We are placing before the Chitrakar community, especially our conservative brethren, a few points which call for serious thought. We appeal to our Chitrakar brethren to ponder over this matter coolly and deeply and then decide what should be the right course for the community to take.

1) The Chitrakar community has descended from the union of a Brahmin father and a Gope mother. The daily work of Chitrakars is concerned with Hindu gods and goddesses. The profession of many of them is painting scrolls and selling these to Hindu households, which amounts to a kind of preaching Hinduism. Chitrakars' names are similar to Hindu names. Their customs also accord with the Hindus'. Thus in religion the Chitrakars are really Hindu. One should die rather than give up one's religion. Whatever may be the difficulties, the ultimate good for the Chitrakar community lies in coming again under the protective wings of their old religion.

2) The Chitrakar community's economic ties are entirely with the Hindus. The Chitrakars' livelihood depends on selling images to Hindus. It is not possible that their profession will be endangered in the near future if Chitrakars remain allied to a non-Hindu society or organisation which is opposed or inimical to image-worship? Since Independence Hindus have become more energetic and active than before in propagating and preserving their religion. Those among the Hindus who are in favour of strict adherence to their traditional religious customs are not going much longer to tolerate people with close associations with a non-Hindu
community freely entering Hindu temples and making images for worship. Already objections against this have been raised at several places. Some prominent pandits have issued an edict of warning against having images of gods and goddesses made by non-Hindus because this is not sanctioned by the shastras and is derogatory for Hinduism. In their proclamation the pandits have suggested that if there are no Hindu artisans available for image-making in any region then Hindu artisans from other parts of West Bengal or Hindu artisans among the migrants from East Bengal(now Bangladesh) should be brought and settled there. Potters of East Bengal are adept in making images and painting. At present large numbers of them are leaving their homes in East Bengal and coming to West Bengal. The Government of India has sanctioned 24 crores of rupees for the assistance and rehabilitation of refugees from East Bengal. If the Hindu refugee artisans from East Bengal get land to settle in and also capital for their business through government help they will be especially welcome in areas where there is a dearth of Hindu artisans. Will our conservative brethren in the Chitrakar community try to visualize their own plight in such a situation?

3) India has been divided into Hindusthan and Pakistan. From time to time things happen around us which cannot but fill our minds with anxiety and fear. Though it is the desire of every peace-loving person that the relations between the different communities should be marked by unity, friendliness and the spirit of cooperation there are self-seekers and reactionary elements ready to instigate and provoke trouble whenever they get an opportunity for mischief.
The fearful memory of the terrible happenings in Calcutta, Noakhali, Punjab, Bihar and Delhi, still haunts us. God forbid—but there is no harm in taking precautions—if some evil deeds perpetrated in East Bengal have some sudden repercussions in West Bengal (such as Bihar in reply to Koakhali) can we be certain that the Chitrakar community will remain unaffected, that is, if it remains associated with some non-Hindu community? Why should the Chitrakar community attract danger to itself through association with a non-Hindu community?

4) In this age of democracy, the state power lies in the hands of those who are in a majority, and those who are in the possession of the state power have all the advantages—religious, social, economic, education, military, industrial and commercial. In India it is the Hindus who constitute the majority; therefore the state power will be on the side for which the majority of the Hindus will vote. The present Congress Government's policy towards the minority communities is an admirable one, it is liberal and impartial. But who can say the policy will remain equally liberal and impartial if the state power changes hands and is possessed by some other party or organisation? Should not this question be a matter for serious consideration by every Chitrakar?

5) The Chitrakars are a small community and they have not enough strength to enforce their demands as a separate community. To secure their political rights and privileges they have to be allied with some powerful community. Where, then, should the Chitrakars anchor their boat? Since in most matters—names, customs and affairs
of livelihood— the Chitrakars are following Hinduism and since it
Hindus are the powerful majority community in India will/not be the
most profitable course for the Chitrakars to be fully integrated into
the Hindu society? Will this not put us in an advantageous position
in our dealings with the majority community in the fields of art,
industry, jobs, education, etc.? The question deserve serious con
sideration.

6) A large section of the Chitrakar community has already merged
with the powerful Hindu society. Only a small conservative section is
still adhering to a contrary attitude. But can a handful of persons
isolated from the main body of the community maintain their separate
existence? Are they not going to be a weak and crippled lot? What
possible good can result from a handful of persons remaining aloof
and isolated?

7) As the result of the community's division into two opposing
groups relatives and friends have been estranged from one other, and
social intercourse and friendly exchanges are being hampered. Though
many are feeling the anguish caused by the estrangement of friends
and relatives they are ignoring the path which would best lead to the
restoration of unity and cordiality. What is that path? All diffi-
culties can be solved in a day if the conservatives will give up their
separatist attitude and join the "Hindu Chitrakar Samaj". Then in a
day relatives will be reunited, all the joys of friendship and social
intercourse will be revived— all estrangements will be things of the
past. Chitrakar brethren, overcome your pride and egoism; if you have
been hurt by the conduct of any relative forget it and come forward
and join your efforts in building up a powerful united "Hindu Chitrakar Samaj". May the new awakening of the Chitrakar community not be in vain!

8) Scroll-painting and image-making are no longer a monopoly of the Chitrakar community like before. Many art schools and art colleges of both Eastern and Western ideology, have come into being for training in painting by modern improved methods. These institutions of training in the fine arts are under the direction and control of highly educated and talented persons. In terms of competition with them, where is the Chitrakar community's place today? In the fields of architecture and sculpture also, the Chitrakar community of today has no place. The only field now left to them is that of image-making. But even here Chitrakars must reckon with the potters from East Bengal. They must also take note of the fact that proficiency in image-making is being displayed by many artisans belonging to the mahishya, poundra-kshatriya and kaora castes of West Bengal. In such a situation Chitrakars can maintain their existence as an artisan community only if they remain united in one social body. If divided, they are bound to lose in the competition with their rivals. Ponder well whether this is true or not?

9) Those who are apprehensive and doubtful as to whether an honourable position is attainable in Hindu society will do well to consider the following:

(a) The old orthodoxy of the Hindu society is on the decline in Independent India the Hindus have generally become liberal-minded and reformist. The fact of the Hindu society is sure to be changed entirely in the next five years.
(b) The big religious and political organisations such as Bharat Sevashram Sangha, the Ramkrishna Mission, the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha as well as every educated person and all important leaders are for reform and reorganisation of the Hindu society. Their efforts are bound to be successful in a short time.

(c) After the Calcutta and the Noakhali riots all the leading pandits, mohants and mandaleshwaras have expressed their unanimous opinion in favour of reform and reorganisation of the Hindu society and have decreed many social and religious rights and privileges equally for the non-Brahmin castes.

(d) The central and the state governments have enacted very stringent laws against untouchability and other discriminating social usages.

(e) The Hindu society has not turned away those whom who were forcibly converted or the women who were criminally violated during the riots in Calcutta, Noakhali and Punjab. Rather they were welcomed back into the Hindu society. This proves how liberal the Hindu society has now become.

(f) Wherever Chitrakars have undergone suddhi, they have received support and sympathy from the Hindus. In most cases the expenses of the suddhi have been borne by the Hindus who have made all the arrangements. After the suddhi, our brethren were livingly embraced and blessed by the leading members of the Hindu society. At this moment at many places the local Hindus are ready to welcome our brethren into their field. But who is to blame if the proffered meal is not eaten?
(g) Wherever suddhi has taken place, services of the priest have been made available. In cases of temporary difficulties, redress is prompt by the Bharat Sevashram Sangha despatching a preacher, or an sannyasi or a worker or a priest according to the requirement of the situation.

(h) Are they not mistaken who harp on the illiberality of the Hindu society? Is it not a false excuse?

(10) Considering the matter from the point of view of religion, it can be certainly said that the Hindu religion, being the mother of every kind of religious doctrine is the best of all religions. In the Hindu religion there are innumerable paths leading to the salvation of the soul and realisation of God. For worshipping God, one may choose any one of the many ways, according to one's taste, nature or tradition. There is no other religion which allows so much freedom, is so liberal and offers such variety of paths to a seeker in the field or religious endeavour. This is a point which deserves to be especially considered by those who would lay particular stress on the religious aspect of the matter. What other religious give scope for such a wide range of religious culture as the Hindu religion does?

(11) What the Chitrakar community has suffered under the inexorable pressure of time were only some distortions and nothing more. It never entered into marital relations with any non-Hindu community. Even today no Chitrakar can contemplate such an alliance without hurting his conscience. Therefore there has never been a mixture of the Chitrakar community's blood with any foreign non-Hindu blood. The blood in the Chitrakar's veins is the same sacred fluid that flowed in the veins of the Aryan rishis and maharshis. Chitrakar brethren, don't you believe
that to be true, why do you feel shy and hesitant to declare that you are descendants of the Aryan rishis? Overcome this feeling of shyness and hesitancy. Respond to the call of the new age. Therein lies your welfare.

12) In the eyes of the non-Hindu image-worship is idolatry. Because they make images Chitrakars are despised and regarded as untouchables by the non-Hindu community. It is strange, some chitrakars—nobody knows beguiled by what fond hopes—appear to be inclined towards that community. What is there to attract them that way? Nothing, as far as we can see. In fact so long as Chitrakars remain image-makers there is no place for them in that community. Why, then, this looking in that direction?

We have placed the above 12 points before our brethren so that they may think over them and those who due to ignorance had been harbouring mistaken notions may get rid of them.

N.B. Translated from the booklet "Bangiya Chitrakar Samajer Nabajagaran" Issued by Bharat Sevasram Sangha, 211, Rashbihari Avenue, Calcutta.