentally at the very fountain of life. The Hindu race consists at the present day, if you would pardon me for the very strong expression that I am bound to utter, by virtue of this very blessed custom, of abortions and premature births. Are we all born at the proper time? If the laws of physiology are true, and I believe they are eternal verities, then every man and woman born of parents of such tender years as ten or twelve years for a girl and fifteen or sixteen for a boy must be pronounced to be either an abortion

or a premature birth (hear, hear). And are you surprised that the people of a nation so constituted should have fallen easy victims under every blessed tyrant, that ever chose to trample upon them? Whatever of intellectual and moral qualities we still possess is by inheritance from the past; whatever we have lost we have to thank this custom, against which we are bound to raise our most emphatic protest (cheers). Do all you can, let the Government concede everything that you want, and let the Government even leave our shores to-day, do you think, gentlemen, that we shall be able to do without that Government from to-morrow? And why not? You will find that it is because you have not got the capacity for work. Look at the root of the evil (cheers). By virtue of the law of inheritance, you have got the intelligence of the old Hindus (cheers); by virtue of this accursed custom you have lost all that capacity for work which our Hindu ancestors possessed in olden days (cheers). How can you expect, if you go on at this rate, to take a lead in any work whatever? You cannot possibly do it. You must improve the fountain of life itself (hear, hear), before you can expect to cope with races which have held their own for so many centuries, which, under better social customs consist of units infinitely more mature than ourselves. This is the simple law of nature, and you cannot go against it. Do all you can, talk as much as you like, abuse your Government as much as you like, there you are—a race, degenerated, paralysed in all your energies. What then can you do? Therefore I say that it is a happy sign that along with the Congress, you have this Conference on the most vital point that concerns us (cheers). The Congress may successfully do all its work; you may have the elective principle and the representative principle and everything else you want and every concession that you claim, but how can you maintain the position in which you may be thus placed? You cannot possibly do it. It is a notorious fact that our children are very smart so long as they are at school, but where do they go after that? They go to the wall. Shall I say it? They go to the very dust, they mingle themselves with the dust, they are nowhere. They very creditably and successfully pass their examinations, and

after that where are they? You do not find them anywhere. With the exception of a very few, you do not find your Graduates engaged in any substantial work, and as regards the few that are so engaged, what reward do they receive? What but discouragement and abuse? (Hear, hear.) I have been spending my whole life, and I am almost tempted to say that I have been waiting my whole life, in order that I might succeed in introducing the study of the physical sciences amongst my countrymen; and what is the reward that I have got? The reward is that after fourteen years of cogitation and agitation and working amidst insuperable difficulties, I have not yet got a Laboratory built for my Science Association. The root of all this is that we do not know what we are. If we knew that, there will soon be an end of all this ruin. Without, therefore, any further remarks, ladies and gentlemen, I would ask you to proceed at once with the business of the meeting (loud cheers).

The Fifth Social Conference—Mr. G. S. Khaparde's Address.

I am proud to become the President of the Indian National Social Conference, although I must say I do not deserve the honour you have done me. To the word *Social* in the title of the Conference, I attach the greatest importance, for to my mind it is clear that this Social Conference is fraught with good and great results. When I said I was not worthy of the honour that has been given to me, the phrase was not used by me as a conventional method of acknowledging thanks, but because it was literally true. For you all know who the President of the first Conference was. It was no less a personage than Sir T. Madhava Rao, one of the greatest statesmen India has produced. The second President was Rai Bahadur Sabhapathi Mudaliar, a man well-known for his sincerity and substantial sympathy in the cause of reform, and well-known also as a writer on the subject of reforms, and a shrewd man of business. The third President, that is to say when the Congress assembled at Bombay, was the Honourable Mr. Justice

Telang, whose praises it would be superfluous to sing. At Calcutta Dr. Mahendra Lal Sircar, who is known all over India as a ripe scholar, great reformer and profound thinker, presided and lent his strong support to the Conference. When we have had such a roll of illustrious Presidents of this Conference, it is not conventional modesty on my part, I assure you, to say that I do not feel myself a worthy successor to my predecessors in this office. Gentlemen, we have had heavy losses during the past year. Rajah Sir T. Madhava Rao, the great "Native Thinker" is no more. His pen no more writes, and his brain has ceased to work. The other loss I have to mention is that of Pundit Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar, than whom you could not find a truer reformer in India. He worked heart and soul for the cause of reform, and was a deep thinker and sincere man. And lately, we lost a friend, Row Sahib Mahipatram Rupram, whose efforts in the cause we have at heart need no mention. Gentlemen, you all know that this year began with the agitation about the Age of Consent Act, which stirred the country so greatly. You know, gentlemen, that my attitude towards the Bill was one of opposition. I would not have let the Bill pass, if I could. And why? My position was that such reforms should spring from the people, and should not be forced on them; for this appearance of force disinclined people to all reform, and this made matters worse. However I shall leave that question now, and would turn to compute the results of the agitation, as far as they have come under our observation during this year. You know there were some people who thought that the Bill had made a breach in native society, and that it could not by any means be bridged over. But these people never made a greater mistake. Now that the Bill is law, it is wrong to fight against it. To throw dirt at it now is, in my opinion, little short of,—from one point of view,—sedition. The other result of the Bill, I am going to note, is that for the first time our old people and our new people began to fight shoulder to shoulder,—which was in itself a distinct gain to all of us, both for those who won and for those who were defeated. These are, in my opinion, results of no small importance. Now, in the heat of the controversy, there was in some quarters a great deal of misconception about

the reformers and the reform movement. It was thought, and it is thought even now, by some that the reformers wanted to have all possible laws passed, and by that agency to carry out the programme of Social Reform. This is a sheer misunderstanding. Our first method is that of persuasion. We try to find out what the belief and the sentiments of the people are, what they would accept or do actually accept, whom they revere as authoritative writers 'on Dharma Shashtra, and then after finding that out, we try to meet them on their own ground. If they accept the Shastras, we accept them too, but interpret them in the light of the knowledge we have acquired. I will honestly tell you that our interpretations are correct, and not distorted through our zeal to further the cause of reform. We accept the premises supplied by the old text writers, and then we stop there, and resort to logic and reason. This is the method of what is called *Yuktivad*. We do not resort to legislation when there are other ways open to us. Where the mischief has been caused by law, we try to get it removed by law, and I think you will all agree with me in saying that it is only fair, after what I have told you, not to describe this Conference as aiming at reform by legislation. You know very well that I am myself against legislation, except in very special cases. But that does not mean that I would not go in for the help of the Legislature in these matters, at any time, and under any circumstances. I am against legislation, first because I believe in the maxim that reform should begin from within, secondly because it creates opposition for opposition's sake, and thirdly because it destroys the self-acting machinery which we desire to create in our society. But where this is not possible, or has been found by trials to be impracticable, then and then alone, by all means I go in and go in with a zest for legislation. The objects of this Social Conference are not any other than what I have indicated. What we seek is to promote organisation and self-help. Our people have already done something in this direction. Take for instance the institution at Ajmere presided over by the Political Agent in Rajputana. They have regulated the age of marriage, and laid down lines of reform in other matters. The movement at Ajmere may be

said to have fairly succeeded, for the report of that Reform Association shows us that out of 1,481 marriages that were celebrated, there were only 307 marriages in which the self-imposed rules were broken. Take another instance, if you like, that of Mysore—which is even more advanced than the British Government in some matters, for they have there a Representative Council now. They in Mysore have taken up the question of reform in right earnest. They have asked their Pandits to find out authorities in favour of long sea-voyages, and I am sure the Pandits will lend their support to the progressive party in this matter. Really speaking, reform is not quite the word to describe the demands of the Conference. For in most cases it is return to old ways that we are advocating. Take for instance the question of marriage. You all know what the progressive party says on this subject. Now I put it to you, if you would not rather have marriages after the manner of Shakuntala than after the fashion prevailing more or less in this country, of an old man taking his little daughter on his knee and giving her to another. Or to take another instance, which do you prefer I ask you: Do you like the marriage of Sita with Rama? Or, to take another instance,—you have Nala and Damayanti? Would you like it better if Damayanti was given away by her father to one of the Gods that competed with Nala on the occasion? But I might go on for any length of time multiplying instances till you are weary of them. All I mean to say is that what we are advocating is not a frightful innovation, as some of our critics seem to take it. It is only, as I have said, a return to genuine old ways. And I sincerely exhort you, gentlemen, to go back to these old ways and old methods, for they are good men and true, who have shown these old paths to you. Gentlemen, I like the caste system, as I also like numerous other old things. I like my good old religion. I would not leave it under any circumstances. Nor would I wish a Mahomedan to give up the Koran, nor also do I ask the Brahmo Samajists to leave the faith which their great founder has established for them. So then, this is not a new religion, nor even is our programme a new departure. Gentlemen, progress is the law of the universe, and you cannot stop

it. You must either advance or fall back. By the blessings of God, and by the blessings of the benign British Government, we are under the influences of a progressive civilisation, so that whether a man will or no,—I am a fatalist in my own way, gentlemen, and so I say, whether a man will or no,—he must move. Now, which is better, walking of our own accord, or being pushed on from behind? That represents the whole problem of Social Reform in this country, and indicates the lines on which our Resolutions are drawn. (*Cheers.*)

The Sixth Social Conference—The Hon. Ram Kall Chaudhuri's Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—Reform in the social condition of our fellow-countrymen's the sole and single aim of our Conference. The social evils we are subject to are infant marriage, extravagant expense attendant on marriages and certain other ceremonies, prohibition of widow-marriage, polygamy, prohibition of intermarriage, disfigurement and other discomforts to which widows are subjected, money consideration for which girls are given in marriage, seclusion of women, and many others. These evils prevail more or less in all parts of our country.

In the growth of our society from the Vedic times, the evils have gradually come into existence in the same way as many good institutions that are found in our social system. The social system of our country in its outward appearance presents a diversity of detail, that has led not only interested writers but also disinterested thinkers to deprive us of the character of nationality. But, if deeply considered, the generalisation cannot but be deemed a specious one. In all essential characteristics the Hindu society has features that go to make it into a single nation. Take *Religion*, the first authority. The Hindus of all parts of the country look up to the Vedas and the religious works based on their interpretations. Then take *Social matters*. It is well-known that religion enters into all the important parts of their social and individual life. And if there is the unity of source in purely religious matters, it necessarily follows that the social department of our community has the same

unity in its important aspects. Whether it be in Northern India or Southern India, the same "*Samskars*"—ceremonial rites performed for social and religious purposes—mark the life of every individual member of the Hindu society at its different periods from birth to death. All of us assembled here, coming from various parts of the country, have undergone the same ceremonies of "*Namukarn*," "*Annaprashan*," "*Mundan*," and others. The "*Smriti*" works, that prescribe rules for all the important functions of our social and religious life, and lay down what our duties and obligations are throughout life, and even show us the way how our properties are to be dealt with in life and after death, govern all parts of the country with but slight differences. Again the tongues in which we speak in our respective homes, are but closely allied dialects, derived from the same mother language—Sanskrit. And all these important elements of unity in the religious and social life of Hindus are daily receiving strength from the common lines of feelings, thoughts and ideas, that are being created in the mind of educated Indians owing to the flow of Western knowledge and thought. If there are such solid reasons in support of the view thus taken, there can be no doubt that the Hindus of all parts of India form *one nation*; and we are well justified in calling our Social Conference a *national* one. Indeed the social evils referred to, as has been observed above, are more or less common to all parts of India, in other words—*National*.

It is obvious that various causes combine to make human life miserable. The social evils referred to having been created by circumstances—that in the various stages of the growth of our society came into existence—have only contributed to the increase of the miseries of life. It is therefore our manifest duty to make efforts to remove them, as far as lies in our power, from our society. This is not only the plain dictate of nature, but in doing so we find that our attempt will take us back to the simple ways in social life, followed by our remote ancestors in the days of our old Vedic period. It is also necessary for us to move with the progress that is going on in other parts of the world. The other evening we heard our learned

friend, the Honourable Rao Bahadur Ranade, calling our attention to the forebodings in the conclusion arrived at by evolutionists in respect of old nations like ourselves to the effect that the force that was in us has been spent and our society has no longer a life worth having. If indeed we are to live the apathetic and stationary life our society has hitherto lived, the melancholy doom the modern men of light predict for us is soon to overtake us; but if the signs of the times are to be properly read, if the activities our countrymen are here and there beginning to put forth have any meaning, for which we have to thank the enlightened policy pursued by the British Government in India, we have no reason for despair. The life in us, as was observed by our friend referred to in his lecture, is not dead, but has only remained torpid owing to various causes. It is now our part to show by our exertions that the life, that has been left in us, is still capable of being revived.

Now what are we to do in introducing reforms in our social conditions? In our zeal for reform let us not lose patience. If we conceive what reforms we should have, let us not take action at once. We thereby alienate our less advanced countrymen from the ways we aspire to adopt, and our failure is the consequence. The first step in our procedure, as far as I am able to judge, is to create a widely spread public opinion in favour of reform. This, I know, requires an immense deal of talk, for which we are subjected to so much taunting criticism. But ignoring such taunts, we should strenuously go on to convert gradually the minds of our countrymen. I know a great deal of time—perhaps the period of a generation or two—is required for such conversion. Our people—even of the lowest class—are, however, very intelligent; and the English education—thanks to the Government we are placed under—is doing us great help in this respect, and we are sure to succeed in this first step of our procedure.

We know what difficulty we experience from the resistance shown by our females, when we attempt to introduce a social reform. It is therefore extremely necessary to take measures to educate them and convert their minds.

In the work of this conversion of mind, we can avail ourselves of the agency of preachers. These should, however, take care that they abstain from proceeding in a manner that might offend the minds of their hearers. In this connection I may observe that it is the duty of every educated person often to mix with the old class of people, and place convincing arguments before them in regard to reforms. This mode is, I can say from my personal experience, a very effective one in gradually creating a public opinion in favour of social reform.

We should avoid State help in introducing reforms in social matters. This mode is calculated to bring about evils of other kinds and tends to retard progress. We are only to avail ourselves of the social force that will be created along with the formation of public opinion. We should also avoid creating factions. The method of conciliation, in my opinion, should always be adhered to. This method takes much time to carry out reforms, but it is a sure and certain one.

The most effective agency for organising reforms is the formation of reform associations all over the country. And this I am glad to see is being gradually done. I may observe here that the rules of such associations should not be enforced with such rigour as to deter people from joining them. We know what a strong force there is in our society that keeps the old state of things a-going, and we are also aware of our weaknesses. Under the present state of society we must make allowance for such weaknesses.

In conclusion, I may say that I advocate the usefulness of our annual Social Conference. We meet together once a year and compare notes as to what we have been able to do, and measure the little bits of progress we are making in various quarters. Also we in our several local quarters feel aspirations to show a better record to the general Conference. And after a deliberate consideration in annual meetings, we recommend to the several bodies in the country the way and means to the several reforms. The Honourable Rao Bahadur Ranade has said so much on this head on various occasions, that it is superfluous to dwell any more on this. It now only remains for me respectfully to request you to keep the work of

social reform a-going throughout the year, and not turn to it only when the Annual Conference meets.

The Seventh Social Conference—Dewan Narendra Nath's Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I must thank you for the honour that you have conferred upon me by selecting me as your President. I confess I find myself unworthy of presiding over the deliberations of such an august assembly as I find here to-day, and I wish your selection had fallen on an abler person.

Nothing conduces more to vigorous action and to a concentrated application of our energies than a clear understanding of the nature of the work we set before ourselves. It is not difficult to find an answer to the question which in the words of the Honourable Mr. Ranade 'is often asked by those who take credit to themselves for superior wisdom' as to the object of that part of the annual gathering which meets here to-day. The answer is covered by a couple of words 'Social Reform.' Every one has a fairly correct notion of what is included in these words, but it will not be amiss to attempt something like an analysis of the ideas which these words convey. It is impossible to give a logical definition of social reform, which may have different meanings in different countries and under different circumstances. In British India, under this head we include, reforms of such institutions as are not directly conversant with the amelioration of our spiritual and religious nature,—reforms which have for their direct sanction the strength of public opinion and which are enforced by social approbation and disapprobation, as distinct from those introduced and enforced by political authority.

Ever since the time that Governmental functions become other than purely military, the Government of each country and nation has uniformly directed its attention to the suppression of a certain class of evils. This class by a successive process of ages has come to be regarded as a separate one by itself. But with the exception of the prominence given to this class of evils, which has always been regarded as the fit subject of legislation,

there is no radical and essential difference between them and the evils which are suppressed by an opinion of the majority expressed in the form of social opprobrium. Even the rules of social etiquette, which are apparently so distinct from laws properly so called, deal with matters which cannot be separated by any hard and fast lines from matters dealt with by our laws. You can easily imagine how a course of conduct, which would be only an offence against the rules of etiquette, by slight changes which introduce no new element, comes to be regarded as an act against which the instrumentality of our courts can be brought into exercise. The question is only one of a fitness of things, of the proportion between means to be employed and ends to be achieved. The magnitude of the evil to be suppressed has to be weighted against the evils inseparable from employing legislation as a remedy. Whether it is possible to create a public opinion in our favour and to achieve by exhortation and advice what would otherwise be attained by more stringent measures,—whether it is worth while to abandon our self-help and reduce ourselves by one further step as automata in the hands of Government—are questions which we should put to ourselves before deciding to seek the help of legislation. There is however no touch-stone which we can employ as a test to distinguish the evils, to the suppression of which legislation can be directed, from other evils.

Circumstances have brought us into contact with a nation in whose social institutions, speaking generally, are reflected all the intellectual and moral traits which distinguish the civilisation of the West from the civilisation of the East. A stern regard for the realities of life as opposed to a vain pursuit after transcendental mysteries and a tendency to regard all human beings as entitled to claim and exercise equal rights and privileges as human beings as opposed to the encouragement of a domination of the stronger class over the weaker—are, amongst others, the main characteristics of the institutions which are placed before us for imitation. I do not enter into the recondite problem of history, whether the antagonism which I have described would exist, if our pristine institutions were by a magical process revived. But that such an antagon-

ism exists now admits of no doubt, whilst it is equally undoubted that we are an Eastern nation and that we are not a barbarous people. I will presently discuss whether the characteristics of the Western institutions, which I have above described, are worthy of our imitation.

But let me first invite your attention to the peculiar circumstances of our position. According to an eminent historian of the present day, the experiment which is being tried by the British nation in India is one unprecedented in history. He says this with reference to politics, but the remark applies with equal force to the changes in the whole moral fabric of our society, which are being worked at the present day. Never before within memorable history did one nation having a progressive civilisation come into contact with another nation having a defunct and stationary civilisation, in the relation of rulers and ruled, with prospects of the permanence of that relation backed up by a desire on both sides for its permanence. In infusing therefore a spirit of the West into our social institutions we have facilities and difficulties that are peculiarly our own, and these arise from the fact that we are a civilised and not a barbarous nation, though our civilisation is now defunct. The facilities are all intellectual, and the difficulties are all moral. We have had a language, the perfection of which is simply a marvel to those who study it; we have had a religion which to say the least is capable of assuming a most scientific and a montheistic garb; and we have had a code of laws which is remarkable for the consistency with which its principles are worked out through its various branches. Much of all this is lost, but in all the vicissitudes, through which we have passed, we have retained our intellectual capacity. Therefore so far as the apprehension of an idea—even the most advanced—is concerned, we are not behind any nation; but when the question comes to carrying these ideas into practice our chief difficulty commences. All human beings are intellectually more flexible than morally, but the fact that we have certain institutions amongst us founded on a state of society, which was admittedly the foremost in civilisation at one time, marks a certain stage of intellectual advance-

ment, and gives us intellectually an advantage over others who have to learn the very first lessons of civilisation, and because these institutions are the heritage of a civilisation, all consistent with one another and based on principles, which by influence of ages have become a part and parcel of our nature, it is all the more difficult to change them. The changes that we are to undergo are not those incident to the growth of an organism, but those incident to a metamorphosis which takes place when one kind of organism changes into another kind of organism,—when one accustomed to live under a certain habitat into another living under a different habitat. We have a double process to undergo,—we have not only to put on a new garb but to take off the old one as well. People of most other countries, in which civilisation is being spread by European influence, have only to exchange savagery for civilisation, which in many respects is a much easier process.

There is another intellectual advantage, which we possess even over the nations foremost in the scale of civilisation and to which I have not referred. A new mode of conduct or living strikes only to the most original and advanced minds amongst them. But we are spared the pains and troubles of originality. The discovery is made by the thinkers of the West, and we have only to grasp and apprehend the idea for which, as I have shown, we have a distinct advantage over many other people. Modes of life in advance of the age are more commonly known amongst us than even amongst the foremost nations of Europe. Hence it is that in no other nation do we discover so many instances of individuals in whom a wide divergence of beliefs from acts is to be found. We are not behind any other nation in the virtue of moral courage, but owing to the peculiar circumstances of our position, we have intellectual advantages and moral difficulties, which others have not. To give you an instance, it does not require a very high order of mental calibre to grasp and apprehend the uselessness or even the perniciousness of the institution of caste with its manifold divisions and sub-divisions. But you can very well realise the moral difficulties that stand in our way of even slightly deviating from these rigid rules. A foreigner is astound-

ed, when an intelligent Hindu who is able to talk with sense and ability on all the topics of the day, declines to accept a cup of tea from him. He must think that the Hindu has some extraordinary mental or moral weakness. But neither of these accusations is true. The Hindu understands that abstinence from eating and drinking with foreigners is a practice which should be abandoned and he does display a certain amount of moral weakness in not acting up to his convictions, but no extraordinary weakness. Courage is to be measured by the amount of self-sacrifice which a person is prepared to undergo, and the foreigner has no idea of the fate which awaits his friend for breaking his caste rules. To the Hindu it means excommunication or social death,—nothing short of a kind of martyrdom. How many in other nations are prepared to undergo such an extreme form of punishment? Very few, not more than those who amongst ourselves, can most aptly be styled martyrs for the cause of social reform. Excommunication or cessation of commensality and intermarriage is a punishment quite unknown in the West, and a European has no idea of the moral courage which a Hindu requires in order to break his caste rules. Those in favour of established customs can easily take to themselves the credit of having the courage of their convictions, but it is a courage which hardly deserves the name.

From these considerations follow two conclusions which are worthy of your attention. 1st, that we stand more in need of organised action than of mere thought and speculation, and if we have to exercise our thinking faculty, it is not so much in discovering new modes of social life as in considering how we are to introduce them, and 2nd, that we must proceed very gradually, seeing at every moment that “old order changeth giving place to new.” We are not changing chaos for order, but an old regime for a new one, and we have to take care that we do not in the process introduce anarchy for a regime which, however ill-suited may be its principles to our present requirements, still possesses the advantages of an organised system. There is much force in the objection which the cavillers of all reform movements urge against the necessary evils of a transi-

tional stage, and we should spare no pains in seeing that these evils are reduced to a minimum.

From these preliminary considerations I now proceed to the main subject. The Honourable Mr. Ramkali Chaudhuri, the President of the Sixth Social Conference, gives an exhaustive list of the subjects that are included in our programme of social reform. These are "infant marriage, extravagant expenses attendant on marriages and certain other ceremonies, prohibition of widow-remarriage, polygamy and prohibition of inter-marriage, disfigurement and other discomforts to which widows are subjected, money considerations for which girls are given in marriage, and seclusion of women." On the evils of infant-marriage I wish to say nothing, this is a subject which I think may fairly be assumed to have passed the stage of controversy. Prohibition of inter-marriage is also a subject which I propose to leave untouched, as I think, I will have sufficiently tried your patience, with the discussion of other subjects with which I propose to deal. The remaining subjects then may be classified under two heads: removal of female disabilities under our social laws, and curtailment of expenses on marriage and other ceremonies, and I wish to say a few words about each.

First as to the removal of female disabilities. If you look at the history of human progress you will find that one chief trait by which its successive steps are characterised is the gradual assertion of the principle that all human beings as such have equal rights and privileges. This principle has been slowly making a triumph over the opposite one of 'might is right.' 'Love thy neighbour as thou lovest thyself.' 'Do unto others as thou wouldst be done by' said a great moral preacher and religious reformer 1900 years ago. Once give up the doctrine of equality of rights of all human beings and assert that physical force ought to determine the superiority of rights and you undermine the very foundation of morality. For what remains of the laws of property is that the stronger neighbour by mere dint of physical force is allowed to have every advantage over the weaker, and to usurp what belongs to him. The laws of contract will be

reduced to a mere mockery, if the stronger promisees were to break with impunity the promises made to the weaker promisor. Passing from individuals to groups of individuals or nations, we find that the same principle has gradually established itself. There was a time when the stronger nations used to invade and plunder their weaker neighbours. The inroads of Nadir Shah and his followers are still painfully fresh in our memories. At the present day we find that amongst the civilised nations of Europe, one of the cardinal principles of international morality is that no nation shall invade its weaker neighbour for purposes of self-aggrandisement. Conquests are permissible in self-defence and for the still worthier, though very often ostensible object of spreading civilisation. Leaving aside the code of morality that guides the conduct towards each other of such two groups as are fit to be called nations, we find that by the abolition of slave trade all civilised nations of the world have recognised that one chief duty of every human being is to regard every other human being as having some claims to equality in the exercise of some of the essential functions of human existence. To come nearer home, what induces us to demand from our rulers who are in every way stronger than ourselves a redress of certain grievances,—a redress which chiefly consists in establishing equality between the rulers and the ruled? And what, may I further ask, leads our rulers to make gradual concessions to our demands? Is it not a silent belief on both sides that a tyranny of the strong over the weak is a rule of the past? Liberalism in politics and conservatism in social reform, at least so far as the rights of women are concerned, is an anomaly and is explicable only upon the hypothesis that those who profess these inconsistent creeds entertain too high an opinion of everything belonging to themselves—too high an opinion of their institutions and too high (which of course includes if you so choose a sufficiently high) opinion of their rights and privileges. In claiming equality for our women we do nothing more than push by one more step the principle of equality, which you have seen has making successive inroads on the opposite one of domination by physical force, and to which all the civilised nations of the day have

yielded and yielded with immense benefit to the human race. None of you is prepared to admit that we should revive the slave trade, or that we should once more allow that it is proper for the stronger nations to invade and plunder the weaker, or that it will conduce to human welfare to drive away altogether the notion of equality from our laws of property and of contracts, and least of all will you admit the justice of the principle that by sword have our rulers conquered India, and by sword they should maintain it and treat us as slaves. But when a further accession to that same principle, the subversion of which will restore a state of things at which every one will shudder, is claimed, the demand is resisted.

There is however nothing strange and wonderful in this. In all departments of human knowledge and conduct the onward march of every progressive principle is resisted at every step in the same way. Look at the manner in which the domain of science has gradually increased. In the opinion of Socrates a search into physics and astronomy, says a historian, was not considered within the domain of science, but was looked upon as impious. A similar reproach is even at the present day made against an attempt to bring social phenomena within the domain of science. Another instance of an opposition against a progressive principle is afforded by the history of religion, in which all attempts to drive out the anthropomorphic tendency have been met with resistance at every step. The most wonderful part of the opposition is that no lesson is taken from the past experience of the human race; it is not recognised that in the past similar struggles were made which are now admitted to have been unwise.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, what more can be said in favour of a principle and in derogation of its opposite than that it forms the very foundation of our morality. But, say our adversaries, all human beings are not equal in power and capacity, and therefore it is preposterous to claim equality of rights for all of them. None can deny that human beings differ much from one another in powers and capacities. I am not going to enter into the controversy whether absolute equality of rights for all in every respect is possible or desirable. The

controversy is foreign to my purpose. But on the other hand, if human progress has not taken the direction just the opposite of that which it should have taken, no one will assert that inferiority of powers justifies an utter annihilation of rights. Not even the most conservative tyrant will have the courage to affirm that our women should be converted into marketable commodities, and that we should have power of life and death over them. What then is the golden mean between these two extremes, which, as we have seen, are both equally unacceptable? The only criterion, which I think we can employ in determining the rights and privileges of a certain class when considered in connection with their powers and capacities, is that rights should be commensurate with powers,—that the measure of right should be the measure of power and capacity. By this process we arrive at that principle, which forms the foundation of all our Political and Moral Philosophy, *viz.*, that every human being should be allowed the free exercise of his power, with the usual proviso that the exercise should be consistent with the harmonious development of all other powers and with a similar exercise of those powers on the part of others. Now, ladies and gentlemen, what rights do we claim for our sisters? The right of re-marriage for widows, the right of free movement, and the right of intellectual advancement. Can any one assert that women have not the powers and capacities for the exercise of these rights, or that their exercise arrests the harmonious development of other powers, or that it is not possible so to arrange that the exercise of these powers may be consistent with a similar exercise on the part of others? On the contrary the present state of our females degrades them from the position of human beings to that of mere machines,—dwarfs and stunts what is noblest and highest in human nature, for no intellectual advancement is possible with so many restrictions of movement as we impose on our women.

But, say our opponents, there are evils in removing the disabilities of females, and that a removal of them will interfere with the development of their moral nature. Before proceeding to consider these evils, let me point out to you one danger which we should guard against, while forming an

opinion on the merits and demerits of every kind of innovation. In the beginning of this address I mentioned incidentally of the inflexibility of our moral nature. Our moral sentiments are formed by the influence of opinions and ideas which we have imbibed from our childhood. We judge of every new movement presented to us in the light of sentiments which have been formed in a state of society inconsistent with the existence of circumstances which the movement advocated proposes to bring about. From our very infancy we have been accustomed when deciding between the respective claims of males and females to put all advantages on the side of males and all disadvantages on the side of females,—to put a high value on our advantages and to think lightly of the sacrifices to which we subject the fair sex. This process when discussing the question of the equality of the rights of women must be abandoned, for to adopt it would be to commit the fallacy so well known to all students of Logic by the technical name of *petitio principii*.

Bearing this precaution in mind and taking first the evils of widow-remarriage I defy any one to point out a single evil, and I will show him a corresponding evil to exist in the remarriage of widowers. Why is the latter permitted? If the combined prayer of all of us assembled here to-day could convert human beings into angels and make them free from all desires and wants, to which they are subject, I would be as glad to lead the congregation as I feel honoured to-day to preside over your deliberations, and then we could by one stroke abolish the re-marriage of both widows and widowers. But alas this is impossible!

It is preposterous to say that certain moral virtues are secured by compulsory widowhood. The case is very often just the reverse. But assuming for the sake of argument that they are secured, is no account to be taken of the miseries and the privations to which widows are subjected? The misfortune of a Hindu woman becoming a widow does not only consist in the loss of a husband, very often her sole protector in this world, but in the train of miseries and privations which must follow in a complete renouncement of all the pleasures of this world and in short in a compulsory asceticism. For otherwise

her position becomes more degrading in other and more important respects. No moralist to whatever school he may belong will affirm that misery and suffering are concomitants of virtuous actions, and that a course is to be recommended as virtuous which brings more misery and suffering than happiness. To a utilitarian the idea of securing virtue by attempts, which entail an amount of misery outweighing the happiness resulting from the so-called virtue, would be as absurd and false as the idea which prompts the miser to pass his life in misery and to hoard up money, knowing that wealth is desirable not for its own sake but for the enjoyment which it is the means of procuring.

Let us now consider for a few moments the objections which are urged against female emancipation, but before doing so let me explain what I mean by this phrase. An idea cognate to that of equality is the idea of liberty. While I refrained from expressing an opinion on the question of absolute equality, I have no hesitation in saying that absolute liberty of action can and will never be permitted. For the welfare of humanity some laws must exist, and every law implies a restriction of liberty. What is objected to by us is an inequality of law—laws imposing many restrictions on one class and few on the other.

I have never been to England and have never moved in English society. I am therefore unable to form an exact idea of the restrictions, which in place of our *Purdah* system exist in English society, regulating the association of males with females. But there is no doubt that some restrictions of the sort do exist. Every one of you is familiar with what you see marked on Railway carriages 'For Ladies only.' It is, as you know, an offence under the Railway Act for a male passenger to travel in a carriage reserved for females.

If I were given the privilege of framing a code of social rules regarding the association of males with females, I would make one of which the cardinal principle could be couched in some such words as the following:—Let no adult male or female enjoy the society or company of the opposite sex except in the presence of his or her relations. I do not see that there could be any reasonable objection to this principle. It gives no unfair advantage to one sex over another. It implies

equal liberty as well as restriction of liberty to both. It does not arrest the development of anything that is good and noble in human nature, nor do I see that it is open to the objection of impracticability. It is possible to enforce a strict observance of it by creating a strong public opinion and moral sentiment in favour of it. A few words more will make this clearer. In what does our Purdah system essentially consist? It consists in the seclusion of women from men by the former being confined within the four walls of Zenana. Hiding the face is not its principal feature. There are many respectable societies in which the rule of drawing a veil over the face is not observed, but which keep their females in the Zenana, and do not in any way regret the absence of that rule. People have an exaggerated notion of the potency of the Zenana system in securing the seclusion of women from men. To no other mode of confinement do the words of the poet:—

‘ Strong walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage ’

apply with greater force than to our Zenana. There are no sentinels standing at the door of every Zenana any more than there are at the doors of those who do not observe the system. Nor is there any dynamite placed at the threshold of every female apartment of respectable Indians liable to explode whenever there is an attempt at an ingress or egress. A person who wantonly enters within the four walls of a Zenana without an intent to intimidate, insult, annoy or commit an offence is not liable to prosecution under our laws, and if he does enter the Zenana with any of these intentions, he is as much guilty of trespass as he would be if he were to enter the *Mardānā* under similar circumstances. The Zenana system therefore has no physical or legal sanction at the present day. In the absence of all these forces, what is it then that prevents a gentleman who is a stranger from going into the Zenana, or a lady from coming out of it? It is nothing more than a fear of public opinion or moral sentiment engendered by the force of early education and habit. In securing the separation of one sex from the other by creating a public opinion in favour of the principle enunciated above, we do not substitute an incorporeal thing

such as a moral sentiment for a corporeal and tangible obstacle such as the walls of the Zenana appear to be at first sight, but only one moral sentiment in place of another, whilst we remove the iniquitous domination of one sex over the other.

There are other instances too in our experience, in which we see that by the spread of civilisation and enlightenment a moral sentiment serves the same purpose as a strong masonry wall. Not to go far, even in the town of Lahore, you will find that the houses of all the members of the old gentry of Sikh times are built within the city in such a style as to defy all attempts of intruders and trespassers. In place of these we find respectable gentlemen of the present day, most of whom fill as high a position in society as some of the old *raias* did in their times, building houses outside of the city, entry into which could be made by a flimsy door that could be forced open by a strong kick from a stalwart Sikh. In Presidency towns and in Simla we find that even the shops of jewellers are protected only by doors having large glass panes. Nothing of the sort is possible in Afghanistan or even in British territory in some of the frontier towns. All this is due to the strong development of a moral sentiment which respects the law of private property and public peace. Is it not then possible that by a similar development of another moral sentiment we may attain without giving any undue advantage to one class over another, that which we now attain by subjecting our women to a miserable kind of slavery?

A stock objection of all opponents of innovations is that the new rule of conduct proposed is liable to be abused. To such of our conservative friends as take an optimistic view of the present state of our society, I have nothing to say beyond appealing to the past experience of mankind, which shows that every change has been liable to abuse and that if there had been no change, there could have been no progress. But to those who think that our present condition stands in need of reform, the simple answer is: guard against the abuse. In the present case the advocates of established customs give a very plausible form to their objection. They say every force follows the course of least resistance; female emancipation may

be carried to an extent to which it exists in English society and this is an evil. Well, as I have said at the outset, I have no personal knowledge of the state of English society,—there may be some evils amongst them. Some of the modes of their social amusement do appear to us to be objectionable. But it is not impossible to avoid them. Drinking prevails very commonly amongst Europeans and was imitated by a very large number of the earlier batch of our educated men. But within the last ten years much good has been done by Temperance Societies, and, I think, I can say without any fear of contradiction that within this period our schools and colleges have turned out men a large majority of whom are teetotallers. Once admit that the principle, which I have enunciated above as forming the basis of our future social code, is a sound one and you can avoid overdoing it as well as underdoing it.

No stage of the advancement of human civilisation comes within my mental view, in which we will have to change this principle. If it is not observed in English society (which I am inclined to think is not correct,—only I cannot speak with authority for want of personal knowledge), it is a mistake to believe that the extent of liberty which prevails amongst them, is an outcome of the advance of civilisation. Freedom of movement has been enjoyed by English women ever since the dawn of British civilisation, and, so far as I am aware, there have been no accessions to this liberty with the advance of civilisation. Some of their customs, which appear to us to be objectionable, are the product of peculiar circumstances, have existed amongst them for a long time, and by no means indicate a particular stage of civilisation, in the same way as our Zenana system was imported under peculiar circumstances and is not a mark of any particular state of intellectual and moral advancement.

What I have described above is the ultimate goal which we mean to reach in our onward march in social progress. What particular steps should be taken by each society is a question which has to be determined with the greatest wisdom, precaution and forethought, and with a special regard to the circumstances of that society; for in no other department of

social progress is a defiance of public opinion more injurious, and in no other department is liberty on a certain principle liable to be abused for liberty without any principle.

You will be amused to hear certain rules of etiquette in our society based on an extreme refinement of the ideas connected with our system of the seclusion of women from men,—a refinement which is sometimes inconsistent with the notions of purity, which ought to permeate all our conceptions about conjugal relationship. A husband does not speak with his wife in the presence of his elders. In conversation it is against decorum to speak of the *wife* of another person, the word 'house' is used instead of wife. In the Multan district when a gentleman enquires about the health of his friend's wife, he does not even use the word house, but *Didhi* or entrance to the Zenana. The enquirer dares not even in imagination enter the house, but falls short of it at the very threshold. In such societies the emancipation of females would indeed be a big jump,—a sudden change as impossible as it would be undesirable. I would suggest that in societies, in which no education is given to females, some education may be given, and in others, in which education is already given, an advanced course of education may be introduced. If you develop the intellectual power, there will naturally be a demand for the exercise of the power. Make your sisters capable of understanding the world, and they will, as a consequence, require to be allowed to move about and see the world. Not only this, but inculcate a taste for knowledge, and the desire for it which is the most insatiable of all other desires will grow, until it will be impossible to satisfy it without slackening the restraints that exist at present.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have detained you long on the subject of female disabilities—though perhaps not longer than the importance of the subject justified, and I will now say a few words on the curtailment of expenses on marriage and other ceremonies. A few months ago my friend Pandit Shiv Narain, Pleader of Jullundhar, wrote a nice little book on the subject of social reform amongst Kashmiri Pundits, a community to which he and I have the honour to belong. A greater part of the book is devoted to proposals for reducing ex-

penditure on various ceremonies. A friend of mine wrote on the back of it a couplet, which with slight alterations in the second line to suit the rhyme stood thus :--

‘Karo aish o ushrat ko apne zara kam,
Ki manen nasayeh tun hanke bhiham,’

which means: reduce your luxuries, before you expect us to follow your advice. A few days later, I had occasion to talk with another friend of mine on the subject, and he said in prose what is expressed above in poetry. Our efforts are partly misunderstood. ‘Never a borrower but a lender be’ is the principle which we mean to inculcate for all kinds of business. We do not recommend extravagance in anything. A person who expends more than his income on the ordinary comforts of life, is as unwise as the person who incurs debts on marriage ceremonies, but our efforts are specially directed to reduction of expenses on the latter, because in respectable circles debts are more generally incurred on celebration of marriages and other ceremonies than on comfortable living, and there is a great disproportion in the minds of the people between the importance of living comfortably and of making a show on ceremonies. To pass years under misery and in a state below what your means can command in order that you may be able to spend five or six days in a life-time with pomp and show is a peculiar mode of employing your resources to the best advantage and of securing the greatest amount of happiness. Our contentions can be summed up in three sentences—never outlive your means, reduce your expenditure under one head and increase it under the other, and see if you are happier. In fixing scales of expenses for the marriages of our daughters, we must not however lose sight of the fact that under our present laws daughters inherit in very few cases, and that the dowries given on their marriages form the principal part of their personal property. Large dowries within the means of the persons giving them are not to be deprecated in societies in which early betrothal is followed by marriage at an age at which the bridegroom though past minority has not entered the world and has not begun to earn his own livelihood.

Rich men in all societies form always an influential class,

whose example is looked up to and followed by all the rest. It is therefore very necessary that if they sympathise with our efforts to reduce expenses in social ceremonies and if they realise that their poorer brethren suffer by the disproportion that exists in our ideas between the importance of living comfortably and of making a show on ceremonies, they should be a little more frugal than is strictly justifiable by their means. For often a morbid activity has to be checked by showing some unusual energy in the display of a healthy activity, which counteracts the morbid one.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have now to say a very few words on the functions of this Social Conference, and I have finished. This assembly, which consists of the representatives of different societies whose circumstances, needs and requirements are more or less different, meets only once a year. It partakes therefore of the character of a representative body. It affirms certain principles, the working of which is left to the various Committees. The proper work of the Conference is to enunciate certain principles and to see that the Committees try to work them out,—in short to guide the work of subordinate working bodies. In the words of our veteran reformer we meet here 'to take stock of one year's achievements.' If by meeting once a year and passing a number of resolutions we are able to awaken the representatives of different communities to a sense of their work, we achieve much. The subject of the organisation of the Conference on a provisional basis will come up before the meeting. The chief difficulty is that in each province, there are different communities, each at a different stage of advancement. Some communities,—perhaps all, except some advanced religious communities,—will be startled at the very name of widow re-marriage or female education, but there are two very important subjects in our programme, which can afford a common platform of work for different Associations and Sabhas, that exist in the country—I mean early marriage and reduction of expenses on social ceremonies. If different Associations affiliate themselves to the Conference, the more advanced spirit which characterises our programme can be infused into them. Let us however hope that the earnestness and zeal,

which characterises our action to-day will mark our efforts throughout the year before we meet again, and that whilst we display undaunted courage and unfailing perseverance in our onward march in social reform, we make our way with the greatest wisdom and forethought through our present stage of marked transition

Ladies and gentlemen, before I sit down let me apologise to you for having detained you so long over this address, and let me thank you for the patience with which you have listened to all that I have said.

**The Eighth Social Conference—Dewan Bahadur
(now the Hon'ble Justice Sir) S. Subramania
Iyer's Address.**

I beg to thank you most sincerely for the honour you have done me in asking me to preside at this Conference. When I look back to the record of your past Conferences, I cannot help feeling that this duty had devolved on some one more capable of doing justice to the task and some one who can speak with much greater emphasis than I can upon questions which will presently come before you for consideration. Gentlemen, we are, I think, very lucky this year in having in our midst some of the leaders of the social reform movement. I refer first to our venerable friend Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao, whose devotion to the cause is so well known to you all. I also refer to that large-hearted man whose indefatigable and wise work in the cause of reform is also well known to you—I mean the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade. I also refer to that profound scholar whose deep learning, erudition, and unflinching devotion to the cause of reform is also well known to you—I mean Dr. Bhandarkar, Vice-Chancellor of the Bombay University. With such learned and experienced men ready to guide you and instruct you in your deliberations this day, I feel great hesitation and diffidence in having to stand up and address you. But orthodox precedent requires that I as the Chairman should open these proceedings with a few prefatory remarks. In fol-

lowing the rule I propose to be brief, because there is so much work to get through and because so much of what I can say has been so well anticipated in the admirable address delivered by the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade the other day in the Christian College Hall. It was an address which contained a luminous and masterly survey of the work done and the progress made during the seven years which have elapsed since the Social Conference was held in this city. Gentlemen, I believe all of you know the large gatherings that were held during the last few days, composed of persons who came from various parts of India. They have come here at considerable sacrifice and inconvenience from distant parts to attend these meetings. What do we find on close examination? We find that a considerable number of these gentlemen are more or less interested in all three movements, thus proving beyond the possibility of a doubt that the revival, which is taking place just amongst us, is not one-sided,—is not confined to politics, but that it extends to and embraces matters, social and spiritual. However much individuals may differ as to which of these particular movements is entitled to special attention and support at their hands,—however much individuals may disagree as to the actual steps to be taken to achieve the end which is in view,—I think I can safely say that it has come to be generally recognised that none of these movements can be neglected altogether, if the general progress of the country is to be placed on a true and sound basis. I am quite sure that this conviction is growing stronger and stronger amongst us every day, and that it is beginning to be felt that there is no real antagonism, and there ought to be no real antagonism amongst these various movements. I believe it is this growing consciousness that makes such of us as are specially interested in the Indian National Congress look upon the work of the social reformer with greater favour than was the case at first. I believe it is this general feeling that likewise disposes the social reformer to endeavour to evolve out of the indigenous literature of the country certain doctrines to meet the requirements of our age. This naturally leads me to offer a few observations on the methods employed by some of the most enthusiastic reformers.

I have noticed with great regret that hastiness, insufficient examination of causes and effects, exaggeration and intolerance characterise some of their writings and utterances. I believe such writings and utterances are retarding rather than advancing the progress of our cause. Allow me to say what I really think of the policy thus pursued. I am anxious to take advantage of this opportunity and state it publicly, because I wish that the outside world should not judge of the soundness and the wisdom of our cause by such utterances and such writings, which I am free to confess are open to objection. I urge most earnestly upon those gentlemen, whose enthusiasm and whose honesty I perfectly recognise, not to provoke enmity and not to make enemies to the cause by such a procedure. We must avoid that narrow dogmatism that we so much complain of in our companions. The habits, the feelings, and the institutions, which are the result of a long history, cannot be altered in a day. To some of those ardent reformers I have just referred to this may sound very harsh. They may ask how are those evils to be eradicated, unless we make it a point of exposing them and holding them for reprobation in season and out of season. To them my reply is—try and educate public opinion—try and get public opinion on your side, and custom such as you wish will certainly soon grow out of such public opinion, and, as has been remarked before, even religion will not delay long to strengthen herself by establishing an alliance with the accomplished fact, and thus adopting with her sanction and grace the altered practices of domestic and social life. Nor do I think that the religious practices and ceremonies, which seem inconsistent at first sight with our altered programme, to be ridiculous. I wish that the reformer gave a thought to the question how these practices, which are inconsistent with our present position of affairs, came to receive the sanction of religion. Once the true foundation of the situation is explained on a rational basis, I feel that much of the opposition which is offered will disappear. In this connection I wish to offer one more observation, and I trust that you will receive it in the spirit in which it is offered. I believe it was the late lamented Professor Ranganadham

Mudaliar, for whom all of us have such admiration, who said that, with reference to some matters which the reformer is advocating, no one has a right to demand from another that amount of self-sacrifice, which is consistent with his thoughts and ideas. With reference to these matters I am inclined to grant and endorse his views. Put yourself the question how many of you are willing to become martyrs of the cause at once. That is the difficulty, which I ask the enthusiastic reformer to realise fully before he loses patience with those who are desirous of seeing those changes effected. I should however ask my enthusiastic friend not to misunderstand me.

I shall now proceed to offer a few observations with reference to another class of persons. The great charge which is brought forward against us is that if we proceed long with these measures that are being advocated, we are sure to be launched in the chaos of irreligion. I feel certain that there is not the slightest foundation for such an apprehension. I have always found it difficult to understand why a religious reformer working for the spiritual elevation of our people, if he is fully liberal, should quarrel with his fellow-countryman, who is seeking to effect in our social usages the necessary changes gradually, cautiously and in a reasonable and truly patriotic spirit (hear, hear). I trust, gentlemen, that as long as the social reformer confines himself to his limits—as long as his practice is characterised by sympathy and discrimination, so long will he receive nothing but sympathy from those educated men who are coming under the powerful influence of philosophy and religion, which is now being preached in this country with a zeal, a fervour, a felicity, and an eloquence, almost unmatched (cheers). I can assure you that I am behind none in my admiration or reverence for the philosophy contained in our Indian scriptures. I feel fully satisfied that the precious contents of these great remains of antiquity are before long destined to find acceptance and due recognition at the hands of the thoughtful men not only in this country,—its ancient home, but also at the hands of the thoughtful men of civilised Europe, America, and Australasia. But no amount of faith in these scriptures can blind any one to

the mischievous character of some of the practices, which the social reformer is endeavouring to rectify. I shall proceed now to take one or two points and make a few observations on them. I first ask how can any one with a spark of reasonableness in him question the mischievous consequences which flow from the system of infant marriages, which is so much in vogue at present. Who will not deplore the disastrous consequences that flow from premature maternity and paternity, which necessarily follow from this extremely vicious custom? How can anybody defend the procreation of feeble children by parents hardly capable of looking after themselves and utterly unable to bring up their children in such a way as would make them useful citizens of the country, into which they come into being? Does our religion require that such early marriages should take place? I deny it, and say that very little reflection and scrutiny will satisfy any of you that entertain a doubt in this matter, that such a practice is absolutely inconsistent with that portion of our Shastras, which lays down rules of self-restraint to be practised by every male member of the so-called regenerate class, before he becomes a householder. As this subject has been the topic of every reflecting and meditating man, I need not say anything further. Passing on to the vexed question of the condition of widows, can anybody defend it and say truly that their condition is all right? Would anyone say that the unfortunate lot of these widows requires no remedy? I know, gentlemen, that this is a very troublesome topic. It is one on which the few are opposed to the many; and I certainly do not belong to the few and yet cannot sympathise with the many. I trust that the observations which I make in regard to this matter will be received as coming from a man who belongs to neither side. I say that the subject is indeed a very difficult one, and beset with difficulties. I say it is beset with difficulties, because I look upon any attempt to mould our marriage institutions on the footing of a mere contractual basis as an extremely retrograde movement. I will deplore the day when the very high ideal of marriage laid down in our Shastras will give place to the modern notion, which seems to be gaining ground everywhere and every day.

The modern notion is that it should be a mere matter of contract. That is a position which little examination will show to be contrary to the spirit of the entire history regarding the subject of marriage in this country. Still it is impossible for me to reconcile myself to the position in which our custom places those widows whom I have just referred to. I believe it serves an extremely useful purpose. It makes them remarkable specimens—self-denying specimens of humanity. If the practice of self-denial was a voluntary one, then it would be entitled to our admiration. But it is absurd to talk of those specimens as specimens of remarkable self-denial, when that is enforced by the rigid rules of society. I submit, gentlemen, that it is impossible to recognise that the self-restraint, which you impose upon children who have no intelligence, would be regarded as producing that self-denial, which is generally admired by all. That being the position of affairs, I cannot possibly agree with those who would band themselves to persecute those who are seeking to find some way out of the difficulty. I think a way should be found, and the position of affairs restored to what it was, when those *Rishis* legislated on a plan akin to the present ideal of marriage and yet did not impose this custom of enforced widowhood. Of course there is a certain class of people who are disposed to look upon everything old contained in the *Shastras* as by-gone nonsense, and there are those who have not read the *Shastras*, except through the medium of translations, to judge what the *Shastras* contain. I have neither to mind the one nor the other. But I have to discharge my duty as a member of this community, whatever the position you may take with reference to me and the acceptance I receive at your hands. I am not pressing my own thoughts upon you as if they were original. The substance of what I said was expressed in a felicitous way by the late Justice K. T. Telang than whom there was no more impartial observer of things—than whom no other person possessed a more independent judgment. But as I observed before, the difficulty, on the other hand, is equally great. Once the solemnity of the bond of marriage is made loose, there is a danger of suits being filed for divorce, for the dissolution of marriage, for incompatibilities of temper and so on. We

are, therefore, by the system of infant marriages principally launched in this position of difficulty, and the truly patriotic and reflective man must make up his mind to find a way out of the difficulty without on the one hand destroying the solemnity of marriage or discouraging the bonds of unity, and on the other hand by finding a remedy for the unprotected class. Whether it is possible to get out of the difficulty is a question about which there is a great difference of opinion. I believe that, if the young and the enthusiastic would both apply their minds dispassionately and endeavour to find a remedy which will not destroy the national character of marriage, Providence will find a way to get out of the difficulty. It is a problem which will take a long time to solve. That is the reflection that is forced upon one's mind. But if you will, as I have said, meet on a friendly basis dispassionately, with a desire in fact to solve the difficulty on national lines, it would not be difficult to find a *modus operandi*, which would satisfy both sides in due time. This is the reflection that forced itself upon my mind, when I looked at some books with reference to this very question. Old *Rishis* did not act as you do. They did not absolutely prohibit re-marriages. On the other hand, they provided for cases of the sort that have created a difficulty and are still creating a difficulty amongst us. They did not by an inviolable custom enforce widowhood on those who are not willing to adopt that life. Therefore I say that if reformers and those that oppose them reasonably meet, some arrangement could be made, which would seem to us a way out of the difficulty. I am not competent to go into the question fully. But even if I were, time would not permit this being done. That is the matter which every honest man must apply his mind to and see whether he could not effect a reconciliation by which the difficulty might be got over. It is not right that if the reformer endeavours to effect a change in the manner which is not consistent with present practices, he should be punished with excommunication—the biggest punishment that can be awarded; for it only indicates that enemies' hearts are callous to the mischief the present practices are working. On the other hand, the reformer should take care not to go and pro-

pound a theory which may lead to a complete breach. I have now taken up the two important social questions of infant marriages and enforced widowhood. I shall now refer to the question of female education—the all-important subject in my view. It is a question which will enable us to tide over the difficulty far more easily than any other question. Can any reasonable man contend to leave the other sex in utter darkness without providing for it the means of acquiring proper learning and culture? I believe this is a subject on which you have heard a great many speeches. Therefore my observations will be very few indeed. I have one more observation to make, and that is that Sir William Hunter very truly once observed that whatever the ultimate sanction for human conduct, whatever the influence of religion, whatever the fear of punishment in the future state, whatever the present fears of the criminal law may be, the best safeguard for a man against the temptation for wrong-doing is his self-respect. This is not an ideal picture merely, and one object of the social reformer in endeavouring to secure education for our women is to enable them to discharge their sacred duties as mothers, as wives, and as sisters more nobly and more truly than they are at present able to perform. It is usual, gentlemen, to speak of this as a new ideal, an outgrowth of purely Western education. However that may be, it is satisfactory to note that a change for the better is taking place in the attitude of the community as a whole in the matter of female education, and the other things which I have referred to before. It is not much, but I believe the old aggressive hostility, confining myself to the general tendency of the people, is slowly dying away, and I believe that the number of people amongst our countrymen, who are disposed to look with greater sympathy with the movement of the reasonable social reformer, is on the increase, and I trust that in the hurry to go on much more quickly than we do now, this favourable attitude on the part of the general community will not be lost sight of. I trust, gentlemen, that no pains will be spared to win over by sympathetic efforts the majority of our countrymen to our way of thinking. I trust that you will resolutely avoid the method of rebellion, as Mr. Justice Ranade aptly termed it. I trust that you will not even

under the most provoking circumstances say it is impossible to get on with this old community, let us form a new community. We shall not then be able to confer any benefit upon the society by such a process. You may become a new caste and have a new marriage law enacted in the statute book. But so far as the cruel customs that you complain of and so far as relief to the oppressed are concerned, you will not be able to do any good. You will be able to say I have saved my daughter, my sister, and so on, but you will not be able to say I have been able to effect a good and salutary change in the general community. I trust, therefore, that you will bear in mind that this method of rebellion may be avoided even under the most provoking circumstances. Our object should be to try and draw to our view the majority of the community, and I think that in going about the work of reform we should also bear in mind the observation of Sir T. Muthuswami Iyer, which he made when addressing an association of young men : ' Your work should not partake of the character of indiscriminate destruction, but of construction on old national lines.' Of course I know that many of you will go back and say that it is usual for Subramania Iyer to indulge in all these platitudes (hear, hear). Many of you may also say that it is easy to suggest good old national lines without being told what these national lines are. If you take ancient books, I trust you will be able to find out that there are a good many national lines. We need not destroy the old history and start a fresh one ; you may be able to rectify yourself, but the community will not be able to change, unless you proceed on those lines on which it has gone on for a considerable period, and our efforts should simply be to remove the excrescences of the injurious customs, which in every climate and in every nationality necessarily crop up from time to time. I do not think I should detain you any more. I have spoken to you upon the principal questions. I know that this slow process that I have been endeavouring to press upon you will certainly be distasteful to certain minds. This will fill many minds who are in favour of a rapid change being effected with a feeling of despondency. But I must say that in my opinion the surest way of reaching our goal is to adopt a policy of persuasion and education—the

policy of educating the community and evoking their sympathy thereby. There are some I know amongst my friends who take a much less favourable view of the destinies of our people. They are those who look upon the inhabitants of this great country as belonging to that inferior type of humanity, which is destined, to adopt the language of Dr. Pearson, to occupy the black belt as opposed to the white belt of the globe. Gentlemen, if you proceed on the lines indicated by me, I am sure you will be able to make a great many improvements, and eventually you will be destined to get a large measure of success within the limit supposed to be allowed to this inferior branch of the people. To those who think that our future is indefinitely great, there is no room for despair. Even if you suppose that it is so, judging from our own procedure, our own habits and customs, our want of self-reliance and so on, even to those who take that despondent view, I say, 'Consult any book which is written on the subject of social evolution, and you cannot but see that there is a great future before you, and in order to achieve this end you should proceed not only with the perseverance, which is worthy of the great cause that we have before us, but also with the spirit of patient confidence and hopefulness, which I think our surrounding circumstances justify.' I have detained you longer than I expected. But before I sit down, I have a duty to perform, of saying a few words upon an event of no small importance which has taken place in the neighbouring Province of Mysore, whose benevolent sovereign paid his debt of nature the other day at a premature age. I think after the vote you have just passed, it is unnecessary for me to dwell upon his great excellences, upon his benevolent nature, his statesmanlike qualities and other excellent traits in his character. It is to that enlightened sovereign that the Mysoreans are indebted for the law, which now prohibits the marriage of girls under 8 years of age and also prohibits ill-assorted marriages. I think His late lamented Highness and his equally enlightened Dewan as well as his wise and able Councillors have earned the gratitude of the whole community by passing such a law as the one in question. Not that this is going to bring in a large amount of relief, but that it has applied the principle of legis-

lation for the removal of social evils. I trust that the example thus set by a native Government, guided by very experienced and cautious men by no means unsympathetic to the dominating orthodoxy—I trust that the example set by that enlightened Prince will lead to similar legislation elsewhere. Gentlemen, I have done,—I have only to thank you for the kindness you have shown me in listening patiently to what I have said. I shall now proceed to call upon the various speakers to move the resolutions that are to be placed before you to-day for your consideration (*loud applause*).

The Ninth Social Conference—Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar's Address.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I must in accordance with the usual practice begin by thanking you for having elected me your Chairman. On the present occasion, however, this is not a mere matter of routine and formality. Certain circumstances have this year very widely evoked enthusiasm for the cause of social reform, and have led to a sort of constitution being given to this Conference similar to that which the political Congress possesses. I have before me to-day a large number of my countrymen, who, I believe, are sincere advocates of social reform, as calculated to improve the fortunes of our country and to place her in a condition to enable her to maintain her position in the keen competition and rivalry that is now going on between the different countries and races of the world. To be the Chairman of a body of such true lovers of their country is an honour that cannot but be highly appreciated.

About sixty years ago, none among us had any idea of the reform of our society and a Conference such as this was out of the question. But since that time we have come in closer contact with Western civilisation chiefly through the means of English education; and that has led us to take interest in the concerns of Indian society in general and consider its good to be our good, and has evoked in us feelings of justice and com-

passion for the various classes that compose our society. If then you are animated by these sentiments, the task before us to-day will present no difficulties. For the end aimed at by the propositions that will be laid before you is justice and fair play to all classes of persons, the alleviation of their sufferings and the removal of obstacles in the free development of our individual activities.

And first, a good many of the proposals have reference to the condition of the female portion of our society. Gentlemen, one-half of the intellectual, moral, and spiritual resources of our country is being wasted. If our women were educated as they ought to be, they would be a powerful instrument for advancing the general condition of our country. They will bring up every new generation in a manner to perform its duty efficiently and will shed the influence of the benign virtues peculiar to them on men and, so to say, humanise them. All the means of educating women, therefore, that have been indicated in the propositions, you will, I feel sure, approve of. You will see that the opening of High Schools is one of them. That necessarily implies that the study of English language and literature is considered to be beneficial to our women. Though there has been some difference of opinion as regards this point, still I believe the necessity of such education has been recognised by the majority. But I think it still remains an open question whether our ideal for the education of women ought to be the same as that for the education of men,—whether after they finish their High School education, they ought to be made to go through the whole University course up to the M.A. Degree. If bitter complaints have recently been urged as to the great pressure which our University education imposes upon our men, much stronger grounds there are for fear as regards women, whose constitution is more delicate and certain incidents in whose life and whose domestic duties tax them so heavily. Perhaps after finishing a High School education, if further progress is desired, there should be a selection of such subjects as are more calculated to develop the peculiar aptitudes of womanly nature. The other points

concerning our daughters and our sisters have reference to the unjust and cruel sufferings to which our present social usages subject them, and which no man in whom the sentiments of justice and compassion are developed can find it in his heart to tolerate even for a moment. The misery of our widows has been the subject of frequent remark ; I will therefore not detain you long by a full exposition of it. I will only make a general observation that that society which allows men to marry any number of times even up to the age of sixty, while it sternly forbids even girls of seven or eight to have another husband after one is dead,—which gives liberty to a man of 50 or 60 to marry a girl of eleven or twelve, which has no word of condemnation for the man who marries another wife within fifteen days after the death of the first, is a society which sets very little value upon the life of a female human being, and places woman on the same level with cattle and is thus in an unsound condition disqualifying it for a successful competition with societies with a more healthy constitution. Oftentimes the marriage of a girl under certain circumstances proves her death-warrant. This matter has within the last few years forced itself powerfully upon my observation. A young man of thirty or thirty-five loses his first wife ; straightway he proceeds to marry another, who is a girl of ten or twelve. That girl dies by the time she reaches the age of twenty ; another takes her place, immediately after ; she too dies similarly ; then comes a third who meets with the same fate ; and a fourth is married by the persevering man and is eventually left a widow before she is out of her teens. A great many such cases have occurred within the last few years and amongst our educated men. The medical men, whom I have consulted, say that the results are due to the marriages being ill-assorted, *i.e.*, to the great inequality between the age of the girl and of the strong and vigorous man. I do not know how else to characterise these cases except as cases of human sacrifice. Surely, if the men who have married girls successively in this manner are educated men, their refined sentiments and feelings ought to make them spare poor innocent girls and marry grown up women,—widows, if unmarried ones are not to be had. Gentlemen, this

case of ill-assorted marriage deserves greater condemnation at our hands than the other, which is the only one that seems to be contemplated in one of the resolutions to be brought forward, and in which an old man of even fifty or sixty marries a girl of ten or twelve.

I will next call your attention to those points in the resolutions which concern the institution of castes. And first of all allow me to observe that a very great revolution has been effected in this matter by the mere fact that we are governed by a people amongst whom the sense of equal justice for all classes of people has received a high development. A Shudra at the present day is not more heavily punished than a Brahmin for the same crimes. Manu, Yajnavalkya and others have been set aside in this respect, and the privileges which in the eye of the criminal law men of the highest caste enjoyed, have been taken away from them. I remember about forty-five years ago when a Brahmin was hanged for committing a murder at Ratnagiri, it created a stir among the people, since such a punishment for a Brahmin was opposed to all past traditions of the country. But of course the change did not provoke active hostility and has been acquiesced in on all sides. Similarly a Shudra's tongue is not now cut off for repeating the letters of the Vedas. On the contrary, if a teacher in a Government school refuses to teach the sacred mantras to a Shudra, he is apt to be dismissed from service. In our schools and colleges we have to teach Sanskrit literature including the Vedas to all castes and classes. But it is very much to be regretted that the treasure of knowledge which has thus been thrown open to all is not availed of by the lower castes to the extent to which they should. This is to be accounted for in a great measure by the fact of the old traditional feeling not having gone out—education is not what the Shudra thinks of first; nor are endeavours made by others to induce him to educate himself and smoothen his path to a University degree. Similarly the railways have been effecting a silent revolution. A holy Brahmin does not scruple to sit in a third class carriage by the side of a Mahar, whose very shadow is an abomination on ordinary occasions.

The Mahars and Mangs on this side of the country and the Pariahs on the other, who form the lowest classes, have been entirely neglected. They are the outcastes of Hindu society, and have been from the remotest times in a very degraded condition. The reference made to this fact by a Mahar Haridas in his prefatory remarks, while performing a Kirtana at my house a few years ago, was very touching. He said, 'the Vedas and Shastras have cast us aside, but the Santas or saints of the middle ages have had compassion on us.' And be it said to the credit of the Santas of Maharashtra headed by the Brahmin Eknath and to the Santas of other provinces that they had compassion for the outcastes of Hindu society, and admitted their claims to religious instruction and a better treatment. If then in those olden days these pious men, with their hearts elevated by faith and devotion, admitted the lowest Shudra to religious communion and instruction, shall we, upon whom a greater variety of influences have been operating, refuse to exert ourselves for bringing enlightenment in the dense darkness in which his mind is shrouded? And I believe from the opportunities I have had of observation that the despised Mahar possesses a good deal of natural intelligence and is capable of being highly educated. So that to continue to keep him in ignorance is to deprive the country of an appreciable amount of intellectual resources. And generally, allow me to observe that the rigid system of castes, which prevails among us, will ever act as a heavy drag on our race towards a brighter future. To tie men down to certain occupations, even when they have no aptitude for them, renders those men less useful to the country. When all men belonging to a certain caste must follow certain occupations only, the field is overstocked and poverty is the result. You can get a Brahmin schoolmaster for five or six rupees a month, but a good carpenter or stonemason cannot be had unless you pay from twenty to twenty-five rupees per mensem. And unless perfect freedom is allowed to men in this respect, and each allowed to make the best possible use of his own powers, the country cannot economically advance. Special privileges enjoyed by certain castes must keep the members of others in a disadvantageous position in the

rivalry and competition of life. In order that a nation as a whole may put forth all its power, it is necessary that there should be no special privileges and special restrictions. Again the principle of caste has throughout our history operated in such a way that each caste has now come to form a separate community with distinct usages, even as to the kind of food that is eaten and the manner in which it is cooked. And there is no social intercommunication between them of a nature to bind them together into one whole. Hence instead of there being a feeling of sympathy between different castes, there is often a feeling of antipathy. As long as this state of things lasts, I shall feel greatly obliged to any one who will explain to me how it is possible to form a united Hindu nation. If therefore we feel at all concerned as regards the future of our country in the great struggle that is going on in the world, something must be immediately done to induce a feeling of unity among these distinct communities and convert active antipathy into active sympathy.

And I will here make bold to assert that the chronic poverty of the agricultural classes and the depredations of the proverbial Savkar or money-lender constitute a great social evil. The Government has been endeavouring to do a good deal by means of mere special legislation; but that does not seem to have remedied the evil and the money-lender continues to charge interest from 18 to 25 per cent. on loans raised on the security of lands, and two or four *pice* per rupee per month, i.e., $37\frac{1}{2}$ or 75 per cent. on smaller sums lent for shorter periods; and there are also enhancements of interest, when the money is not paid at the stipulated time. In this manner, the poor peasant is ever a prey to the rapacity of the money-lender and is never allowed to raise his head. This is a political as well as a social question. The Government has been on several occasions urged to establish agricultural banks, but it has not yet seen the wisdom of doing so, and we too, whose countrymen the agriculturists are, have not shown particular solicitude to remedy the evil by establishing banks of our own. I do not think any special banking institution with elaborate machinery, such as has been recently proposed, is wanted. An ordinary bank

with agencies at the District towns and sub-agencies for circles with a radius of about ten miles will, I think, fully answer the purpose. Money should be lent on the security of land at an interest of from 9 to 12 per cent payable about the same time as the land revenue. Sympathetic, though firm, treatment should be accorded to the peasants and the agents employed should not be unscrupulous men exacting perquisites for themselves. But I will not trespass on the province of the man of business, and whatever be the scheme that may be considered suitable and whatever its details, this I feel certain about, that shrewd men ought not to be allowed to prey upon the ignorance and entire helplessness of the agricultural classes and perpetuate their wretched condition.

Then there are other points in the resolutions, the aim of which is to remove positive obstacles to our healthy development. The early marriage of boys and girls is of this nature, since its effect is to undermine the strength of both and bring forth a progeny of weak children. The growth of the parents themselves, intellectual as well as physical, is stunted; and in a course of evolution our race must become incapable of that energy and stillness of application, which are so necessary under the conditions brought into existence by the rivalry and competition of races. The prohibition of travel in foreign countries I would put under the same head, since it acts as an obstacle to the free expansion of our energies and capacities.

These are the principal points aimed at by the social reformer. You will see that what is necessary in order that these reforms may come into practice is that there should spring up in our hearts a sense of justice, a keen sympathy for the sufferings of others and a love for one's own country and race, and an anxiety for their future well-being. If the feelings have been awakened in us with any degree of intensity, they cannot fail to realise themselves in some sort of action, and I believe that the contrary holds true that when no action follows, the feelings are either not awakened at all, or if really awakened, are very weak. It is this fact and also the general conservatism of our nature as well as the fear of excommunication that hold us back and we devise a number of excuses for our inaction. Sometimes we are disposed

to leave the whole matter to the action of time, thinking that all we desire will come into practice just as the rigidity of caste rules is being gradually lessened by railway travelling and such other circumstances. But time is not a force, it is simply a conception of the mind to connect events together and cannot work any changes. If therefore any changes have come on in the course of time, they must be brought about by the force in the human heart that leads to action. As a matter of fact, such changes are often very extensive and important. For instance the practice of early marriage of girls, and of female infanticide and Kulinism have come into existence in comparatively recent times. But if you examine their origin, you will find that the first owes its introduction probably to the circumstances that when the girls grew up, they went wrong in some cases. In order to prevent such a result, they were tied down to a husband before they were of an age to go wrong. To avoid sin was of course a laudable object, but the desire was not under the guidance of reason. Consequently the many evil effects of early marriages were overlooked, and the attainment of that one object was exclusively attended to. If, however, the desire to prevent the evil had been under the guidance of reason, other modes would have been devised for effecting it than the one actually chosen. Similarly the practice of female infanticide and of Kulinism must in the beginning have arisen from family pride. One's daughter should not be married into a family possessing no importance or distinction. To marry her into a high family requires a heavy expenditure of money, which the father cannot afford, and in the case of Kulinism such a family is not available. Hence rather than suffer the disgrace of allying himself with a low family, he allowed his daughter to be destroyed, and in the other case to be married to one who had innumerable wives already. Here again you will see that the motive of action was not under the guidance of the higher feelings of love and tenderness for a human being and especially for one's own child. Thus then what time brings about is very often not under the guidance of reason or the higher feelings of our nature, and consequently very often degradation is the result and not elevation. It will therefore not do to leave

reform to time or the slow and unconscious operation of causes. It must be effected from a conscious intention, and the motive force should be, as above remarked, a sense of justice, a keen sympathy and an anxiety for the future of one's own country. Unable to appreciate the feelings of the true reformer, we often accuse him of being hasty in desiring to do everything at once,—we sometimes say that if he had adopted a particular way, the reform he desires would have long come into practice. Comments such as these I always suspect, especially when they come from a man who has done little or nothing practical. I am however not an advocate of headlong action. The motive force of reform should be powerful in our hearts, but they must be tempered in a manner not to lead us to cut ourselves from a vital connection with the past. We should not adopt the procedure of the French Revolution, but imitate the mode of action of English people, whose pupils we are. They have realised as great changes as the French Revolution sought to effect, but in a manner which connects them with the past history of the country. It will not be impossible to devise such a mode of action. One who has returned from foreign travels should live like an ordinary Hindu. A re-married widow should conduct herself just like an ordinary Hindu lady. And even as regards caste, we should behave towards each other in ordinary matters as if no such distinction existed between us; while as to eating together and inter-marriage, they must come in by and by especially when the sharp distinctions as to usages and customs between the several castes are obliterated by a closer intercommunication than that which exists at the present day. But the great danger of delayed reform is that in a short time the feeling which dictated it becomes cool, and the necessity for it is entirely forgotten. To prevent this result it is essential that the motive springs of reform should always be kept alive in our hearts. We should make an earnest effort never to lose sight of the goal we have to reach. But the modest proposal that will be laid before you as regards these two matters, viz., inter-communication as regards eating and marriage-alliance between members of the sub-divisions of the same caste, involves no violent change whatever; consequently, there is, I believe, no

excuse for delaying its realisation. Generally it may be observed that what we have to avoid is the formation of a separate caste cut off from all social intercourse with any of the existing Hindn castes,—that is to say, we should avoid such complete isolation, as for instance, conversion to Christianity leads to. And most of the reforms we advocate involve no break of continuity. Some of them will be welcomed by the orthodox people themselves, and as regards a great many others what we propose is merely to go back to the more healthy condition in which our society once existed. In ancient times girls were married after they had attained maturity, now they must be married before; widow-marriage was in practice, now it has entirely gone out, women were often highly educated and taught even music and dancing, now they are condemned to ignorance and denied any accomplishments. The castes were only four in number, now they are innumerable. Inter-dining among those castes was not prohibited, now the numberless castes that prevail cannot have inter-communication of that nature. Consistently with the maintenance of continuity in this manner, there ought to be, I think, as much action as possible. A strong public opinion must be created among the whole body of educated natives, condemning any departure from the programme of reform, while no mercy should be shown to one who does what even the orthodox disapprove, and at sixty marries a girl of ten or twelve, or another wife immediately after the death of the first. The exhibition of any caste partiality must also be severely condemned, as no religious rules require it. Unless we act in this manner, all our advocacy of reform will sink into the merest sentimentality more demoralising in its effects than sturdy orthodoxy.

But even sentimental advocacy is an homage done to a right cause and consequently is better than stolid indifference or active hostility. This, however, is unfortunately the mental attitude of a great many educated natives in all parts of the country. In Bengal, as was pointed out by our friend the Honourable Mr. Justice Ranade the other day, social reform is now confined to Brahmos. The great body of educated Bengalees, who are not Brahmos, are indifferent or hostile. The late

Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar, who inaugurated the reform about widow-marriage and first ransacked our *Smriti* literature to be able to make out that it was sanctioned by the *Shashtra*, and worked for a life-time to make it popular, was in his latter days filled with despondency and expressed his conviction to visitors from this side of the country that Hindus as Hindus would never accept social reform. It is certainly a matter of the deepest regret that it should be confined to a religious body. We on this side have not come to this pass yet, though we have our full share of indifference and hostility. The aim of our reformers here has always been to reform our society—our nation. I am happy to find that our Madras friends agree with us in this respect. Reform through the agency of caste, which is attempted in some parts of the country, is very unsatisfactory. Very little can be effected in this way. The reduction of marriage expenses and measures of this nature only can be carried out by its means, and the great danger of this method is that caste which has corroded the vitals of this country will be strengthened by it.

Thus then we should nurture in our hearts the great forces which bring about the reform of society, *viz.*, truth, justice, and sympathy. Two of the greatest historians of England have told us that the moral law governs the affairs of the world; its observance alone ensures national prosperity. One of these I have quoted elsewhere, and will now ask your attention to the observations of the other. The strongest of the forces which are steadily bearing nations onward to improvement or decay are, according to Lecky, the moral ones. 'Their permanent political well-being,' he says, 'is essentially the outcome of their moral state.' The moral law seeks to purify private life and to effect social justice, and through these alone is the political well-being of a nation possible. And evolutionary science is beginning to teach us the same lesson. Competition and rivalry are the necessary conditions of progress towards a higher condition among men as well as among the lower creatures. This competition and this rivalry tend to establish the supremacy of the stronger individual over the weaker; his race propagates itself and that of

the other disappears. It is this law that is leading or has led to the extinction of the aboriginal races in the presence of the stronger European races in America, Australia, New Zealand and other islands. This competition and rivalry need not assume the form of an actual war of extermination. It has been clearly ascertained that even in the midst of profound peace, the primitive races show a tendency to disappear. If this law were in operation in our country, our future must be very gloomy. But our climate will, I think, come to our rescue as it has been ascertained that the stronger races of Western Europe cannot, if settled here, exhibit the same energy and perseverance that they do in temperate regions. Colonisation of India by the European races is, therefore, an impracticability; but does not deliver us from the dangers of competition and rivalry with them. And again that law must be in operation among us to ensure our own progress. But to estimate its full effects we must understand the conditions under which it acts in the case of man. Man is a social animal, and the competition that comes into operation in his case is a competition between societies. The ancient history of the human race consists of war between such societies and the triumph of one and subjugation of another. This competition and rivalry between different societies is going on still, and in order that a society may carry on the contest to a successful issue, it is necessary that it should be so organised that the individuals composing it should not be borne down by artificial restrictions, but be able to put forth their best powers and capacities. The history of England, for example, shows a gradual emancipation of the classes that were once in a condition of little better than slavery and a renunciation of their privileges by the dominant classes. The effect of this has been to place the individual in a more advantageous position to conduct the battle of life, and thus to render the society, of which he is a member, fitter for competition and rivalry with other societies. But it is the development of sympathetic or altruistic feelings only amongst the privileged classes and the society generally that can lead to the removal of the disabilities of others and the redress of their grievances. Without such feelings, internal dissensions and

eventual degradation must be the results. And these feelings are now leading the English people to devise means for relieving the chronic poverty of the lower classes, to readjust the relations between labour and capital, and undertake a variety of schemes to relieve distress and misery. It is a patent fact acknowledged by all disinterested persons that the English people have developed the altruistic feelings in a higher degree than any other European nation, and by the way, this constitutes the basis of our hopes in a better future for our country. Just as England has been endeavouring to remove the disabilities and sufferings of the lower classes of her population, so shall efforts not be wanting on her part to remove our disabilities and sufferings. But the law of social evolution cannot cease to operate; and in order that our society may be able to hold its own in the competition and rivalry with other societies, which is inevitable, we must abide by the conditions of that law. That law is thus stated by the latest writer on the subject, whose book has created a great stir:—‘That the moral law is the unchanging law of progress in human society is the lesson which appears to be written over all things. No school of theology has ever sought to enforce this teaching with the directness and emphasis, with which it appears that evolutionary science will in the future be justified in doing. In the silent and strenuous rivalry in which every section of the race is of necessity continually engaged, permanent success appears to be invariably associated with certain ethical and moral conditions favourable to the maintenance of a high standard of social efficiency and with those conditions only.’ If then social efficiency and consequent success are what we desire in our contest with other races, we must, because the law is immutable, endeavour to realise those ethical and moral conditions. We must cultivate a sense of justice and a love and sympathy for others, relieve the poor widow of her sufferings, remove the disabilities of womankind and of the lower classes, and allow free play to the energies and capacities of all. And the necessity for our doing so becomes the more imperative from our political condition. If we ask England to remove our disabilities, we must as a necessary preliminary show that we are worthy of the favour by removing the dis-

abilities of the oppressed classes of our society. Thus and thus alone will our country prosper. Every scheme for bettering our condition is destined to fail if it does not make provision for the growth of these sympathetic virtues and through them for the realisation of social reform. Let us then invigorate and elevate our souls by ever placing before our mind's eye the precept of the great Indian Reformer of the 6th century before Christ, the Lion of the Sakya race, Goutama, the enlightened : 'Cultivate a mind boundless (as sympathy) for all beings as is that of the mother, who protects her only son by sacrificing her own life', and with him proclaim from this Social Conference hall, 'May all living beings feeble or strong, long, great, middle-sized or short, small or large, seen or unseen, living far or near, born or to be born be happy.' (*Prolonged cheers.*)

The Tenth Social Conference—Babu Norendro Nath Sen's Address.

It is nothing new to say, that opposition is the very life-breath of a public movement, and that no great cause in the world has triumphed without opposition. The history of every important agitation teaches that it did not attain to its object, till after severe strifes and struggles, and repeated reverses. This lesson is well illustrated in the case of the Congress. You require not to be told what fierce opposition that movement evoked in the early years of its existence, and how it has out-lived all clamour, till it fairly promises to be an institution of the land. The history of the Congress movement shows, however, that the opposition it encountered, was mostly from without, while the Social Conference has had to experience opposition from within. But we may now be said to be well out of the wood. To-day the Social Conference is far stronger than it was a few years back. The movement now enters upon the tenth year of its existence, and every year we find it gaining ground, step by step, while the number of its friends and supporters has steadily increased. The fact, at the same time, remains unquestionable, that the Conference is exercising a healthy edu-

cating influence upon the different castes and sub-sections of castes, into which Hindu society is divided. From small beginnings the movement has expanded into its present dimensions. We have our delegates, like those of the Congress, duly elected, and among the visitors to Calcutta at this season, not a few have come, not as delegates to the Congress, but as delegates to the Conference. I happen to be acquainted with people, who entertain more sympathy for this movement than for the Congress itself, and with others, who somehow find themselves deterred from attending the Congress, but readily assist at the deliberations of the Social Conference. But rightly speaking, the Social Conference is a fitting corollary to the National Congress. It is well that, when claiming higher privileges, we should fit ourselves for such privileges.

There was a time, and that not so very long ago, when our countrymen concerned themselves with politics only, and with political agitation. But that time is fast passing away, and it is quite refreshing to see the re-awakening of national life in all directions, and the people shaking off their torpor, and engaging in reforms of all kinds, such as might be needed to raise them as a nation. We are beginning to see all our weak points, and discovering the causes that retard our national progress, and applying ourselves to the task of remedying the evils. There are abundant signs of national activity all around us. Our people are seeking not only their political enfranchisement, but also their material, moral, social and religious welfare. There is an upheaval and a revival everywhere. The amelioration of our social condition is so mixed up with our future greatness and prosperity, that we cannot afford to neglect it any further. However we may try to raise ourselves as a nation, we shall find our efforts quite paralysed, because of the crying defects in our social system. You will therefore see that social reform is even of more immediate concern to us than political reform. But somehow or other, social reform has come to be regarded with the utmost distrust and suspicion. It is viewed in some quarters in the light of something outlandish and foreign. I do not know why it should be so. We are not a new nation, but an old one, that has long known decay. It

is this decay, which, in part at least, we have met to arrest. We are not so very unfamiliar with the character of the social system existing in India in olden times, and in her palmy days. That system was nothing like the hybrid one, which we have hugged all too closely in recent times. Knowing that to be the case, what should prevent us from reverting to the old system? Social reform, then, means nothing more than a return to the social structure that was built up in Ancient India. Thus, there can be nothing much to object to it. One of the principal causes of our present misfortunes is that we have receded a very long way from the laws and institutions of the past, and adopted some mongrel ones in their stead. Our national decadence is mostly due to the later corruptions, which have been allowed to permeate both our social and religious systems. Our efforts, therefore, should be directed solely to the removal of those corruptions. All that we call upon our Hindu countrymen to do is nothing more than this.

Already the Social Conference has achieved great good for the country, as you will find from the published summary or reports, forwarded by the different Social Reform Associations in India, copies of which have been placed in your hands. A more interesting publication, it has hardly been my lot to peruse. You will now have some idea of the social progress that the country is making along with progress in other directions. Such subjects, as marriage-reform, set-voyage, and foreign travel, female education, temperance, &c., have been engaging the attention of these Associations. Some of them have been working with remarkable vigour and zeal. Besides these Associations, there have been several Caste Conferences, held annually, such as the Kayastha Conference, the Vaishya Conference, and Sri Vaishnava Conference. Those Conferences are meant for the social benefit of the castes whose names they bear. The proceedings of those Conferences will indicate what advance some of the important Hindu castes are making in self-help, self-reliance, and social progress.

The so-called benighted and conservative Madras evidently leads the van of social progress, and, in this respect, sets an ex-

ample to the rest of India. Next comes the Deccan, and other parts of India follow it. It has been said that Bengal lags behind the rest of India in the matter of social reform. I do not know how far this charge is true. Here in Bengal, there is evidently a decided feeling against early marriages among the educated classes. An agitation has been set on foot for some-time in favour of the reduction of Hindu marriage expenses, with as much genuine earnestness as we displayed in connection with the sea-voyage question a few years back. Then as regards the higher education for women, Bengal holds decidedly more advanced views than any other reform circle in the country. But it must be said that the above remark holds good chiefly of the Indian Christian, Brahmo, and the England-returned classes. What is particularly wanted however, in Bengal, as in the other parts of India, is that social reform should be carried on strictly national, that is, Aryan and old Shastric lines, among those who aspire to be known as good Hindus. If we wish to make the cause of social reform a success, we must proceed with caution, and make no attempt to introduce violent changes in our social organisation. The object of this Social Conference is more to educate public opinion in all the problems of social reform than anything else. You may safely leave to time the results. We must call to our aid the authority of our sacred books, and of the ancient history of our country in our work of social reform. There is enough in our ancient volumes to show that the social system of the Hindu in the past, was altogether a model one, and we cannot do better than follow it, if we are at all anxious to regain our lost national greatness.

And now, before I conclude, I hope that the deliberations of this Conference will be conducted with as much moderation, forbearance and wisdom as possible, and that no want of harmony will disturb our proceedings. There is not another question more difficult and delicate than that of social reform, and it should be approached with the utmost sobriety, and discussed in such a spirit as might not give rise to the least friction. We must show extreme tolerance for the opinions and feelings of those who differ from us on the subject, so that even the most orthodox and bigoted might, in time, come into our fold, and

become of our way of thinking. Social reform is not meant for the liberal few, but for the backward many.

**The Eleventh Social Conference—Rao Bahadur
Vamanrao Madhav Kolhatkar's Address.**

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I thank you very much for the honour you have done me by voting me to the chair, and I beg to assure you that I feel very much flattered by it. But I cannot conceal from you the consciousness of my inability to fill with credit a position which has been honoured at previous gatherings by eminent and distinguished personages, with whom the humble individual now addressing you can bear very little comparison. In fact when the proposal to make me President was first communicated to me about six weeks ago, it caused me considerable surprise, and I almost suspected that a practical joke was being played upon me. But when I considered that the proposal emanated from friends whose good sense and friendly feeling I could not very well for a moment doubt, and when I consider further that the race, as has been well said, was not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong, I took heart and braced myself up, as well as I could, for the difficult task that was to be laid on me. I will first beg you to overlook my shortcomings, and then proceed according to time-honoured custom to make some observations in connection with the work for which we have assembled here to-day.

The first matter to which I have the pleasure to invite your attention, is the gratifying fact that the short-sighted prejudice which had sought sometime ago to dislodge our Conference from its legitimate habitation—the Congress *pandal*—is now happily a thing of the past and has given place to good sense and wisdom. The credit of first discountenancing that prejudice does no doubt belong to enlightened Bengal. But we of the Berars and the Central Provinces also might well be excused for claiming a share in it, and for having walked in the wise footsteps of Calcutta. I am informed on good authority that there

was not a single discordant note struck when the question of placing the Congress *pandal* at the service of this Conference came on for consideration before the local Congress Committee, and that the question was disposed of with perfect concord, and in such a manner as to even imply that it admitted of no two opinions at all. This, you will allow, is a matter for sincere congratulation, and you will doubtless join with me in saying that "all is well that ends well."

I will next address you a few words about the present position and future prospects of the Social Reform Movement. My humble opinion is that, all things considered, social reform is steadily gaining ground in the hearts of our people. In view of the magnitude of our task, the difficulties in the way, the comparative paucity of real workers in our field, and the slowness of the pace with which we are moving, one is apt not to recognise this onward motion, and many people are disposed to grumble, and be despondent, and even doubt at times whether we are going forward at all. When we are in this undesirable plight, we cannot do better than cast at once a mental glance at what things were like, say, about ten or twenty years ago, and ask ourselves if we have not made any progress. This useful retrospect will at once lift us out of the slough of despondency, and restore us to a hopeful, if not even cheerful, mood. If one has any doubt on this question of the progress achieved, he has but to turn the pages of the report of the last Conference to be convinced of the general fermentation that is taking place in matters social in so many places, and in such unexpected quarters. And in this connection, let us also always lay to our heart and constantly bear in mind the golden advice so often repeated by our great guide, friend and philosopher, the life and soul of the Indian Social Conference—I mean the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade—and sedulously cultivate in practice the useful virtue of patience, which is ever the greatest friend in need, and is therefore the best friend indeed. But the indispensable friend, I am sorry to observe, does often fight shy of us, and is conspicuous among us only by his absence, simply because we do not sufficiently care to cultivate his friendship. And again, let us

remember that the causes of the slow pace with which we are moving onwards are not confined to the Social Reform Movement alone, but are simultaneously hindering the onward march of other movements also. The principal drawback everywhere is the paucity of earnest, loyal, and enthusiastic workers, combined with the superfluity of irresponsible, unsympathetic and do-nothing critics. This is the chief canker at the root of all our activities, whether in the social, the industrial, the religious, or any other field. There is, on the one hand, the more or less large following, whose chief business is talk, the whole talk, and nothing but talk, and on the other hand there is the larger herd still of the ever-carping critics, who are pleased to live in a well-known paradise, and to fancy that the reforms we advocate do not concern them or their society at all; and who, doing nothing themselves, but standing at a safe distance from all the risk and toil and moil of all progressive work, are satisfied with nothing that the reformers will do, but are, on the contrary, immensely delighted with the easy and patriotic-looking work of crying down reform and reformers. If a reformer in any of the fields already mentioned serves the cause for which he is working merely by speech—and yet speech, let us remember, is the first and the most potent instrument of ventilation and agitation—he is, according to these dainty gentlemen, only a *lip-reformer* or a canting hypocrite. But the moment the reformer reduces his professions to action, he becomes at once a dangerous fire-brand, a revolutionary character who, instead of taking up some other non-descript reform first, is moving on too fast and headlong, and without the previous consent and sanction of the majority, if not the whole, of his countrymen, or moving on in contravention of the laws of evolution, or the teachings of history, or the strict lines and dictates of the Shastras, or in a word, what not! Good God!! Are not these objections grand, and high-sounding, and if you please even *erudite*? Sure enough, they are. But these gentlemen forget that it is generally not in the nature of individuals, belonging to a supremely conservative race like ours, to move on too fast, that no reform has yet taken place at any time with the previous consent and sanction of the majority of mankind; that even the laws of evolu-

tion require human aid in furtherance of their work in social matters; that history, if read aright, teaches something else than mere cynical inaction; and that the lines and dictates of the Shastras run counter neither to the spirit, nor in many cases to the letter, of our proposals for reforms. Let us not, ladies and gentlemen, look at things from the high and giddy altitudes of theoretical beauty and perfection, but remain satisfied with the humble and sober stand-point of practical good sense and discretion. Let us not be carried away and deluded by fine phrases and catch-words, and let us not allow our equanimity to be disturbed by them; but let us, at the same time, take care to keep our minds free from the taint of self-sufficiency or self-satisfaction, which seems to me to be one of the most besetting sins of the present day. For no one, whether a reformer or a non-reformer, can afford to indulge in these mischievous luxuries, and scorn the honest advice of friend or foe. No true reformer has, so far as I know, yet claimed perfection and infallibility for himself or his ways. The sensible portion of them, conscious of their own defects and shortcomings, are no doubt, profiting by past mistakes and failures. If our worthy critics only practise half the moderation, which they are fond of preaching to us in season and out of season, and take to honest and sympathetic criticism, their fault-finding will be a great and useful light in our path, and we shall not only be duly grateful to them for that light, but shall also gladly excuse their inaction or apathy which when timid, is often concealed, if the truth must be told, under the mask of cautious prudence. Between half-hearted work and unsympathetic, irresponsible criticism, the work of reform is bound to be a good deal stifled, if not even strangled; and the wonder to me very often is that the social reformer, who is the favourite butt of ruthless criticism proceeding from both the educated and the uneducated critics, has still managed not only to keep his head above water, but also to win his way steadily, though slowly, to the unwilling hearts of his dear countrymen. The workers in the other fields are better placed than ourselves and the religious reformers, inasmuch as they have to face only external opposition, whereas the opposition

we have to meet and face is opposition proceeding from our own dear and near ones--parents, wives, daughters, sisters, brothers, neighbours, friends and countrymen--with whom we have to journey on in this pilgrimage of life, and for whose welfare we are striving to the best of our lights and opportunities. The other workers are cheered on in their paths by encouragement and approbation from persons for whose well-being they labour. But ours is truly a thankless and therefore much more difficult, task. The only reward we get for our pains is jeer and ridicule, which frighten away many a man who would otherwise willingly work for the cause we have at heart. No wonder then that we have a smaller number of even half-hearted workers in our field, and that our outturn of work is perhaps not so large in quantity, or so nice to look at as the labourers in the other fields can show and boast of.

This then is the explanation that accounts for the fact that our educated men, upon whose shoulders alone the responsibility of the regeneration of our beloved country can rest, are either half-hearted workers or uncomfortable critics. Why is it that our engines are so few and weak, while our brakes are so numerous and powerful? The reply to my mind can only be one and it is this, that our homes not being in order, we send forth into the world only weakly and ill-equipped soldiers to fight the battle of life. Our nursery is so full of unhealthy influences, that a supply from it of healthy and vigorous plants that grow in the fulness of time into large, shady and fruit-laden trees, is well-nigh impossible. Being children generally of girl-mothers and boy-fathers, we naturally lack the physical stamina which is a *sine qua non* of all our different activities. Being brought up in homes where ignorance and superstition are generally allowed to reign supreme, and where blind custom is permitted to be the principal guide and regulating force, we naturally lack that mental freedom and those moral and religious influences which are so necessary for the robust growth and development of individual soul and character. Being exhausted in body and mind in early years by too much educational cramming, unrelieved by sufficiently nourishing diet, and being encumbered with a wife and children almost at the threshold of

life, besides having in numerous instances to bear the anxious burden of supporting a host of other relations, our budding spirits are soon blighted by these cares and anxieties, and little energy or inclination is left for any other serious work in life than that of earning bread and butter. Add to these cramping and stunting influences the habits of servility, submission and supineness engendered by climatical and other causes, and the result is the unavoidable one which we actually see and so much deplore.

The social reform movement has set to itself the all-important task of removing these evils, which are eating into the vitals of all our movements, and of giving them life, health and vigour. If our difficulties and sacrifices are greater than those which have to be encountered and endured by the workers in the other fields, the guerdon, the prize, and the reward which must, by the grace of God, come to us in the long run, if we are true to our salt, is also very much greater. By stopping early and unequal marriages, we shall be bringing into being a robust race of workers, with frames better adapted to stand the wear and tear of life. By destroying the cruel customs which deprive our widowed daughters and sisters of the joys and comforts of holy matrimony, and which disfigure them against their will, we shall not only be giving them, if they wish to have it, the happiness of family-life, the absence of which makes the generality of our widowers so miserable with all their vaunted superiority in knowledge, wisdom and philosophy, but we shall also be laying a deep, broad, and strong foundation of moral courage in our character by trampling under our feet tyranny of every description. By educating and emancipating our females, by setting our faces against the mischievous vice of intemperance, which, not content with the ravages it has wrought in its old homes of Europe and America, is now seeking a new field for its unhallowed work of destruction in this holy land of Bharat; and by advancing the purity-movement, worked for with such laudable zeal and persistence principally by our good friends of Madras, who promise ere long to my mind to be the exemplars and the models of earnest workers for the rest of India, we shall be creating better environments for ourselves and our children,