Foundation of Banaras Hindu University

Annie Besant and her Proposed University of India

Born on the 1st October, 1847, in London, she was married in 1867 to Rev. Frank Besant, and had a son and a daughter. She got herself legally separated in 1873, and came under the influence of Charles Bradlaugh and was appointed Vice-President of National Secular Society and Co-Editor, National Reformer, in 1877. She formed the Malthusian League. She came in contact with Madame Blavatsky in 1882 and joined the Theosophical Society in 1889. The Theosophical Society was, at that time passing through a crisis. The regrettable misrepresentation and the malicious lies of the Coulombs had created an artificial uncertainty about theosophical doctrines and tenets and had cast its leaders and officers into undeserved public odium. To join it at that time required considerable self-confidence for anyone, the more so for one with the secularist views of Mrs. Besant. From the moment she embraced theosophy, she began to work for its cause with her characteristic zeal. As a result of her strenuous work for and in the name of the Society, the Coulombs died a natural death. Under her guidance, the work of the Society ran into fruitful channels.¹

Mrs. Besant came to India in 1893 and since then she made India her Home. India was fortunate in having a gifted and high-souled woman like Mrs. Besant in her midst. The preliminary grounding she had in England stood her in good stead here. Her rationalistic surroundings in early age, her love of knowledge, her association with Mr. Charles Bradlaugh and the school of political and religious thought he represented, her work for the Free-thought and the Socialist causes, her intense hatred of oppression and cruelty in every form and shape, and her high spirituality had each and all their effect in preparing her for her life’s work in India—the bringing of the other world in touch with the spiritual wealth of India for the benefit of humanity. How to re-invigorate India and how to make her take her destined place and fulfil her mission in the scheme of the Universe was the foremost thought in the minds of Mrs. Besant. Her plain and unmistakable answer was, “Revivify its people, revivify its literature, revivify its religion.”²
In the year 1916, she launched her great Home Rule movement. She disaffiliated her Theosophical Educational institutions at Madanapalle from the Madras University. A national High School was established at Adyar, Madras. Poet Rabindranath Tagore was its Patron. Similar institutions were established at other places also. A Society for the promotion of National Education was organised. She started a daily, the New India and later, a weekly, the Commonweal. The Home Rule movement worked through the daily, ‘New India’. Lord Pentland promulgated the G. O. 559 prohibiting the students, who had become a great force in the agitation, from taking part in politics. Mrs. Besant was called upon to furnish a Security of Rs. 20,000/- for her press and papers. The whole amount was forfeited in 1917 under the Press Act. She was then interned in June 1917, with her associates, Dr. G. S. Arundale and Mr. B. P. Wadia. They were released in Sept. 1917.

Mrs. Besant was elected President of the Congress Session held in Calcutta in December 1917. Till then the Presidentship of the Congress was a matter of only three days’ activity. The view of Mrs. Besant was that the President of the Session should continue as such throughout the succeeding year. Though the idea was not new, it was not enforced in the history of the Congress till then. She was the first to act upon it. It was at this Session of the Congress that the question of the national flag was formally raised. The Home Rule League had already adopted and popularized the tricolour flag. The Congress appointed a Committee to recommend a design but this Committee never met. The Home Rule Flag, with the Charkha added on it later on, virtually became the Congress flag till 1931, when the saffron colour was substituted for the red. Mrs. Besant was actively connected with the Congress till the year 1929. She passed away on the 20th September, 1933.3

The following is the position for the Royal Charter for the establishment of this University of India.

TO,

THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY-IN-COUNCIL

The humble petition of the undersigned inhabitants of India

Sheweth as follows:

1. That for some time past your petitioners have felt the need for and are desirous of establishing a new University in India, having a field of activity of a distinctive character from the existing Universities, and possessing special features of its own; moreover your petitioners believe—in accordance with the declarations of the Imperial Government on many
occasions—that higher education should more and more devolve on private and voluntary endeavours, thus lessening the burden on the State, and that the establishment of a University resting on such endeavours is absolutely necessary for unifying and rendering effective Indian initiative in educational matters.

2. The most marked speciality of the proposed University will lie in the fact that it will affiliate no College in which religion and morality do not form an integral part of the education given; it will make no distinctions between religions, accepting equally Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, Christian and Muhammadan, but it will not affiliate any purely secular institution. It will thus supply a gap in the educational system of India, and will draw together all the elements which regard the training of youth in honor and virtue as the most essential part of education. It will be a nursery of good citizen instead of only a mint for hall-marking a certain standard of knowledge.

3. The second important speciality will be the placing in the first rank of Indian philosophy, history, and literature, and seeking in these, and in the classical languages of India, the chief means of culture. While western thought will be amply studied, eastern will take the lead, and western knowledge will be used to enrich, but not to distort or cripple, the expanding national life.

4. The third important speciality will be the paying of special attention to manual and technical training, to science applied to agriculture and manufactures, and to Indian arts and crafts, so as to revive these now decaying industries, while bringing from the West all that can usefully be assimilated for the increasing of national prosperity.

The University shall have the powers following:

1. To impart and promote the imparting of Education—Literary, Artistic, and Scientific, as well as Technical, Commercial and Professional—on National lines and under National control, not in opposition to but standing apart from the Government system of Collegiate Education—attaching special importance to a knowledge of the Country, its Literature, History and Philosophy, and designed to incorporate with the best Oriental ideals of life and thought, the best assimilable ideals of the West, and to inspire students with a genuine love for a real desire to serve the country.

2. To promote and encourage the study chiefly of such branches of the Arts, Sciences, Industries, and Commerce as are best calculated to develop the
material resources of the country and to satisfy its pressing wants, including in Scientific Education generally a knowledge of the scientific truths embodied in Oriental Learning, and in Medical Education, specially, a knowledge of such scientific truths as are to be found in the Ayurvedik land Hakimi systems.

(3) To found and affiliate National Colleges, such Colleges being institutions which recognise religion and ethics as integral parts of a true education, whether they teach these in the College or in denominational Hostels connected therewith.

(4) To grant and confer degrees and other academic distinctions to and on persons who shall have pursued an approved course of study in the University and the Colleges founded by or affiliated to it and shall have passed the examinations of the University under conditions laid down in its Regulations: Provided that Degrees representing proficiency in technical subjects shall not be conferred without proper security for testing the scientific and general knowledge underlying technical attainments.

(5) To admit Graduates of other Universities to Degrees of equal and similar ranks in the University.

(6) To confer Degrees of the University on any persons who hold office in the University as Professors, Readers, Lecturers or otherwise who shall have carried on independent research therein.

(7) To grant Diplomas or certificates to persons who shall have pursued a course of study approved by the University under conditions laid down by the University.

(8) To confer Honorary Degrees or other distinctions on approved persons: Provided that all degrees and other distinctions shall be conferred and held subject to any provisions which may be made in reference thereto by the Regulations of the University.

(9) To provide for instruction in such branches of learning as the University may think fit and also to make provision for research and for the advancement and dissemination of knowledge.

(10) To examine and inspect schools and other educational institutions and grant certificates of proficiency and to provide such lectures and instruction for persons not members of the University as the University may determine.
(11) To accept the examinations and periods of study passed by students of the University and other Universities or places of learning as equivalent to such examinations and periods of study in the University as the University may determine and to withdraw such acceptance at any time.

(12) To admit the members of other institutions to any of its privileges and to accept attendance at courses of study in such institutions in place of such part of the attendance at courses of study in the University and upon such terms and conditions and subject to such regulations as may, from time to time be determined by the University.\(^5\)

(13) To accept courses of study in any other institution which in the opinion of the University possesses the means of affording the proper instruction for such courses and to withdraw such acceptance at any time: Provided that in no case shall the University confer a Degree in Medicine or Surgery upon any person who has not attended in the University during two years at least courses of study recognised for such Degree or for one of the other Degrees of the University.

(14) To enter into alliance with any of the Indian Educational bodies working on similar lines to the University.

(15) To co-operate by means of joint Boards or otherwise with other Universities or authorities for the conduct of Matriculation and other Examinations, for the examination and inspection of schools and other academic institutions and for the extension of University teaching of influence in academic matters and for such other purposes as the University may from time to time determine.

(16) To enter into any agreement with any other institution or Society for the incorporation of that institution in the University and for taking over its property and liabilities and for any other purpose not repugnant to this our Charter.

(17) To institute Professorships, Readerships, Lecturerships, and any other offices required by the University and to appoint to such offices.

(18) To institute and award Fellowships, Scholarships, Exhibitions and Prizes.

(19) To establish and maintain Hostels and Boarding-houses for the residence of students.

(20) To do all such other acts and things whether incidental to the powers aforesaid or not as may be requisite in order to further the objects of the University as a teaching and examining body and to cultivate and promote Acts, Science and Learning.
The Senate Shall consist of: (i) Life-Fellows; (ii) Elected Fellows.

Friends of India saw that there was little hope for three charters; also that the Muslim community had deliberately and finally cut themselves off from the large scheme of the University of India; and that therefore the only course left was to modify the University of India scheme into one for the University of Benares. Mrs. Besant and Pandit Malaviya met in Calcutta in March 1911, talked over the situation and decided to join hands. A further meeting was held between them and a few other leading Hindus at Allahabad on the 8th of April, 1911, and it was agreed that the petition for a Royal Charter already submitted by Mrs. Besant to the King-Emperor through the Government should be the basis of work with certain modifications. These proposed changes were printed in a circular letter dated the 11th April, 1911, issued by Mrs. Besant which was also published in various dailies and weeklies. The following is the circular letter:

Benares City

April 11th, 1911

THE UNIVERSITY OF INDIA

Now The University of Benares

Since the University of India scheme was first formulated, many changes have come over the position of public affairs, and when the Petition for a Royal Charter was ready for signature my three chief Musalman supporters withdrew, Aligarh College having refused co-operation on the ground that the Muhammadans wished to have a College of their own. The Petition was sent up to the Secretary of State for India by H. E. the Viceroy in September, 1910. Since then has come the formal demand for a University Charter from the Musalmans, and the admirably carried out mission of H. H. the Aga Khan. This has aroused a strong feeling of emulation in the Hindu population, and a wish to have a University of their own.

A scheme for such a University was formulated some years ago by the Hon. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya; the question then arose: “Is it desirable to send up to the Government three petitions for University Charters? May not such a procedure lead to a refusal of the whole?”

As the Charter already sent up by a strong body of representative men, including no less than five present and past Vice-Chancellors of already existing Universities, asks for powers which would cover the whole of the Hon. Pandit’s scheme, and as that scheme includes the immediate establishment of a residential and teaching University, which we, on our side, were not prepared to undertake at once, friends on both sides counselled the Hon. Pandit and myself to blend our schemes, so that
there should go up the Crown form India only two Petitions, one from the educated portion of the Hindu population of the Indian Empire, and one from the educated portion of the Musalman: if the petitions are granted—and under the conditions both would be granted or both refused—India would then possess two Universities, in one of which Hindu culture and in the other of which Musalman culture would be the presiding spirit, which both would be freely open to men of all faiths, thus avoiding the narrowness which threatens purely denominational Institutions.

To bring about the union between the two schemes of the Hon. Pandit and myself, certain modifications in the Petition already before the Crown are necessary, and these have been formulated as below; to these the assent of those who signed the original Petition is now being sought. The most important of these is the immediate establishment of a residential and teaching University, inserted as para 2 in the preamble; the others are comparatively unimportant. A change of name is imperative, as the establishment of the Aligarh University will make the sweeping title of the “University of India” a misnomer. When I chose it, I had hoped that both communities would unite. We have therefore agreed to change this name to the “University of Benares”, in Hindi, the “Kashi Vishvavidyalaya”. Doubtless the two Universities will be popularly known as the Hindu and Moslem Universities, but territorial designations are everywhere adopted for such Institutions.7

On the 10th July, 1911, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya came to Banaras and had an informal talk with some members of the Central Hindu College Committee. He pointed out certain difficulties that presented themselves to his mind and the minds of some of his friends, in connection with the amalgamated scheme as published. He proposed certain alteration which to the other present, seemed, in some important respects to alter the character of the amalgamated scheme. He was, however, advised by the members of the College Committee to write to Mrs. Besant in detail about it. Then in the Leader, dated the 15th July, 1911, appeared the announcement of Pandit Malaviya which put in a nut-shell the points that he has mentioned at the informal meeting of July 10, 1911. But this announcement did not and could not solve the real difficulties and was interpreted differently by different people.

For the Trustees present in the meeting in their official capacities as members of the Board of Trustees of the Central Hindu College, the only point of contact with the proposed University was Mrs. Besant, the President and principal-founder of the Central Hindu College and they could not be expected to accept the further modifications proposed by Pandit Malaviya without knowing whether they would be
accepted by Mrs. Besant or not. Unless they were sure that Pandit Malaviya and Mrs. Besant were in through agreement they could not say that the college would be given over to the new University. In addition to this, there were some legal difficulties pointed out by the distinguished lawyer in the chair. At the same time it was felt that it would not be possible to keep the public in entire suspense as to the general attitude of the Trustees towards the broad question of the amalgamated scheme of the University of Benares. The Board therefore decided to pass a tentative resolution as follows:--

"Resolved that in view of the legal difficulties involved in the draft resolution, the Board is of opinion that the time is not ripe for taking any action in regard to the funds and properties of the institution, but the Board desires to place on record its willingness to join hands with Mrs. Besant and the Hon’ble Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and to co-operate with them in all ways in promoting the establishment of the Hindu University at Benares of which the Central Hindu College shall form an integral portion".

THE HINDU UNIVERSITY

The following prospectus of the Benares Hindu University Scheme was published in July 1911.

The proposal to establish a Hindu University at Benares was first put forward at a meeting held in 1904, at the ‘Mint House’ at Benares, which was presided over by H. H. the Maharaja of Benares. A prospectus of the University was published and circulated in October, 1905, and it was discussed at a select meeting held at the Town Hall at Benares on the 31st December, 1905, at which a number of distinguished educationists and representatives of the Hindu community of almost every province of India were present. It was also considered and approved by the Congress of Hindu Religion which met at Allahabad in January, 1906. The scheme met with much approval and support both from the Press and the Public.

This was in 1906. The scheme has ever since been kept alive by discussions and consultations with a view to begin work. But owing to circumstances which need not be mentioned here, an organised endeavour to carry out the proposal had to be put off year after year until last year. Such endeavour would assuredly have been begun last year. But the lamented death of our King-Emperor, and the schemes for Imperial and Provincial memorials to His Majesty, and the All-India memorials to the retiring Viceroy, came in, and the project of the University had yet to wait. Efforts have now been going on since January last to realise the long-cherished idea. As the result of the discussion which has gone on, the scheme has undergone some
important changes. It has generally been agreed that the proposed University should be a residential and teaching University of the modern type. No such University exists at present in India. All the five Universities which exist are mainly examining Universities. They have done and are doing most useful work. But the need for a University which will teach as well as examine, and which by reason of being a residential University, will realise the ideal of University life as it was known in the past in India, and it is known at present in the advanced countries of the West, has long been felt, and deserves to be satisfied.\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{THE OBJECTS}

The objects of the University have been thus formulated:

(i) To promote the study of the Hindu Shastras and of Sanskrit literature generally, as a means of preserving and popularising for the benefit of the Hindus in particular and of the world at large in general, the best thought and culture of the Hindus, and all that was good and great in the ancient civilization of India;

(ii) to promote learning and research generally in arts and science in all branches;

(iii) to advance and diffuse such scientific, technical and professional knowledge, combined with the necessary practical training, as is best calculated to help in promoting indigenous industries and in developing the material resources of the country; and

(iv) to promote the building up of character in youth by making religion and ethics an integral part of education.

\textbf{THE COLLEGES}

It is proposed that to carry out those objects, as, and so far as funds should permit, the University should comprise the following Colleges:

(1) A Sanskrit College—with a Theological department;

(2) A College of Arts and Literature;

(3) A College of Science and Technology;

(4) A College of Agriculture;

(5) A College of Commerce;

(6) A College of Medicine; and

(7) A College of Music and the Fine Arts.

It will thus be seen that the Faculties which it is proposed to constitute at the
University are those very Faculties which generally find recognition at every modern University in Europe and America. There is no proposal as yet to establish a Faculty of Law; but this omission can easily be made good if there is general desire that the study of Law should also be provided for.

THE SANSKRIT COLLEGE.

The Colleges have been somewhat differently named now: Vedic College of the old scheme has given place to the Sanskrit College with a theological department,—where satisfactory provision can be made for the teaching of the Vedas also. Over a hundred years ago in the year 1791, Mr. Jonathan Duncan, the Resident at Benares, proposed to Earl Cornwallis, the Governor General:

That a certain portion of the surplus revenue of the province or zamindari of Benares should be set apart for the support of a Hindu college or academy for the preservation of the Sanskrit literature and religion of the nation, as this the centre of their faith and the common resort of their tribes.

The proposal was approved by the Governor-General, and the Sanskrit College was established. From that time it has been the most important institution for the preservation and the promotion of Sanskrit learning throughout India. The debt of gratitute which the Hindu community owes to the British Government for having made this provision for the study of Sanskrit learning can never be repaid. And it is in every way met and proper that instead of establishing a new College in the same city where the same subjects will be taught the Government should be approached with a proposal in incorporate this College with the proposed University. If the proposal meets with the approval of the Government, as it may reasonably be hoped that it will, all that will then be necessary will be added a theological department to the Sanskrit College, for the teaching of the Vedas. When the Sanskrit College was started four chairs had been provided for the teaching of the four Vedas. And they were all subsequently abolished. This has long been a matter for regret.

The Vedas have more than antiquarian value for Hindus. They are the primary source of their religion. And it is a matter of reproach to the Hindus, that while excellent provision is made for the study and elucidation of the Vedas in Germany and America, there is not one single first-rate institution in this country for the proper study of these sacred books. An effort will be made to remove this reproach by establishing a good Vedic School at this University. This, is done, will complete the provision for the higher study of Sanskrit literature at Kashi, the ancient seat
of ancient learning. The Vaidic School will naturally have an ashram or hostel attached to it for the residence of Brahmacharirs, some of whom may be trained as teachers of religion. The substitution of the name, 'the Sanskrit College' for the Vedik College in the scheme, has been made in view of this possible incorporation.

THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LITERATURE.

The second College will be a College of Arts and Literature, where languages, comparative philology, philosophy, history, political economy, pedagogics, and will be taught. It is proposed that the existing Central Hindu College at Benares should be made the nucleus of this College. The self-sacrifice and devotion which have built up this first-class institution, must be thankfully acknowledged; and, if the terms of incorporation can be satisfactorily settled, as they may well be, the College should be taken up by the University, and improved and developed so as to become the premier College on the Arts side of the University. The incorporation and development will be both natural and reasonable, and there is reason to hope that the authorities of the Central Hindu College will agree to this being done.

THE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY.

The third College will be the College of Science and Technology, with four well-equipped departments of pure and applied sciences.

THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE.

It is proposed that the second College to be established should be the College of Agriculture. For a country where more than two-thirds of the population depend for their subsistence on the soil, the importance of agriculture cannot be exaggerated. Even when manufacturing industries have been largely developed, agriculture is bound to remain the greatest and the most important national industry of India. Besides, agriculture is the basic industry, the industry on which most of the other industries depend. As the great scientist Baron Leibig has said—'perfect agriculture is the foundation of all trade and industry—is the foundation of the riches of the State.' The prosperity of India is, therefore, most closely bound up with the improvement of its agriculture. The greatest service that can be rendered to the teeming millions of this country is to make two blades of grass grow where only one grows at present. The experience of the West has shown that this result can be achieved by means of scientific agriculture. A comparison of the present outturn per acre in this country with what was obtained here in former times and what is yielded by the land of other countries shows the great necessity and the vast possibility of improvement in this direction. Wheat land in the United Provinces which now gives 840 lbs. an acre yielded 1,140 lbs. in the Akbar. The average yield
of wheat per acre in India is 700 lbs; in England it is 1,100 lbs. Of rice the yield in India is 800 lbs. as against 2,500 lbs. in Bavaria. America produces many times more of cotton and of wheat per acre than we produce in India. This marvellously increased production in the West is the result of the application of science to agriculture.

THE COLLEGE OF MEDICINE.

It is proposed that the next College to be established should be the College of Medicine. The many Medical Colleges and schools which the Government have established in various provinces of India have done and are doing a great deal of good to the people. But the supply of qualified medical men is still far short of the requirements of the country. The graduates and licentiates in medicine and surgery whom these Colleges turn out are mostly absorbed by cities and towns. Indeed, even in these, a large portion of the population is served by Vaidyas and Hakims, who practise, or are supposed to practise, according to the Hindu or Mohammedan system of medicine. In the villages in which the nation dwells, qualified medical practitioners are still very rare. Hospital assistants are employed in the dispensaries maintained by District Boards. But the number of these also is small. The result is that it is believed that vast numbers of the people have to go without any medical aid in fighting against disease, and a large number of them have in their helplessness to welcome the medical assistance of men who are often un instructed and incompetent. The need for more Medical Colleges is thus obvious and insistent. In the last session of the Imperial Legislative Council, the Hon’ble Surgeon-General Lukis, Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals in India, referring to the advice recently given to the Bombay medical men by Dr. Tremalji Nariman, exhorted Indians to found more Medical Colleges.

The distinguishing feature of the proposed Medical College at Benares will be that Hindu medical science will be taught here along with the European system of medicine and surgery. Hindu medical science has unfortunately received less attention and recognition than it deserves. Hippocrates, who is called the ‘Father of Medicine,’ because he first cultivated the subject as a science in Europe, has been shown to have borrowed his Matería medica from the Hindus. ‘It is to the Hindus,’ says Dr. Wise, late of the Bengal Medical Service, we own the first system of medicine.’ It will be of some interest to Hindu readers to know,’ says Romesh Dutt in his “History of Civilisation in Ancient India,” ‘when foreign scientific skill and knowledge are required in every district in India for sanitary and medical work that twenty-two centuries ago. Alexender the Great kept Hindu physicians in his camp
for the treatment of disease which Greek physicians could not heal, and that eleven centuries ago Haroun-al-Rashid of Bagdad retained two Hindu physicians known in Arabian records as Manka and Saleh as his own physicians.' Not only throughout the Hindu period—including of course the Buddhist—but throughout the Mohammedan period also, the Hindu system was the national system of medical relief in India, so far at least as the Hindu world was concerned, and so it remains, to a large extent, even to this day. Being indigenous it is more congenial to the people; treatment under it is cheaper than under the European system and it has merits of its own which enable it to stand favourable comparison with other systems. In support of this view it will be sufficient to mention that Kavirajas or Vaidyas who have a good knowledge of Hindu medical works, command a lucrative practice in a city like Calcutta, in the midst of a large number of the most competent practitioners of the European system. This being so, it is a matter for regret that there is not even one first class institution throughout the country where such Kavirajas or Vaidyas may be properly educated and trained to practise their very responsible profession. The interests of the Hindu community demand that satisfactory provision should be made at the very least at one centre in the country for the regular and systematic study and improvement of a system which is so largely practised, as is likely to continue to be practised in the country. It is intended that the proposed Medical College of the University should form one such centre. The Hindu system of medicine shall here be brought up to date and enriched by the incorporation of the marvellous achievements which modern medical science has made in anatomy, physiology, surgery and all other departments of the healing art, both on the preventive and the curative side. The aim of the institution will be to provide the country with Vaidyas well qualified both as physicians and surgeons. It is believed that this will be a great service to the cause of suffering humanity in India.14

THE MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION.

When the idea of a Hindu University was first put forward, it was proposed that instruction should be imparted in general subjects through the medium of one of the vernaculars of the country. It was proposed that that vernacular should be Hindi, as being the most widely understood language in the country. This was supported by the principle laid down in the Despatch of 1954, that a knowledge of European arts and sciences should gradually be brought by means of the Indian vernaculars, within the reach of all classes of the people. But it is felt that this cannot be done at present owing to the absence of suitable treatises and text-books on science in the vernaculars. It is also recognised that the adoption of one
vernacular as the medium of instruction at an University which hopes to draw its 
*alumni* from all parts of India will rain several difficulties of a practical character 
which it would be were to avoid in the beginning.\(^5\)

It has, therefore, been agreed that instruction shall be imparted through the 
medium of English, but that as the vernacular are gradually developed, it will be in 
the power of the University to allow any one or more of them to be used as the 
medium of instruction in subjects and courses in which they may consider it 
practicable and useful to do so. In view of the great usefulness of the English 
language as a language of world-wide utility, English shall even then be taught as 
a second language.

**THE NEED FOR THE UNIVERSITY.**\(^6\)

There are at present five Universities in India, *viz.*, those of Calcutta, Bombay, 
Madras, Lahore and Allahabad. These are all mainly examining Universities. In 
founding them, as the Government of India said in their Resolution on Education 
in 1904:

The Government of India of that day took as their model the type of institution 
then believed to be best suited to the educational conditions of India, that is to say, 
the examining University of London. Since then the best educational thought of 
Europe has shown an increasing tendency to realise the inevitable shortcoming of 
a purely examining University, and the London University itself has taken steps to 
enlarge the scope of its operations by assuming tuitional functions...

Besides, a merely examining University can do little to promote the formation 
of character, which, it is generally agreed, is even more important for the well being 
of the individual and of the community, than the cultivation of intellect. These and 
similar considerations point to the necessity of establishing residential and teaching 
Universities in India of the type that exists in all the advanced countries of the 
West. The proposed University will be such a University—a Residential and 
Teaching University. It will thus supply a distinct want which has for some time 
been recognised both by the Government and the public, and will, it is hoped, prove 
a most valuable addition to the educational institutions of the country.

But even if the existing Universities were all teaching Universities, the exterior 
of many more new Universities would yet be called for in the best interests of the 
country. If India is to know, in the words of the great Educational Despatch of 1854, 
those vast moral and material blessings which flow from the general diffusion of 
useful knowledge, and which India may, under Providence, derive from her 
connection with England’; if her children are to be enabled to build up indigenous
industries in the face of the sequel competition of the most advanced countries of the West, the means of higher education in this country, particularly on scientific industrial and technical education will have to be very largely increased and improved. To show how great is the room for improvement, it will be sufficient to mention that as against five examining Universities in a vast country like India, which is equal to the whole of Europe minus Russia, there are eighteen Universities in the United Kingdom, which is nearly equal in area and population to only one province of India namely, the United Provinces; fifteen in France; twenty-one in Italy; and twenty-two State endowed Universities in Germany, besides many other Universities in other countries of Europe. In the United States of America, there are 134 State and privately-endowed Universities. The truth is that University education is no longer regarded in the West as the luxury of the rich, which concerns only those who can afford to pay heavily for it. Such education is now regarded as of the highest national concern, as essential for the healthy existence and progress of every nation which is exposed to the relentless industrial warfare which is going on all over the civilised world.

MORAL PROGRESS.

Enough has been said above to show the need for a University such as it is proposed to establish, to help the diffusion of general, scientific and technical education as a means of preserving or reviving national industries and of utilising the natural resources of India and thereby augmenting national wealth. But mere industrial advancement cannot ensure happiness and prosperity to any people; nor can it raise them in the scale of nations. Moral progress is even more necessary for that purpose than material. Even industrial prosperity cannot be attained in any large measure without mutual confidence and loyal co-operation amongst the people who must associate with each other for the purpose. These qualities can prevail and endure only amongst those who are upright in their dealings, strict in their observance of good faith, and steadfast in their loyalty to truth. And such men can be generally met with in a society only when that society is under the abiding influence of a great religion acting as a living force.

The importance of providing for the education of the teachers of a religion so ancient, so widespread, and so deep-rooted in the attachment of its followers, is quite obvious. If no satisfactory provision is made to properly educate men for this noble calling, ill-educated or uneducated and incompetent men must largely fill it. This can only mean injury to the cause of religion and loss to the community. Owing to the extremely limited number of teachers of religion who are qualified by their learning and character to discharge their holy functions, the great bulk of the
Hindus including princes, noblemen, the gentry, and—barring exceptions here and there—even Brahmans, have to go without any systematic religious education or spiritual ministrations. This state of things is in marked contrast with that prevailing in the civilised countries of Europe and America, where religion, as a rule, forms a necessary part of education; where large congregations assemble in churches to hear sermons preached by well-educated clergymen, discharging their duties under the control of well-established Church Governments or religious societies. But though the fact is greatly to be deplored, it is not to be wondered at. The old system which supplied teachers of religion has, in consequence of the many vicissitudes through which India has passed, largely died out. It has not yet been replaced by modern organisations to train such teachers. To remove this great want, to make suitable provision for satisfying the religious requirements of the Hindu community, it is proposed to establish a large school or college at the University to educate teachers of the Hindu religion. It is proposed that they should receive a sound grounding in liberal education, make a special and thorough study of their own sacred books, and a comparative study of the great religious systems of the world; in other words, that they should receive at least as good an education and training as ministers of their religion as Christian missionaries receive in their own.

Of course, several chairs will have to be created to meet the requirements of the principal denominations of Hindus. How many these should be can only be settled later on by a conference of the representative men of the community. But there seems to be no reason to despair that an agreement will be arrived at regarding that theological department of the University. Hindus have for ages been noted for their religious toleration. Large bodies of Hindus in the Punjab, who adhere to the ancient faith, revere the Sikh Gurus who abolished castes. The closest ties bind together Sikh and non-Sikh Hindu, and Jains and Agrawals who follow the ancient faith. Followers of the Acharyas of different Sampradayas live and work together as good neighbours and friends. So also do the followers of the Sanatan Dharma and of the Arya Samaj, and of the Brahma Samaj. And they all co-operate in matters where the common interests of the Hindu community as a whole are involved. The toleration and good feeling have not been on the wane; on the contrary, they have been steadily growing. There is visible at present a strong desire for greater union and solidarity among all the various sections of the community, a growing consciousness of communities which bind them together and which make them sharers in sorrow and in joy: and it may well be hoped that this growing feeling will make it easier than before to adjust differences and to promote brotherly good
feeling and harmonious co-operation even in the matter of providing for the religious needs of the different sections of the community.\textsuperscript{17}

\textbf{THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY.}

The success of a large scheme like this depends upon the approval and support of (1) the Government, (2) the Ruling Princes, and (3) the Hindu public. The scheme is bound to succeed if it does not fail to enlist sympathy and support from these directions. To establish these essential conditions of success, nothing is more important than that the Governing Body of the University should be of sufficient weight to command respect; that its constitution should be so carefully considered and laid down as to secure the confidence of the Government on the one hand and of the Hindu Princes and the public on the other. To ensure this, it is proposed that as soon as a fairly large sum has been subscribed, a Committee should be appointed to prepare and recommend a scheme dealing with the constitution and functions of the Senate, which shall be the supreme governing body of the University, and of the Syndicate, which shall be the Executive of the University. It is also proposed that apart from these there should be an Academic Council of the University, which should have well-defined functions—partly advisory and partly executive, in regard to matters relating to education, such as has been recommended in the case of the University of London by the Royal Commission on University Education in London. The scheme must of course be submitted to Government for their approval before it can be finally settled.\textsuperscript{18}

So far as this particular movement for a Hindu University is concerned, it must be gratefully acknowledged that it has received much kind sympathy and encouragement from high officials of Government from the beginning. As one instance of it, reference may be made to the latter of the Hon’ble Sir James La Touohe, the late Lieutenant Governor of the U.P., and now a member of the India Council, quoted at the commencement of this note, wherein he said:—“It the cultured classes throughout India are willing to establish a Hindu University with its Colleges clustered round it, they have my best wishes for its success.” Several high officials of beginning should be made, which part or parts of the scheme it would be possible and desirable to take up first and which afterwards, and what practical shape should be given to them, can only be formulated by experts advising with an approximate idea of the fund which are likely to be available for expenditure and any general indication of the wishes of the donors. It is proposed that as soon as sufficient funds have been collected to ensure a beginning made, an Educational Organisation Committee should be appointed to formulate such proposals. The
same Committee may be asked to make detailed proposals regarding the scope and character of the courses in the branch or branches that they may recommend to be taken up, regarding also the staff and salaries, the equipment and appliances, the libraries and laboratories, the probable amount of accommodation and the buildings, etc., which will be required to give effect to their proposals.\textsuperscript{19}

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At the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council held on the 22nd March 1915, the Hon. Sir Harcourt Butler moved for leave to introduce the Benares Hindu University Bill. Speaking on the motion Pandit Madan Mohan said:

My Lord, I should be wanting in my duty if I allowed this occasion to pass without expressing the deep gratitude that we feel towards Your Excellency for the broad-minded sympathy and large-hearted statesmanship with which Your Excellency has encouraged and supported the movement which has taken its first material shape in the Bill which is before us to-day. I should also be wanting in my duty if I did not express our sincere gratitude to the Hon’ble Sir Harcourt Butler for the generous sympathy with which he has supported and helped us.\textsuperscript{21}

My Lord, I look forward to the day when students and professors, and donors and others interested in the Benares Hindu University will meet on the banks of the Ganges to celebrate the Donors Day; and I feel certain that the name that will stand
at the head of the list on such a day will be the honoured name of Your Excellency, for there is no donor who has made a greater, a more generous gift to this new movement than Your Excellency has done. My Lord, generations of Hindu students yet to come will recall with grateful reverence the name of Your Excellency for having given the start to this University. Nor will they ever forget the debt of gratitude they owe to Sir Harcourt Butler for the help he has given to it.

I should not take up the time of the Council today with a discussion of the provisions of the Bill. The time for it is not yet. But some remarks which have been made point to the existence of certain misapprehensions which might be removed.\textsuperscript{22}

Objection has also been taken to the provision for compulsory religious education in the proposed University. My Lord, to remove that provision would be like cutting the heart out of the scheme. Many people deplore the absence of a provision for religious education in our existing institutions, and it seems that there would not be much reason for the establishment of a new University if it were not that we wish to make up for an acknowledged deficiency in the existing system. It is to be regretted that some people are afraid of the influence of religion; I regret I cannot share their views. That influence is ever ennobling. I believe, my Lord, that where the true religious spirit is inculcated, there must be an elevating feeling of humility. And where there is love of God, there will be a greater love and less hatred of man, and therefore I venture to say that it religious instruction will be made compulsory, it will lead to nothing but good, not only for Hindu students but for other students as well, who will go to the new University.\textsuperscript{23}

My Lord, it has also been said that if sectarian Universities must come into existence, we need not carry sectarianism to an extreme. The Hon’ble Mr. Setalvad has referred to the provision in the Bill that in the University Court, which will be the supreme governing body of the University, none but Hindus are to tube members. The reason for it needs to be explained. The University has to teach the Vedas, the religious Scriptures, and to impart instruction even in rituals and other religions ceremonies which are practised by Hindu. The Bill provides that there shall be two bodies in the institution, the Court and the Senate. The Court will be the administrative body, will deal mainly with matters of finance and general administration, providing means for the establishment of Chairs, hostels and other institution. The Senate will be the academic body, having charge of instruction, examination and discipline of students. Well, membership on the Court has been confined to Hindus in order that Hindus who may make benefactions in favour of the institution should feel satisfied that their charities will be administered by men who will be in religious sympathy with them and in a position to appreciate their
motives and their desires.\textsuperscript{24}

I should like to say one word more with regard to the provision that religious instruction should be compulsory in the case of Hindu students. It has been said that we should not make it compulsory even for Hindu students, as it might keep some Hindu students who do not desire to receive religious instruction, from the benefit of education at the Hindu University. But my Lord, in the first place, the general religious instruction which will be imparted will be such as will be acceptable to all sections of the Hindu community. In the second place, a number of Hindu students at present attend missionary institutions where the study of religion is compulsory. So I hope that even those Hindu students who may not appreciate the teaching of religion, will not be kept away from the proposed University on the ground that religious instruction will be compulsory there.

I do not think, my Lord, that I need take up more time at present. I beg again to express the gratitude that I am sure millions of Hindus will feel towards Your Excellency’s Government, and personally towards Your Excellency, and towards Sir Harcourt Butler, when they hear of the Bill which has been introduced here today\textsuperscript{25}

At the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council held on the 1st October 1915, the Hon’ble Sir Harcourt Butler moved that the Report of the Select Committee on the Bill be taken into consideration. The Hon’ble Pandit, in supporting the Bill, spoke as follows.\textsuperscript{26}

My Lord, it is my pleasing duty to offer my hearty thanks to your Excellency, to the Hon’ble Sir Harcourt Butler, and to the members of this Council for the very generous support extended to this measure for the establishment of a Hindu University. My Lord, the policy of which it is the product is the generous policy of trust in the people and of sympathy with them in their hopes and aspirations, which has been the keynote of your Excellency’s administration.

The history of this movement hardly requires to be repeated here. But it may interest some of its friends to know that it was in 1904, that the first meeting was held at which, under the presidency of His Highness the Maharajah of Benares, the idea of such a University was promulgated. Owing, however, to a variety of causes into which it is not necessary to enter here, it was not until 1911 that the matter was taken up in real earnest. From 1911 to 1915 was not too long a period for the birth of a University when we remember that the London University took seven years to be established from the time the idea was first taken up.\textsuperscript{27}

My Lord, in this connection, we must not overlook the work done by my Muhammadan friends. The idea of establishing a Muslim University was vigorously
worked up early in the year 1911 when His Highness the Aga Khan made a tour in the country to enlist sympathy and support for it. Your Excellency was pleased to express your appreciation of the effort so made when replying to an address at Lahore. You were pleased to speak approvingly of the spirited response made by the Muhammadan community to the appeal for a Muslim University recently carried throughout the length and breadth of India under the brilliant leadership of His Highness the Agha Khan. We are thus indebted for a part of our success to our Muhammadan brethren, for the work which they did as pioneers in our common cause. 28

My Lord, I have carefully read the criticisms that have been levelled against the Bill before us, and it is only fair that I should explain the attitude and action of the promoters of the Hindu University. We are very thankful to the Secretary of State for according his sanction to the proposal to establish what have been described as denominational Universities—which marks a new and liberal departure in the educational policy of the Government. But our thanks are due, in a larger measure, to the Government of India who have from the beginning given to the movement their consistent and generous support. In the first proposals which we placed before the Government, we desired that the Viceroy and Governor-General of India should be the Chancellor, ex-officio, of the University. 29

My Lord, some of my countrymen, who are keenly interested in the proposed University and the educational movement which it represents, have some what misunderstood the position of the Hindu University Society and of the promoters of the University in respect of some of the powers vested in the Visitor. They seem to think that we have agreed to those powers without demur. That is not so. Sir Harcourt Butler knows that in regard to some of these powers, I have almost—I should not say—irritated him, but certainly gone beyond what be considered to be the proper limits in pressing for certain omissions. We have fully represented our views to the Government whenever we thought it proper to do so. But having done our duty in that direction, we have agreed to accept what the Government has decided to give. I hope, my Lord, the future will prove that we have not acted wrongly.

My Lord, I thank God that this movement to provide further and better facilities for high education for our young men has come to bear fruit in the course of these few years. It will not be out of place to mention here that one of the most fascinating ideas for which we are indebted to Lord Curzon, was the idea of a real residential and teaching University in India. I am tempted to quote the words in which his Lordship expressed his ideal of the University which he desired to see
established in this country.

“What ought the ideal University to be in India as else where?” said Lord Curzon. ‘As the name implies, it ought to be a place where all knowledge is taught by the best teachers to all who seem to acquire it, where the knowledge is always turned to good purposes, and where its boundaries are receiving a constant extension.’

My Lord, though this noble wish was not realised in the time of Lord Curzon, I am sure he will be pleased to hear that such a University has come into existence—or rather is coming into existence—through the generous support of your Excellency’s Government.\(^3\)

It is still more pleasing to think that the University that is coming to be will be better in one respect than the University outlined by Lord Curzon, because it will make religion an integral part of the education that will be provided. My Lord, I believe in the living power of religion, and it is a matter of great satisfaction to us to know, that your Excellency is strongly in favour of religious education. The want of such education in our schools and Colleges has long been felt. I believe that the absence of any provision for religious education in the otherwise excellent system which Government has introduced and worked for the last sixty years in this country, has been responsible for many unfortunate results. I do not wish to dwell upon them. I am thankful to think that this acknowledged deficiency is going to be removed at the proposed important centre of education, which is happily going to be established at a place which may well be described as the most important centre of the religion and learning of the Hindus.\(^3\)

My Lord, some well-meaning friends have been apprehensive lest we may not agree at the Hindu University as to what the religious education of our youths should be. This is due to a misapprehension. We have, no doubt, many differences among us; we are divided by many sects and forms of worship. Considering that we embrace a population of nearly 250 million, it should not surprise any one that we have so many sects and divisions among us. But, my Lord, in spite of these differences, there is a body of truths and precepts which are accepted by all denominations of our people. For sixteen years and more religious instruction has been compulsory at the Central Hindu College at Benares.\(^3\)

I do not think, my Lord, that I should be justified in taking up the time of the Council any further. I once more beg to offer my thanks to your Excellency, to Sir Harcourt Butler and to the Government of India, for helping this University to
come into existence, and I conclude with the earnest hope and prayer, that this centre of light and life, which is coming into existence will produce students who will not only be intellectually equal to the best of their fellow-students in other parts of the world, but will also be trained to live noble lives, to love God, to love their country and to be loyal to the Crown.33

The existing provision of the law are amply sufficient to effectively prevent as well as to punish any attempt to promote sedition or to disturb the public tranquillity, which might be made by persons who are hostile to Government and whose number is small; that the great bulk of the people are loyal to the core, and are more then ever inclined to co-operate with Government in maintaining law and order; that the policy of conciliation is in these circumstances the only safe and wise policy; that it should be steadily and earnestly pursued; that unless some overpowering causes intervene, nothing should be done which is likely to interfere with the success of that policy. I believe that no such causes demand a continuation of an Act of an abnormal character, which must operate against the return of normal relations between the Government and the people. For these reasons, I beg humbly to oppose the motion which is now before the Council.34

REFERENCES

1. Annie Besant was the founder of the College for higher learning in Banaras. Later on, with the ardent and sincere efforts of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, the Banaras Hindu University was founded. Indeed the University gained splendid progress under his patronage, and guidance. See for details the Commemoration Volume.

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid; Also see the Speeches of Annie Besant.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. A comprehensive scheme having deep bearing on Banaras Hindu University was published in July 1911. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was appointed its Vice-Chancellor and remained in that position for more than two decades. He also held the position of Proctor of the University. The first meeting was presided over by the Maharaja of Banaras. (For details see the Commemoration Volume.)
11. Ibid.

12. The objects of the University were clarified vividly.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. The medium of instruction in the initial stage was Hindi.

16. The need for such a University was emphasised in clear words of the founder and his associates. It was in fact for the moral progress of the younger generation by inculcating the spirit of Indian nationalism.

17. Ibid.

18. The constitution of the University was in very clear language.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Introduction of Banaras Hindu University Bill by Sir Harcourt Butler on 22 March 1915. See the details in Imperial Legislative Council.

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Speech of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya regarding the Bill proposed by Sir Harcourt Butler. op. cit.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid.