

THE
VARNASHRAMA DHARMA
CONFERENCE

TRICHINOPOLY.

Opening speech of
C. M. PADMANABHACHARIAR, B.A., B.L.,
THE PRESIDENT.



SRIRANGAM:
SRI VANI VILAS PRESS.
1916.

Varnashrama Dharma Conference, Trichinopoly.

Address of the President.

GENTLEMEN,

You can hardly realize my feeling on this solemn occasion, which I look upon as a red-letter day in the history of my humble life. For some years past, I have found it congenial to lead more or less a life of seclusion, seldom eager for, or desirous of, taking part in any public movement. It is a great puzzle to me how one who has been carefully avoiding the glare of public light has come to be chosen to occupy the chair on such an occasion.

In my retirement, I have however shed many a tear over the rapid march of events which some choose to call *progress*. I have also indulged in fond day dreams that a reaction might set in somehow and that a Carlylean hero of some sort or kind equal to the requirements of the hour might spring into life to lead us on, or some movement come into being to apply the brake at least and check the velocity of too much *progress*. At this juncture, the appearance, of the Varnashrama movement on the horizon is the

happy augury of a brighter day which, conservative people, at any rate, hail with joy and pleasure.

In Kaliyuga, strength, power, initiative, and achievement, are vested in united cooperation rather than in units of heroism. संघे शक्तिः कलौ युगे is an oft-quoted saying that is amply borne out by the success of democracies, corporations, sabhas and conferences. The hero of the 20th century is more often than not some little parliament which inaugurates a political, moral, social, or religious Renaissance. I look upon this gathering in this light and gladly give it a whole-hearted welcome to the arena of useful public bodies, and warmly wish it God-speed.

Gentlemen, I feel overpowered by the honour you have done me in voting me to the chair and calling upon me to preside over the deliberations of the only kind of gathering I would have ever cared to be associated with. I am equally overpowered by the sense of responsibility which the privilege necessarily carries with it. But I am here as an humble seeker of light, more as a learner than as a teacher, more to listen than to speak, more to follow than to guide. I see around me men of light and leading whose superior wisdom and example are bound to command a large following. This being so, I take it that I am pitchforked into this position, as custom demands a variety, and the Presidential office must, like other things in the world, have its own vicissitudes.

of fortune and take its turn of good, bad and indifferent incumbents.

Custom demands likewise that I should make a few observations and, with your leave, I proceed to do so with a timely warning not to pitch expectations high and suffer disappointment. Far greater men have spoken on the subject and discussed the problems relating to our needs. What I can think of and refer to here must therefore be stale news and beaten track to most of you.

Kindly bear with me for a short while, (which it will be my endeavour to make as short as possible,) until I touch on a few points of interest, with no special attempt at logical order or sequence, and with no effort to pitch my points on a high key of reasoning or proof.

One who attempts to find a short equivalent for "Dharma", and define or explain the full scope of its significance, will see at once the difficulty. The word is used in Sanskrit, in a variety of senses according to context. Sometimes it denotes duty. Often it means the moral law. Not infrequently it means Righteousness. It stands also for Religion. Dharma is also a name of God. धारकत्वाद्धर्मो भगवान् ।

Dharma is the basis of right conduct, the life and soul of Sat-Karma and Sadachara. What is Dharma does not admit of a short answer in the

shape of a hard and fast rule applicable to all men and all conditions. Sri Krishna says in Ch. IV. B. Geeta—किं कर्म किमकर्मेति कवयोऽप्यत्र मोहिताः । “What is work, what is non-work, and what is mis-work, on this matter, even the wise are bewildered”. Alluring theories and hypotheses luminously argued out by plausible reasoning have misled people into erroneous views of right and wrong. We can only pray in the words of Isavasya.

हिरण्येन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखं ।

सत्यं पूषन्नपावृणु सत्यधर्माय दृष्टये ॥

“The face of Truth is hidden by a golden veil. Pooshan, draw the veil aside that we may look upon the Truths of Dharma”.

In approaching the subject of Varnashrama Dharma, the question that faces us at the very threshold is whether this movement is not an anachronism and whether the amelioration and progress of the country do not rather require an abolition of all antiquated distinctions. Much may be said plausibly in support of this view, shared as it is, by some of the best men of the rising generation. Into the details of their reasoning, I need not enter. Great men before me have trodden this ground and considered the pros and cons of this alleged anachronism. For some years past, Northern India has been organizing Samajas,

Samities, Mahamandals and Sammelans which have survived the initial doubts of to be or not to be, survived also the stages of ridicule and opposition and entered upon active work with roots fairly established. This is the movement of which the Hindu University itself appears to me to be a phase. The Maharaja of Dharbhanga is dedicating his great talents, resources and influence, to promote the best interests of the cause. Our leaders, Professor Sundararamier whose learned leisure has been ungrudgingly placed at the disposal and service of this cause, Mr. T. R. Ramachandrier, and many others are our pioneers to show the way.

At the end of the eighteenth century, a French Missionary lived for about 30 years as a villager among villagers, simulating their manners, customs and habits, and making notes in his own way for purposes of caricature. He arrived at the conclusion that no salvation was possible for the Hindus in general and the Brahmins in particular, so long as any vestige of their old religion, morality, culture or civilization continued to live. He wished the melting pot to deal with everything without leaving a trace, and boil it off to evaporation so that Hindoos may start at point zero and learn lessons of civilization at the feet of Abbe Dubois and his successors, with a clean slate. Is this the opinion of young India? It is not impossible that some

may still share this view and approve of the drastic remedy suggested.

Whatever may be said in support of this extreme measure of ending rather than mending, one thing is certain that it is an extremely unpatriotic step to adopt. For, where is the patriot who can bear to look upon the history of this great land thus wiped out. And what is patriotism if it cannot and does not boast of a native language, literature, ideals, native customs, manners, habits, religion, fasts, feasts, observances, holidays and superstitions too, individualizing and distinguishing it from alien articles of the kind. I have no doubt whatever that the young generation is eminently fired by patriotism having imbibed the high thoughts and noble impulses of English literature. If leaders will but convince them and satisfy their rationalism, they are sure to enlist themselves warmly under the banner of Varnashrama Dharma.

To those who believe that caste has always been a bane and has done us no good at all, I may quote valuable testimony to the contrary. Let us not forget that it is the British Raj which first inaugurated the State Policy of benevolent neutrality so as to create and foster the development of indigenous religions. Before the advent of this rule, for many

centuries after the Christian Era, the country was under an inundation of aggressive Vandalism whose destructive agents showed no quarter at all to the religion and culture of the soil. In all these troublous times, Hinduism stuck bravely to life and managed to emerge almost unscathed out of the debris. The result is the rich heritage handed down to us, fairly compact and solid, with only parts exposed to damage. May we pause to think how our forefathers were able to stave off the effect of the Niagran flood and preserve the Promethean fire so long unextinguished? How is it that the Unity of Race-consciousness has persisted so long and so well? What is the strong armour of steel that portected it against the onslaught? Many a shrewd observer has answered this doubt by allotting the credit to the much-abused institution of caste. The other day, the Maharaja of Dharbhanga observed "Is it not because of the fixity of our social organization, based as it was on the ideal of Varnashrama Dharma, that the Hindus have been able to survive the cataclysmic changes that the country has passed through and to preserve throughout the ages, the thread of Race-consciousness which alone to-day inspires us with the confidence of once more rising up as a mighty nation to take our old place in the vanguard of human progress". Such is the Maharaja's view.

Had we allowed the sacred barriers of the Hindu home to be knocked down, had not caste distinctions (of which the Gosha also became an auxiliary) kept watch and vigil over our hearths and homes, and shielded Hinduism by a sort of touch-me-not isolation, the nation would have got disintegrated into powdered atoms long ago, whose only merit would have been a uniformity in barbarism. It is appalling to contemplate what the India of the Hindus would have been if every vestige of the old order had been thus destroyed.

Abbe Dubois whose attack of our customs, manners and religion is without parallel in the range of abusive literature and who may be deemed every inch a hostile witness, testifies on the subject to the following effect. He says "I believe caste distinction to be in many respects *the chef de œuvre, the happiest effort of Hindu civilization*. I am persuaded that it is simply and solely due to the distinction of the people into caste that India does not lapse into a state of barbarism, that she preserved and perfected the arts and sciences of civilization while most other nations of the Earth remained in a state of barbarism. Such an institution was probably the only means that the most clear-sighted persons could devise for maintaining a state of civilization."

This is the picture drawn by one who, be it remembered, had not a single good word to say of the

Hindus in general and the Brahmins in particular. Possessed of this evidence in our favour, let us hope that this institution wisely adjusted and regulated to the needs of the day can still do us as valuable a service, as it ever did, of old.

The observation of Abbe Dubois is that caste is the happiest effort of Hindu civilization. It is however not the manufacture of any legislative will nor the device of any shrewd men who sat together one morning and evolved rules out of their brains. Sri Krishna says-

चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्मविभागशः ।

in B-Geeta "Caste," He says, "by which men are classified into 4 divisions was created by me, based on *character and conduct*". Thus we see that the division and distribution of society into compartments is of divine origin for, this is the ruling principle of all organic life. In the human body, each organ has its own individual place, structure, function and purpose. Should the heart envy the lungs and try to usurp its functions, or should the kidney envy the brain and encroach on its province, what will be the result? If the five senses of knowledge and the five senses of action set up a small rebellion against the stomach and go into strike protesting against the injustice of catering to the insatiate hunger and thirst of the latter, and supplying it with dainties at the sweat of the brow, while the bulging drone perched well in a

commanding centre lords it over all, and does no work but gormandise, we may see how disastrous will be the result of this little storm in the teapot. Analogously, society too being an organism, Varnashrama Dharma propounds the law of this organic life and distributes functions among the various limbs of the body corporate. 'Dharma' checks the scramble of mutual trespass and the resulting confusion. As God has built all organisms on the same model, it is intelligible how the organic life of human communities should be based on and regulated by the same principles, due emphasis being laid on the separateness of the parts and each part being possessed of its own distinctive place, structure, function and purpose. On this footing it is easy to understand the truth of the Gita teaching which the Varnashrama Journal has adopted as its motto.

श्रेयान्स्वधर्मो विगुणः परधर्मात्स्वनुष्ठितात् ।

स्वधर्मे निधनं श्रेयः परधर्मो भयावहः ॥

which means "better far, one's own Dharma imperfectly done than another's Dharma done well. Death in one's own Dharma is better than success in another's, as the latter is invariably associated with danger".

In this connection, it is well to remember that no one has any right to advance claims of arrogant superiority, because each unit is but a limb of the

whole and it is the duty of all the parts to work for the common weal. May we remember that Yudishthira refused to mount on the Vimana that waited for him to take him to Heaven unless and until his faithful dog mounted also? I can't see that any distinction or gradation is recognised between the mouth and feet of God. The allegory of the four castes having sprung from the upper or lower limbs of the creator furnishes no ground for claiming superiority in the sense in which that word is understood in a spirit of haughtiness. Sri Krishna's memorable words about caste being based on merit have naturally led to misconception. Those who carry on a crusade against the so-called elevated classes under a flaming banner on which is writ the motto 'Down with caste' quote the scripture for the purpose of levelling all distinctions and abolishing all restrictions in regard to intermarriage, interdining, and everything else. Another party propounds the theory that the Vedas uphold caste by birth while the Vedanta and Gita sounds a dissent by overthrowing *caste by birth* and substituting *caste by Merit* in its place. These persons do not see that in thus setting Veda and Vedanta by the ears, they are creating a conflict that no Vedic believer can afford to look on with complacence. But there is the stern fact staring us in the face that in spite of the Vedanta and the Gita which are said to have abrogated,

all distinctions, the religious conscience of the nation has all along believed in restrictions, and in birth too as a dividing factor for many a purpose. It is hard to believe that our forefathers have so long, so systematically, and so persistently, stuck to caste by birth in the face of Sri Krishna's pronouncement making a total abolition of all differentiation.

It seems to me radically wrong to assume that the Vedas propound or uphold a doctrine which is different from or is at conflict with the Vedanta or the Gita. They are, every one of them, of binding authority on us and no real conflict between them is possible or can be conceded.

On the one hand, if merit means nothing and birth everything, caste offends against reason and natural justice. On the other hand, if birth is neither a determining nor a relevant factor at all, the institution loses its value as a social factor of Divine origin by throwing the door wide open for a scramble and confusion.

It seems to me that a solution may be sought in the belief that caste is something deeper than the skin. There is something in the inner and inherent nature of every man which propels him to his destiny. His birth is a step and a stage in his pilgrimage and is the barometer marking

his position in the evolution. As a rule, and on principle, caste by birth and caste by merit ought to coincide and tally. But exceptions are not infrequent, due to special causes as in the case of Duryodhana and Vidura. Hence, it will be presumptuous to lay much stress on *Birth* and misconstrue it to mean necessarily intrinsic superiority or inferiority. Not is it right to give vent to speculative imagination and neglect duties incidental to birth-right, for it is these that constitute one's path to the goal.

Five thousand years ago lived Bheeshma the revered grandsire of the Kauravas, sage and warrior rolled into one, a veritable embodiment of Dharma and the fountain-source of the wisest teachings on the subject. Bidding Death itself stand off until Uttara-yana came, he lay on a heroic bed of arrows, resting his head on a pillow of the same material and every hair-hole of his body pierced through by the same missiles. He endured the tortures of the flesh and, by his own choice and will, held death itself at bay. When his enemies, Dharmaputra, Bheema, and Arjuna came with others, the authors of all his sufferings, he welcomed them calmly and quietly as if he lay on a bed of roses, and discoursed to them on all the intricate problems of life and death, on Raja Dharma, Asrama Dharma, Apaddharma and Moksha

Dharma, and touched on every phase of religion and philosophy akin to Pantheism, Spinozism, Hegialism, Materialism, Agnosticism and Idealism of every variety and kind. He spoke under the direct inspiration of Sri Krishna himself in something like Ten Thousand verses.

Let us imagine that Bheeshma descends now from his heavenly abode and is drawn by curiosity to the terrestrial regions which he once adorned. Let us bring him down in a Vimana from whence he takes a survey of terrestrial conditions. His eagle eyes aided by Kshatriya instincts fall first and foremost on the gigantic struggle which is devastating the foundations of Europe and tearing up Western civilization by the roots. There he sees that the Astras and Sastras of old that have reincarnated as horrible inventions of science—known by weird names such as Bomb guns, Howitzers, Krupp guns, quickfirers, batteries, rockets, poison-gases, Dreadnoughts, Torpedoes, mines, and hundreds of other products whose only use is to take away the largest number of precious human lives within the shortest possible time.

He would be struck dumb at the Vandalism of Germany destroying the arts of Europe and trampling under foot, rules of fair play and honorable war, which even Duryodhana did not flagrantly

violate. He would be astonished to see in an age of boasted enlightenment, *might* elevated over *right*, treaties scorned as scraps of paper, rules of honourable warfare and Hague-conventions brushed away as anachronisms, with the result that innocent unoffending countries came to be lacerated by the havoc of brute force. He would see clearly with his Yogic vision, what Mr. Asquith's naked eyes also appear to see with some amount of straining, the real beginning of the end, the fortunes of war propitious at last to the Allies and Nemesis hurling retribution on the author of untold human misery. Bheeshma would not be surprised at Germany's downfall which seems to be happily within sight, because in the old days in spite of long preparation and numerical superiority added to the Machiavellian schemes of Sakuni and the stratagic points of vantage secured and consolidated by Duryodhana with devilish foresight, the infernal Satan fell in the end and righteousness was, at last, vindicated in a glorious triumph.

Let us fancy that Bheeshma turns his back on the long fronts and countless trenches whence heroes dwelling as in rat-holes, deal out death and mutilation to enmassed collections of human units, each unit aggregating by itself to the entire population of an average town. Let us welcome him to Bharata-varsha the land which he once adorned. His eyes

would mark the peace prevailing under Pax Britannica throughout the length and breadth of the country and note likewise, how, as in the Orpheus's theatre of the legend where the wolf and the lamb, the tiger and the cow and all beasts and brutes friendly or hostile sat side by side and listened to the soul-stirring music, having forgotten their instincts. So here, the music of good government is holding spell-bound the friendly and rival races and instincts of this continent in a manner calculated to promote the best interests of all.

He would be stricken with amazement to see the railway and the telegraph, the tramway and the motor-car, the countless products of steam and electricity, the comforts and luxuries produced by turning a handle or pulling a switch as if some magic wand is being waved somewhere and the desired boon appears automatically in a twinkle. But Bheeshma is too shrewd to confuse merely material gratifications with true happiness. His line of thought may be set out in the words of some Western writers themselves on the subject. One historian observes "We imagine that discoveries enlarge human powers when they only multiply the human instruments. When we multiply the appliances of human life, we do not multiply the years of life, nor the days in the year, nor the hours of the day ; nor do we multiply the powers of thought

or of endurance, much less do we multiply self-restraint, unselfishness, or a good heart. What we multiply are our doubts and difficulties". Harrison says "Fling upon a people at random, a mass of mechanical appliances which invite them and force them to transform their entire external existence, to turn home-work into factory work, handi-work into machine work, man's work into child's work, country-life into town-life, to have movement, mass-concentration and competition where quiet industry had been the habit for 20 generations and then,—these things follow. These mountains of social disease seem inevitable, the moment we have sudden material changes in life produced by vast mechanical discoveries. Science, philosophy, education, become smothered. Arts, manners, culture, taste, suffer by the harrassing rapidity with which life is whirled on from old to new fashion, from old to new interest, until the nervous system of the race itself is agitated and weakened by the never ending rattle.

We do not now read of giants in literature. We read in abundance of speculators who had done nothing but handle money which had clung to their fingers in passing through them, of divines who had preached a morality which they did not practise, fluent orators who had made speeches which they knew had little or no sense in them, philosophers who

had spun out of moonshine systems of the universe, distinguished pleaders who had defeated justice while they established points of law, writers of books upon subjects of which they knew enough to mislead their readers, purveyors of luxuries which had added nothing to human health or strength. Such is our age. No century in all human history was ever so much praised to its face for its wonderful achievements, its wealth and its power, its unparalleled ingenuity and its miraculous capacity for making life comfortable. History read in its true light reveals to us that this is only a vanity, a dream and a delusion."

Thus is European testimony itself regarding the value of purely material progress. Bheeshma concurs in the correctness of the picture.

Directing the XRay-searchlights of Yogic vision behind this crust of Indian physical prosperity, Bheeshma would be anxious to see whether we, the sons of illustrious ancestry, are keeping up the old fires untarnished.

Among the castes, now multiplied a hundredfold into sub-castes, he would very much miss the Kshatriya, the class of great warriors and statesmen who adorned the nation once upon a time. He would, no doubt, take a pride in the Rajput as a true chip of the old block. In Todd's Rajasthan we read that an old lady—the Boondi Queen—was so touched by joy

on the valiant death of her brave son in a heroic battle that her maternal old breast long dry of milk, suddenly yielded a jet of the fluid. But where can you now find men and women of this type? Where is the Kshatriya, fired by the highest ideals of duty and sacrifice ever ready to risk his life at the service of the country and the crown ever eager to punish wrong and vindicate right, the hero of manly stature and majestic brow reminding us of Pope's lines 'Pride in their post, defiance in their eye, I see the lords of human kind pass by' the heroic model of a grihastha who, being an accomplished soldier and finished gentleman rolled into one, combines greatness with goodness, culture with courage, chivalry with valour, simple living with high thinking, and, being specially qualified by heredity and up-bringing to rule and to command, does his duty for duty's sake and god's sake actuated by the noblest of instincts. In the absence of the true Kshatriya, the Brahmin, the Vaisya, the Soodra and all the others are scrambling on the rights of this caste and are performing its duties as best as they may.

But up above in Bengal a new policy which presages hope and promises a revival seems inaugurated by an epoch-making pronouncement of Lord Carmichael. It seems possible that the streaks of a better dawn are visible on the horizon and that

the Kshatriya may yet arise Phoenix-like from his own ashes. The new policy is electrifying Bengal to wake up and translate her loyalty into action. Is it possible that the same policy may, in time, give the martial races of India a chance of regaining manhood and proving to the world that the flame of Indian loyalty is not one quivering merely on the life but is an incandescent burner that can blaze into a conflagration capable of destroying the King Emperor's enemies in the field. May god give the country a chance !

Could Beeshma who propounded laws of Dharma in about ten thousand verses of Sanskrit make out the babel of tongues and dialects now dividing the people by petty walls of isolation into provincial units? Could he make out the *lingua franca* fast coming into use, the extraordinary hybrid of half vernacular and half English, the fashionable medium of thought-conveyance now in vogue. He would be astonished to see the grievous fall of *Geervana Bhasha* virtually relegated, by sheer neglect, to the limbo of a forgotten past. What a grievous fall, gentlemen, does this denote and connote, that a pre-eminent language and literature which is the storehouse of Indian wisdom and ideals should be forlorn and woe-begone like Draupadi herself (the incarnation of Bharati) of dishevelled hair and despairing looks.

If Bheeshma should inquire if Mahabharata or Shanti Parva is studied anywhere, the reply must be disappointing. Yet, it is a wonderful epic in comparing which with the Epics of Greece and Rome, Monier Williams measures the difference in the ratio of the mightly Ganges and the Indus as against the brooks of Italy and Thessaly. This book is not read by us, but is devoured with avidity by savants of the West. Dr. Hassler of America says "In all my experience in life, I have not found a work that has interested me so much as that noble production of the wise, and I do not hesitate to say, *inspired* men of ancient India. In fact, I have studied it more than any other work for a long time past and have made at least 1000 notes which I have arranged in alphabetical order for the purpose of study. The Mahabaratha has opened to me, as it were, a new world, and I have been surprised beyond measure at the wisdom, truth, knowledge and love of the right which I have found displayed in its pages".

यथा काष्ठमयो हस्ती यथा चर्ममयो मृगः ।

यश्च विप्रोऽनधीयानस्त्रयस्ते नामधारकाः ॥

योऽनधीत्य द्विजो वेदमन्यत कुस्ते श्रमं ।

स जीवन्नेव शूद्रत्वमाशु गच्छति सान्वयः ॥

This testimony affords a crushing reply to Macaulay who said that all the libraries of Indian

learning collected from one end of the country to the other are not equal to a single book-shelf of the west, and to our friend the most learned Abbe Dubois who thought that Panchatantra is the highest of Indian literary products and denotes the high water-mark of Hindu literary genius.

Taking a bird's eye view of the Brahmin Asramas, Bheeshma would miss the Brahmacharin so honored in ancient times, and so endowed with Tapas as to rain blessings wherever he dwelt, like Rishyasringa of Ramayana and Raikwa of Chandogya. In the general languishment of Brahmins, Brahmacharya has been one of the first few things to disappear in spirit. Manu says "An elephant made of wood, a deer made of leather, and an unlearned Brahmin, are only bearers of their respective names. The Brahmin who, not having studied the Vedas labours elsewhere becomes a sudra in that very life together with his descendants.

I strongly feel for the ideal life chalked out for the Brahmacharin, the hard life of celibacy and austerity under the guidance of a patriarchal guru.

Manu says "Let him refrain from wine, meat, perfumes, garlands, tasty and savoury dishes, women, all acids, and injury to life. From unguents, collyrium to the eyes, the wearing of shoes and umbrellas, from lust, anger and greed, from dancing,

singing and playing on musical instruments. From dice, gossip, slander and untruth, from staring at and touching women etc., etc."

वर्जयेन्मधुमांसं च गन्धमाल्यं रसांस्त्रियः ।

शुक्रानि चैव सर्वाणि प्राणिनां चैव हिंसनम् ॥

अभ्यङ्गमञ्जनं चाक्ष्णोरूपानं छत्रधारणं ।

कामं क्रोधं च लोभं च नर्तनं गीतवादनम् ॥

स्त्रीणां च प्रेक्षणालंभमुपघातं परस्य च ।

These and other texts far too numerous to quote lay great stress on a life of restraint and purity. It is the only means of promoting the vigour and strength of manhood, of securing freedom from disease, begetting healthy children in Grihastha life, and securing longevity of life. Simple food, hard work and frugal living, are meant to build up a robust body inured to hardships. Where is the prototype of the lovely Brahmacharin who used to be a flashing spark of religious and moral fervour, a Rishi in embryo, an ornament of the Guroo's hut, a luminary of Vidya and Tapas ?

I need not dwell on the modern type to depict a contrast. We know but too well how the modern Brahmacharin is engaged and occupied, what he does in the hours allotted to Sandhyas, and how he disposes of his time in general. Fascinated by the melody of English words and phrases, and

revelling in the bewitching logic of Free-thought, he lives an intoxicated life of liberty, untrammelled by inconvenient notions of Shastraic piety and purity. In an undertone of ill-concealed disapproval, he brushes the grandfather aside as an old fool and his own father as a piece of anomaly who tries an impossible reconciliation of the old and the new. He agrees with the idealism of Spencer that the world is but a bundle of consciousness and possibilities of sensation. The bedrock of his ethics is utilitarianism. His idol of worship is foreign manners, and imitation is the fine art he sedulously cultivates almost to perfection. I feel a thrill whenever I think of the good old Gurukulavasa and the vast potentiality for good that it possessed. In his book on Universities, Cardinal Newman has devoted many a passage of impassioned eloquence to this topic quoting the ancient example of Abel and our ancients could think of no other system for the education of the Brahmacharin. The *guru* and *kula vasa* form a happy pair whose beauty lies in harmonious combination, as in the case of a married couple. Division of labour carried out with a vengeance, has, however split them in twain and distributed them between the parent and the schoolmaster. The result of this divided responsibility is that each of them throws the blame on the other and neither fulfils his part or duty.

Can it be said that the new order of things evidenced by the hostel brings us the blessings of the residential system. It may, if properly regulated. But it is a feeble agency to make ideal Hindus of our youth. The genius of hostel life is not congenial to religion. It does not instil reverence for the Indian past, nor does it promote an appreciative knowledge of Indian standpoints. Its atmosphere is choking with Mill's liberty imperfectly or wrongly understood and utterly lacks the saintly halo associated with the hermitage of Vasishta or Vamadeva.

Gentlemen, will this conference do anything for reclaiming Brahmacharya as far as possible, and restoring it, under changed conditions it may be, to something like its pristine purity? Is it possible, or have things gone too far to mend? Is there any hope? I shall wait for an answer. For my part, I am hopeful that a revival of the old type is not impossible. My optimism is based on the fact that the young Dvija of to-day is smart, intelligent, and full of promise. He would be glad, if possible, to take a pride in the past and live a rational life of Hinduism. At present, no doubt, he looks ashamed of his birth-rights, and chafes at the home he lives in, the food he has to live on, the caste-marks he has to tolerate, the costume he has to endure, and the ceremonies, fasts and feasts he has to take part

in. It would be a great pity if, by the culpable neglect of elders and leaders, the young generation cannot be convinced to the contrary by proper measures taken in time, whole-some text-books, instructive journals, wise precepts and wiser example.

The Grihastha is the key-stone of the social fabric and the housewife (गृहिणी) is the mainstay of Dharma, for which reason, she is justly designated Dharma Patni.

Let us imagine that Bheeshma enters a typical home where dwell the representatives of three generations in something like harmony. The grandmother lives an isolated life of her own, looking down on the daughter-in-law as a go-ahead heretic and on the impious grand-daughter as one who is past all hopes of redemption. Entrenched in notions of severe *madi*, she seldom leaves the kitchen, hurling anathemas at the enamel-ware and porcelain-plates dominating the house. Bheeshma accosts the middle-aged daughter-in-law, the bread-winner's wife. He finds her very busy grinding away coffee seeds for the breakfast of the house.

Q.—Madam, you are up betimes and busy. What is this decoction? Evidently some Kashayam of Ayurveda. Is any body ill?

A.—No, sir, thank God, nobody is actually ill. These seeds are the staple food of the family except

the mother-in-law. We spend as much on this as on rice or dhal. Instead of curing illness, it seems to be a fairly good producer of illness. Vylian says, it is a slow poison. But every one is so madly fond of it that there is no possibility of its being ever given up.

Q.—But what of your mother-in-law?

A.—She is too orthodox. Mark you, every now and then, the purohit looks at the Tanjore Panchangam and counts out the *double* Yekadasi, and this old lady of 75 summers hesitates not to fast away for 48 hours and more at a stretch, a fast in which food and water are absolutely shunned. She scrupulously observes the rigidest diet of *chaturmasya*. She is never absent from any public or private place where the Ramayana or Bhagavata is read and explained, and is somewhat too much given to the habit of bestowing coins on the Acharya. As for me, I have no time for these occupations. I cannot get by heart, as the old lady has done, thousands of vernacular verses consecrated to Seeta and Savitri, Draupadi and Lakshmi. I am not, however, the go-ahead reformer, she takes me to be. But I occupy the golden mean. I attend not the Puranic readings regularly, but, once in a way, just to keep up appearances, I pay a visit on the final day with a silver plate of cocoanut and plantains.

in which I do not fail to place a couple of rupees to make up for past neglect. I do not understand much of Hindu ideals of womanhood and cannot make out why Draupadi and Seeta so meekly put up with so much suffering. I admire chastity and Pati-seva but I cannot consent to be the willing slave that my mother used to be. On the other hand, I assert myself, at times, somewhat stiffly against my husband, and I keep him in wholesome awe by timely lectures—rather strictures—behind the curtain.

I see, sir, from your looks, that you do not quite approve of me. But you must see what my daughter-in-law is doing and is drifting to. She and a hundred girls of the Agraharam are attending a school. When their education is finished and they come to rule the household, *then* will be the revolution. Mark you, my mother believed too much in turmeric and used to paint her face, hands and legs quite yellow. I believe partly in turmeric and partly in soap. My girls discard turmeric altogether and are never happy without the Pear's soap in whose lather and foam they drown themselves many times a day. My mother was a store-house of traditions and knew minutely all about the feasts, fasts and rites. But I don't bother much about them and consult the purohit when necessary. My girls,

you will see, will neither know nor consult. Their pastime is books like the Arabian Nights and cheap novels. They know a great deal too much of the world's geography and history. They speak of America and the great freedom enjoyed there by the fair sex and are impatient to get at the millennium which will be a *fait accompli* in their opinion, if the manacles imposed by our social and marital rules be done away with. At this rate, your Hindu womenhood will soon yield place to the 'Smart set' of America where, I gather, men and women compete with one another in all the fields of public activity, law, medicine, engineering, commerce, industries and physical games, the result being that domesticity is at the vanishing point. Marriage is said to be a mere contract for a term of years or terminable at will. Home-life is substituted by club-life. Maternity carries with it no special sanctities or responsibilities. The steward looks after the stores, the feeding bottle is in charge of the baby, the nurse makes periodical reports to the mother, the patent medicine looks after every-body's health, and the family doctor summons the parent, maternal or paternal, by the telephone, or a special report couched in proper form, whenever any grave emergency should transpire, sufficient to justify the trespass upon the time and engagements of the parent requisitioned. This, sir, will be your new India if the trend of education goes on un-

checked and unobstructed.

Bheeshma has heard enough. He is thunder-struck by the revelations. Before leaving the house, he steps forward into the visiting room of the grihastha, the master of the house. This gentleman lives a high style of life, is rather cosmopolitan in principles, and revels in the name of Desika Subramaniya Rao, M. A., His habits and tastes are an amalgam of the East and West. This is the Grahastha to whose duties and privileges, hundreds of chapters have been devoted by Bheeshma in his Shanti. The fact is that the angle of vision has changed in respect to the aims and purpose of life. Of Purusharthas, the dharma, artha, kama and moksha the first and the last form an allied pair and the two middle-ones go together. The fever of gold impels men in the Pravritti-marga of Artha-Kama where the incandescent white heat of ambition goads them to the delirium of earning money to the neglect and detriment of the soul. In this regime, the only castes that are recognised are the castes of wealth and poverty. Greatness is not goodness but Bank deposits. Influence and rank gravitate round the millionaire. The aristocracy that rules is not an aristocracy of learning or wisdom but an aristocracy of riches. Into the scramble for nuggets are plunged the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vysias and

Soodras pall-mall, along with infinite sub-divisions under every head. The ideal of Dharma-Moksha naturally goes to the wall by sheer neglect. Renunciation is simply out of the question and is no more than a forgotten relic of ancient ideals.

Gentlemen, this Artha-Kama ideal may suit such nations as believe not in rebirths. Any one who answers Shakspeare's 'to be or not to be' in the negative, and looks upon the short span of current life from the cradle to the grave to sum up the total existence of the individual, is naturally in a hurry to squeeze all his ambitions and aspirations within the short compass of time before him, and, acting on the principle of making hay when the sun shines, grasp with feverish avidity as much of the world's goods as he may and can, so as to derive the maximum of pleasure within the minimum of time. To one who believes in re-births for the full evolution of latent potentialities, the full history of a man is not the history of a single life but one stretching behind and before, and far beyond the sight and imagination of the historian. Such a belief allays the fever of ambitions. The belief in the potency and effect of vasanas and karmas invests human life with dignity, because it is something to be proud of that, under the guidance of God, we are the architects of our own destinies. One who is absolutely

certain in the conviction that from the lowest savage to the towering genius of Newton and beyond, every idea, every word and every act of the man, is bound to redound upon him so as to fructify in some result or other, here or hereafter, now or in futuro, must be struck by the awful responsibility associated with his existence as a human being. Such a faith is a most powerful moral force to keep the vagrant mind in check.

The Grihastha is called upon by the Shastras to look upon wealth more as a trust than as property meant for the chases of pleasure. The guest (Athithi) was once honoured next to God. Every day until after Vaisvadeva and Baliharana, it is the duty of the householder to keep an open door for the guest. With Vaisvadeva neglected and Baliharana unobserved, with the five Maha Yagnas ununderstood, charity and hospitality have come to be looked upon in a new light altogether.

I certainly do not object to Schools and Hospitals as worthy objects of charity. Nor may I object to or prevent subscription lists ever in circulation for so-called public purposes and memorials. In the glamour of new-fangled charities, let not the simple unostentatious charities of the Hindu Home, which have so long staved off the Poor-law from the statute book, be forgotten or banished by

us. You have, I dare say, heard the touching story of two birds related in Shanti Parva. One night, a hunter caught one of them, the she-bird, and put it in his cage. The he-bird was so broken-hearted and grief-stricken that he took to prolonged wailing. It was a night of biting cold and the hunter was shivering under the tree. The she-bird in the cage saw plainly what was her duty. She addressed her husband in her own language and pointed out that their guest, the hunter, ought not to suffer. Reminded thus of his duty as a grihastha, the he-bird rushed off to gather bits of fuel and grass with his beak, dropped them near the cage, and lit up a fire. The hunter was very thankful for the little bonfire. But he was hungry. Understanding the situation and the need for self-sacrifice the he-bird next plunged into the fire and died, before any rescue was possible. Struck dumb by what he saw, the hunter released the she-bird from the cage. But the chaste house-wife followed her husband into the fire in order to give the guest a fuller meal. So goes the story and the moral lies on the surface.

Sri Krishna says that Earth and Heaven are linked together by a tie of mutual obligations meant for reciprocal happiness. Unless we repay to the Gods the debts we incur whenever any boon

or blessing is derived by us we are ungrateful debtors. Sri Krishna says यो भुंक्ते स्तेन एव सः । It is beautiful idea if we but remember and realise this whenever we catch hold of pleasures and devour them with glee, unmindful of their Divine Origin. Mere trusts, which we ought not to misappropriate ! The very thought makes us sober.

Attempting a count, in how many houses do we find the Pooja-room maintained in a proper condition. I fear that the percentage won't be high. What is the excuse? One is that a priest is not available. Another is that the Grihastha has no time. A third is that he has not learnt the necessary mantras. A fourth is an answer of desperation though honest, that the Pooja is but vain idolatry. Having regard to the fact that the image is not god but is only an aid to concentration this excuse is far from being sound. The iconoclast who does his worship in a Church or a Mosque is as much a slave of convention as one who resorts to the Temple. He who puts on a costume set apart for Sunday or Friday, kneels down, shuts his eyes, and holds up his face in prayer, is as much a victim of symbolism as any idolator. The Christian or Mohammadan who conjures up a mental image of god and offers his prayer to it is, truly speaking, as much an idolator as the Hindu,