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Akhila Bharatiya
Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha

10th CONFERENCE

1937

R. Krishnaswami Sastri

Welcome Address 197

BY

SETH PURUSHOTHAM DOSS GOCoola DOSS

MADRAS

Chairman, Reception Committee

"LALITA SADANAM"

ROYAPETTAH.

29th, 30th & 31st December 1937



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WELCOME ADDRESS

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SETH PURUSHOTHAM DOSS GOCoola DOSS

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It is with feelings of great pleasure that I extend to you my hearty welcome on behalf of the Reception Committee of this tenth Conference of the All India Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha. We are indeed greatly thankful to the Working Committee of the All India Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha for having kindly agreed to hold this Conference in this city of Madras. The Provincial Sanatana Dharma Conference that was held in this city in the month of February last gave a great fillip to our movement. And as a result of the deliberations of that Conference we were able to do some substantial spade work in the different parts of this Presidency in the matter of our organisation. Subsequent to that the All India Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha Conference was held at Puri under the presidentship of our distinguished countryman, M. R. Ry., Rao Saheb N. Natesa Iyer Avergal. It is with feelings of great gratification that I see that the great Sanatana

Dharma movement has again become a dynamic thing and in Northern India several local Sanghas have been organised in each province. The details of the working of our Provincial Organisations are now being published in the Report of the All India Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha. The Progress in building a strong and thorough organisation has thus been steady though slow. It is up to us now to make a further effort and mobilise our forces so that we may have in our midst a very efficient and living organisation which will be in a position not only to ward off the ill-thought-out and unwarranted inroads into our Dharma, but also to improve the standard of our Dharmic life.

The strength of our sacred cause and the success we have so far made are more than evident from the Akhila Bharatiya Sanatana Dharma Vidvat Parishat which held its sessions here in this Lalita-Sadanam for the last four days. Most of you, I am sure, have had the privilege of witnessing the unique gathering of a number of Peethadhipathis, Dharmacharyas and a very large number of eminent Vedic scholars who had so very kindly graced the occasion at a considerable sacrifice of their personal comforts from the different parts of this Bharata Varsha. I may say without fear of contradiction that there has not been a Parishat of this kind so fully and worthily represented in the recent history of our province if not of India itself. We have made a right beginning in welding together the Vaidik and Loukik sections of our Hindu community by arranging the Vidvat Parishat and the Conference. In the last four days, the learned scholars, who, it may be said, have imbibed the essence of the teachings of the Rishis and live entirely religious lives, have discussed threadbare several aspects of our Dharma and Socio-

logy as propounded by the Srutis and Smritis and have given their conclusions in the light of the attack of modernism against them. Their conclusions will, no doubt, guide us in our deliberations in this Conference.

One additional great benefit that we have derived from this Conference is this. It has been often said that Sanskrit is a dead language and that it is no use pursuing the study of that language. This irresponsible assertion has been thoroughly falsified by the brilliant discussions in Sanskrit itself, which we had in the Parishat. The melody and the free flow of the Sanskrit expositions added immense grace to the discussions. Not only the ideas connected with the highly philosophical scientific systems were easily expressed in Sanskrit but even the problems of the workaday world were very intelligently and usefully tackled by the learned Pandits through the medium of Sanskrit. Hundreds of Pandits were actively taking part in the discussions and thousands of the ordinary public were able to follow the discussions and enlighten themselves. Well, the language of the Devas is not dead ; and it will never die. From the short experience I had of these discussions, I am tempted to think why Sanskrit be not made once again the *lingua franca* of Bharata Varsha at least for the Hindus. From this I may assert, as matters stand at present, more people in this province understand Sanskrit better than Hindi. Not that I am against Hindi, or any language for the matter of that. I am very particular about the Deva Bhasha. I take this opportunity to emphasise our duty to develop the study of Sanskrit language and literature. It is admitted on all hands that the Sanskrit literature has not been unravelled completely

and there are yet hidden treasures in that beautiful and eternal language. It is yet in a position to give the key to many of our present economic and socio-religious problems. Sanskrit does not represent merely the philosophical and religious thought of this ancient land. Even other branches of human thought and learning stand to gain considerably by a systematic and scientific study of the Sanskrit language. If India had produced one great Sir J. C. Bose, is it not due entirely to the inspiration he derived from the Vedas ? It is up to us to explore what other treasures are hidden in this language. We have woefully neglected the study and development of Sanskrit in the past and it is high time we open our eyes and take active steps to instil in our younger generation a greater interest in a complete study of our language. I hope the Conference will take necessary steps towards that end. I am of opinion that if only the study of Sanskrit is well developed and people are made to understand the greatness of our ancient civilization by a direct study of the originals, much of the present day confusion and misconception of the Shastras and our duties could be overcome. The proceedings of the Vidvat Parishat which by themselves are an achievement in my opinion, will give us the necessary lead.

Incidentally I wish to refer to one matter. There was to be a Vidvat Parishat in the city of Madras about this time (on the 25th, 26th and 27th instants) to find out fresh interpretations of the Dharma Shastras "to suit changing times." It was advertised to be held under very great auspices. There was a good deal of fuss and publicity about this Parishat. But it has not been held and it is even rumoured that it has fizzled out. I shall not be surpri-

sed if it turns out to be a still-born child. We have no quarrel with the Social Reformers if they want to transform the India of today into a fine America or even Hollywood if they can. What we sincerely plead for is this: that they should not blaspheme the sacred memory of the holy Rishis by trying to misinterpret the Shastras to suit their whims and fancies and wild experiments in socio-religious matters. In spite of the best financial support and press publicity, the so-called Pandits Conference of the reformers has not been held as proposed. It means only this: that the Shastras are not in a mood to oblige these erstwhile reformers and they cannot catch hold of even a few Pandits worth the name to run their show. This was evident from the results they obtained in the preliminary meeting they held recently in the Hindu High School Hall. If that Parishat had not achieved anything, it has done one thing at least. To some extent, I am forced to confess that their attempts were responsible for inducing us to have our Sanatana Dharma Vidvat Parishat. At least here is an instance of good coming out of evil.

This brings me to the question of temple-entry. It is still the burning question not only in our camp but also in the Social Reform and Congress circles. It has been very clearly demonstrated that the temple-entry for Avarnas is against the Shastras and an overwhelming majority of the believing Hindus are against this inroad into their forms of religious worship. During the last general elections the Madras Provincial Varnashrama Swarajya Sangha Conference decided that it had no quarrel with the Congress, if it only assured us religious freedom. In the speeches made by responsible Congress leaders then, it was often repeated by way of answer to our questions

that the temple-entry question was not before the electorate and they were dealing only with the fundamental problem of winning national freedom. To that extent, it was considered as a small concession in our favour. But of late we see the same cry of temple-entry being raised here and there and pressure is being brought to bear on the Congress Ministry in some form or other to bring about this 'Reform' by the force of legislation. I hope the Congress Ministry will not forget the promise it made—a promise though negative in form still precluded the possibility of temple-entry legislation. I am glad to note that the Madras Premier, in a speech he recently made in the Servants of India Society premises, stated that the Madras Presidency is not Travancore and they could not force legislation if the community at large was not in a position to take it. By this he has not given up his plan, but he evidently wants the Social Reform section to prepare the public for a legislation of this kind. I contend, if even that is done, he is not free to undertake a legislation of this serious nature during the present term of the Madras Legislature in view of the pre-election promises which he and other Congress leaders have made. I am not very much familiar with the state of affairs in other provinces. In Bombay and the Central Provinces I think there is a definite attempt to bring about legislation for the temple-entry of the Avarnas. It is quite immaterial whether it is going to be a permissive legislation or a coercive one. We do not want that any interference in our religious freedom and practices should be made to suit any body's political moves or social reform tendencies. Whatever may be the attitude of the Congress Ministries in the majority provinces, our duty now is clear. We have to organise ourselves

more effectively in all the parts of Bharata Varsha and see that our Sanatana Dharma movement is real and dynamic and governs the thoughts and actions of all the Sanatanists. This is not an easy task, but it is not impossible. That is evident from what I have remarked at the outset. Fortunately for us the several Mathadhipathis all over India have bestirred themselves, the learned Pandits and Dharmacharyas who had not the necessity or opportunity of adapting themselves to the new form of *Loka Sangraha* have now realised the real danger ahead and come forward with their energy and enthusiasm to protect our Dharma. It only remains for us, the laymen, to implicitly follow their lead and do our duty towards us, our forefathers and our Rishis. Our Dharma can never be killed. It has withstood ever so many onslaughts. It does not even stand in need of our protection, but it protects only those who protect it (*Dharmo Rakshati Rakshitaha*). Therefore the main work before our Conference is to find ways and means to further strengthen our organisation in all respects.

I need not advert to several other social questions equally threatening to subvert our ancient civilization. There is the question of the Debt Relief Bill which has given a rude shock to our economic order. Without going into the details I may say that it has evoked a good deal of opposition. I simply wish to repeat the words of Mr. Langley, who said that the Government will be signing its own death-warrant if they passed this legislation. I do not want to take much of your time now. If only our organisation is made perfect, then no such problem will arise, and even if they arise, we can easily ward them off. The result of our success lies only in our sincerity in translating our enthu-

siasm into concrete activity. I shall close this with merely reminding you of the Lord's words *Swadhar-mo Nihitam Sreyaha Para dharmo Bhayavaha*.

Gentlemen, I thank you all for the kindness with which you have responded to our invitation. I do realise that you have come in such large numbers from distant parts of India at a considerable sacrifice. It may be, our arrangements to accommodate you all fall short of your expectations—at least they fall short of our own wishes. I request you to excuse us for all the shortcomings in the arrangements as we had a very limited time before us and we are not yet thorough in the methods of organisation. Once again I extend to you my hearty welcome and pray Sri Saranya to guide our deliberations and lead us on to victory.

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