Hindu Mahasabha President

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was a sincere worker of the Hindu Mahasabha who presided over its sessions. Undoubtedly he was a staunch Hindu and probably it was the reason that the word ‘Hindu’ was attached with the name of the University at Banaras.\(^1\) But he was secular in several ways and did not raise the question of caste and creed while he delivered public and official speeches. His addresses will give vent to his feelings thus in Belgaum, Madras, Guwahati and Banaras.\(^2\)

**ALL-INDIA HINDU MAHASABHA\(^3\)**
Belgaum—December 27th 1924

The Special Session of the Hindu mahasabha opened on Dec. 27th in the Congress Pnadal at Belgaum under the presidency of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. The address of the President referred to the necessity of organisation of a Hindu proselytizing mission and of focussing Hindu opinion on the question of representation in the Council and the Services. He also touched on the question of untouchability and the Non-Brahmin movement. Attendance was very large and included Gandhi, C.R. Das, Lala Lajpat rai, Shaukat Ali, Dr. Mahmud, Mohamed Ali, Pandit Motilal Nehru, N.C. Kelkar, Hasrat Mohani, Swami Shraddhanand, Dr. Moonje, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and thousands of delegates.\(^4\)

Rao J. Gangadhar Khote, Chairman of the Reception Committee, said that the special session had been called to consider the position of the Hindu society both politically and socially at that critical juncture. The recent Hindu-Muslim riots and conversion of untouchables into other religious had proved the weakness of Hindus and Hindu society. To remove these grave short-coming the Mahasabha had been organised.\(^5\)

**The Presidential Address**

Pandit Malaviya in delivering his presidential speech pleaded justification for the creation of the Sabha and explained its scope. He said the Mahasabha came into existence only a few years ago. There were some who considered it a departure from the right path and thought that as a communal organisation it was likely to clash
with the national organisation of the Congress. Pandit Malaviya dispelled that suspicion. It would be a shame if any Hindu opposed the National Congress. Their object was to supplement and to strengthen the Congress. The Necessity for organising the Mahasabha had arisen because the Congress being a political body could now deal with questions which affected various communities in social and other non-political spheres. In this country they had more than one culture. Muslims cherished their own culture. Hindus must cherish their own and preserve it and spread it. Political problems were ephemeral; they come and go as Empires were built up and disappeared. But the culture of a people, their social institutions, their literature and art, were of durable value and must be preserved. He wished with all his heart that Hindus and Muslims studied each other’s culture to appreciate each other better. Hindus must preserve and popularise their culture as Muslims were doing. On this platform had met Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists who had inherited a common culture. Where, he asked, could they find a common platform to unite all these factors in Hindu society except on the platform of the Mahasabha?

Referring to the recent Hindu-Muslim riots, Pandit Malaviya said he was convinced that but for the weakness and cowardice of Hindus some of them could have been averted. These disturbances had created a situation of national importance. It was therefore a national necessity that the weakness of Hindus which had brought some disturbances about should be removed. What were the causes which brought about that weakness? Firstly, Hindus had forgotten the tenets of their religion. These must be spread. Secondly they were physically weak. This was due mainly to deterioration in the system of marriages. Nowhere in the world marriage had been placed on a higher basis then in India were no one could marry before 25. Now they found child-widow. This state of affairs must disappear as it had weakened the community physically. To remove such social evils, where could they find a better platform than as the Mahasabha?26

Then again there was the dispute about possession of the Buddha Gaya Temple. A Buddhist friend had come from Ceylon to attend their meeting. The question of management of the temple was for decision between them and the Buddhists, and where was a more competent body than the Mahasabha to deal with such questions and settle them amicably?

Then there were questions about Non-Brahmins and Untouchability. Unfortunately by the introduction of the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms there had occurred divisions and groups were no one suspected they would occur. Both Brahmins and Non-Brahmins were inheritors of a common culture. They should
have lived like brothers. Brahmans should value ability and skill wherever it was found. Indeed the Brahmans’s reverence and worship of Rama, Krishna and Buddha who were not Brahmans showed that Brahmans did not hesitate to worship ability wherever it was found. He was sorry that for a few loaves and fishes of office, and even a few Ministerships which were trifles before the question of unity amongst Hindus, the split had occurred. They should rejoice in each others’ happiness and strength and there was no occasion for quarrel unless a man’s vision was perverted, vitiated and diseased. Was not Mahatma Gandhi a Non-Brahmin and was it not that no man had roused greater homage of the country than Mahatma Gandhi? He appealed to his Brahmin and Non-Brahmin friends to remove misunderstandings, and what better platform was there than was offered by the Mahasabha?

As for the position of the untouchables, he thanked Mahatma Gandhi for the great impetus he had given to the movement. The speaker said, leaving aside the political side of the swelling cwensus figure, they owed a duty to their brether untouchables who were common inheritors of their civilisation and culture and were part of Hindu Society. The Mahasabha had voted in favour of their admission to schools, permission to them to draw water from public wells, and to have Darshan at temples, but as the Mahasabha believed in non-violence and to kill sentiments and prejudices by love and not force, it had also laid down that, where this was not possible at present, new institutions, wells and temples be built for untouchables.

Continuing Pandit Malaviya said that for centuries Muhammadans had been converting Hindus and the majority of the Muslims of India were converts. Numerous Christian Missions were also carrying on a campaign of proselytisation. Hindu Shastras had also enjoined on them to spread their knowledge among others, but this duty they had hitherto neglected and only his Arya Samaj brethren has done something in this direction. Therefore the question of having a Hindu Mission for proselytisation had become a very pressing necessity in the situation created in this country by the activities of Muslim and Christian Missions.

There was another aspect of the problem which had assumed importance. The Muslim League was putting forward a demand on behalf on Muslims in the matter of communal representation in all elected bodies and services. The speaker recalled that in 1906 Sir Ibrahim Rahimtullah, presiding over the League, had indicated that communal representation would be required only for a very short time. The Lucknow Pact was later on concluded. He was entirely opposed to communal representation in national interests, but they could not give it up until Mohammedans voluntarily agreed to its abandonment. He was grieved to find communal feeling intensified by this representation. “I consider that a national
Government and a communal administration are impossible. They cannot exist together. If communalism dominates the affairs of the country to the extent to which it is dominating the affairs of this land, I feel upon all consideration that it would be wrong to the country to have a full system of national Government established in India. I do not believe communalism and nationalism can co-exist. One must disappear before the other comes in.”

Continuing, Pandit Malaviya said now that the question of communal representation was being raised by Muslims, the Hindu Maha Sabha’s work lay in focussing Hindu opinion on this question and to voice it when anybody undertook to discuss the question with a view to reconcile the interests of both communities. Concluding Pandit Malaviya put in a strong plea for unity and asked all Hindus and Muhammadans to become Nationalists to the core.

RESOLUTIONS

Next day, Dec. 28th, the Maha Sabha met to pass resolutions. A resolution was moved by Satyamurti to appoint a committee “to ascertain and formulate Hindu opinion on the subject of Hindu-Muslim problems in their relation to the question of further constitutional reforms.” This was passed.

Lala Lajpat Rai was the Chairman of this Committee and three Hindu representatives from every province were elected to form it. They include Raja Sir Rampal Singh, Chintamani, Raja Narendra Nath, Dwarkanath, Babu Rajendra Prasad, Dr. Moonje, Mr. N.C. Kelkar, M.R. Jayakar, T. Prakasam, Satyamurti, C.R. Reddy, Karnadikar, Rai Yatindranath Chowdhuri and Jairamdas Doulatram. The total membership was 23.10

Satyamurti explaining the scope of the resolution said that it was for the first time giving a distinct political orientation to the activities of the Hindu Maha Sabha. The Sabha would not only be confined to the social and religious uplift of Hindus, but would also focus and express Hindu opinion on political problems. In fact, at the present stage of political evolution of the country the best contribution Hindus could make to the commonweal was by organising themselves politically, openly and deliberately. Today the fact was that Hindus, though strongest in numbers and the inheritors of a great civilization and doing everything which made for culture, were the weakest and the most disorganised. He believed after his enquiries in Malabar that the extent of the Moplah rebellion was largely due to Hindu cowardice and that despite all pious resolutions Hindu-Moslem unity would bot be achieved unless Hindus organised themselves, reclaimed untouchables, and all stood shoulder to shoulder. The distressing fight between Non-Brahmins and
Brahmins for loaves and fishes would stop if Hinduism was revived and all knew that they had equal rights as Hindus. Some said that the organisation of the Maha Sabha was creating distrust among Muslims. There was no ground for this suspicion. On the other hand, the Hindu Maha Sabha would set an example that communalism could be reconciled with nationalism. "We shall be showing how can produce nationalism out of our communalism. We shall be showing to various organisations in India how to subordinate communalism to a higher, nobler and more inspiring ideal of nationalism." There was the question of communal representation. It was an evil day for India when they agreed to this form of representation. Lucknow Pact was an unfortunate blunder. It sowed the seed which had now resulted in all Muslims, Non-Brahmins Depressed classed and other communities demanding separate representation. All wanted to promote the interests of their communities but non cared for the nation. Of course they could not give it up until the Muslims agreed. It was thought by its framers that the Lucknow Pact was the last word of the subject. Now the demand was put forward for its revision. He was glad to find that Dr. Kitchlew as president of the Khilafat Conference had favoured at mixed electorate which would remove the greater part of the evil of today. The Mahasabha must formulate the Hindu demand on the matter of such representation and the proposed committee would tour all over India and report. The Congress did not express that. Muslims, he said, at the recent occurrences had roused the communal feeling of Hindus and unless progressive leaders led it in the right direction there was the danger of the Mahasabha falling into reactionary hands who might stand in the way of national progress.

Nepal’s Independence

The next resolution moved from the chair expressed deep satisfaction on the recognition of independence of Nepal by the British Government. The Conference also congratulated the Maharaja of Nepal’s Government for its noble decision to completely abolish the system of slavery in his kingdom. The President was authorised to send the resolution to the Prime Minister, Nepal. Pandit Malaviya said Nepal was now the only independent Hindu State in the world and they should therefore rejoice at it. The resolution was carried.

Kohat Riots

T. Prakasam moved a long resolution about Kohat. It expressed grief at the loss sustained by Hindus and Muslims in life and property, the burning of about 473 houses and shops, the desecration or destruction of many temples and Gurdwaras which compelled the entire Hindu and Sikh population to leave Kohat and to seek
shelter in Rawalpindi and other places in the Punjab. The resolution stated that though local authorities were previously informed of the impending danger, they failed to take steps which were necessary to prevent the disturbances and, after it had begun, to quell it, to arrest offenders and to recover looted property, though they could have easily nipped the evil in the bud with the help of small force of non-Mohammedan sepoys or soldiers from the adjoining Cantonment. The Conference thought that the local administration had shown lamentable want of sympathy with the sufferings of penniless and homeless refugees and had been incompetent in dealing with the situation which largely accounted for no reconciliation having been brought about so long between Mohammedans and Hindus of Kohat. The Conference regretted that the Government had accepted the findings of a junior Magistrate on a matter of such grave importance who did not examine Hindus, and that they arrived at conclusions on such findings which were grossly unjust to Hindus.

"The Conference opines that the character of the occurrence demands an independent public enquiry by a committee which would command public confidence and would recommend measures necessary to restore the sense of security among Hindus and compensate them.

'The Conference regrets that the Frontier Government has coerced prominent Hindus of Kohat by arresting them to agree to reconciliation without satisfactory therms being settled, and on the failure of negotiations for which representatives of Kohat Hindus say they are not responsible, it has ordered the arrest and re-arrest of a number of prominent Hindus and Sikhs.

'The Conference urges the Vicroy to release these men of position on bail and to transfer their cases for trial to the Punjab. The Conference appeals for subscription towards the Kohat Refugees’ Fund to be remitted whether to the Punjab National Bank, Lahore, or to the Central Bank of India, Lahore, towards the Hindu Sabha Kohat refugees Relief Fund."

Prakasam narrated his experience of Hindu-Moslem riots in various places like Multan and Saharanpur which he had visited. After Kohat he saw no alternative but to join the Mahasabha.

Lala Lajpat Rai speaking on this resolution made general observations about the position of Hindus, their past greatness and present degradation. He said he had travelled over almost all countries of the world where modern civilization flourished and after close examination he had come back with the conviction that Hindu culture and Hindu ideals were infinitely superior to that of any other nation in the world. This did not mean that Hindus today were praiseworthy. Hindus had totally
degraded themselves and fallen from their ideals and it was because of that that tragedies like Kohat were befalling them. He said the Hindu code of war prohibited attack on children, on women, on the aged, on the unarmed and on he non-combatant. The laws of wars of no other nation were so high. Culture was not judged by wealth or by weapons at the command of a nation, but by its ideal of humanity and its human laws. In this respect the Hindu civilization was the highest and it was this civilization which they inherited, but from which they had fallen. Hindus with a feeling of chivalry and justice were prepared to be quite fair to all communities.

Touching Kohat he asked whether, even admitting that Hindus were at fault, their fault was such that it deserved the punishment inflicted on them. Turning his face towards the dais where Mahatma Gandhi was seated, he said he did not mind whatever concessions Mahatma Gandhi might give to the Muslim community. That did not hurt him, but he appealed to Mahatma Gandhi and others to save Hindus, the inheritors of a great civilization, from the death which threatened them.

Swami Shradhanand said the blood of Kohat had shaken Hindus all over. The time was not for talk but for work. He for one had decided to go and for a month to spread the beds of Kohat refugees and serve them thereby. Impassioned appeals were made by him and Lala Lajpat Rai for funds for relief to which many responded.

Other Resolutions

Pandit Malaviya put several resolutions from the chair which were carried. These included a prayer to the Maharani of Travancore to permit the untouchables the use of public roads about which Vykom Satyagraha was going on, because those roads were already open to men of other religions and to those untouchables who had become converted to other religions.

A other resolution condemned the Gulbarga riots and hoped the Nizam would ensure protection in future and build the temples desecrated.

One resolution urged Brahmins and Non-Brahmins to remove mutual misunderstandings and to become united as part of the Hindu community, brothers in the inheritance of a great culture.

A resolution moved by Dr. Moonje asked Hindus to start Hindu Sabhas all over the country with a view to improve themselves socially and religiously and also to safeguard their political rights.13

A resolution was also passed by the Conference offering condolence on the deaths of the Maharajah of Travancore, Sir Ashutosh Mukerjee, Sir Subramania Iyer, Kanhayalal and others.
Hindu Organisation

The following resolution was passed endorsing the view taken up by the Maha Sabha at the previous Benares and Allahabad sessions:

“Resolved that this Conference supports the resolution passed at the Benares and Prayag sessions of the Hindu Mahasabha and appeals to all Hindus:

(1) To work, so far as it lies in their power, in friendliness and harmony with the other communities in all matters of common national interest;

(2) To promote both religious and secular education among boys and girls of all classes of the community combined with the due observance of the time-honoured system of Brahmacharya and physical culture;

(3) In any even as a rule not to perform the marriages of girls before the age of 12 and of boys before the age of 18;

(4) To organise Samaj Seve-Dals or Social Service Leagues for the service of the community which should co-operate whenever possible which members of other sister communities in maintaining peace;

(5) To study the Hindu language and specially the Nagari characters in which all sacred Hindu scriptures are primarily written;

(6) To take every lawful step to protect laws;

(7) To promote the use of Swadeshi cloth and preferable of hand-spun hand-woven Khaddar;

(8) To organise rathas and satangs in every Hindu Mohalla or ward for religious instruction;

(9) To take all reasonable steps for the education and uplift of those Hindu brethren who are regarded as the depressed classes;

(a) By encouraging the admission of their children to public schools which are open to other children of the followers of other religions also and, when necessary, by establishing separate schools for them;

(b) By removing, with the consent of other residents of the locality, the difficulties in the way of the members of the depressed classes from using public wells and when necessary by having special wells dug for their use; and

(c) By appealing to the adhikaries or managers of temples to offer them, when it may be feasible in conformity with the “maryada” of the institutions, opportunity fro gratifying their laudable desire for Devadarshan.
The Conference also draws the attention of the Hindu public to those Shastric authorities according to which no 'Sparshadosh' is incurred on the occasion of pilgrimage, festivals, marriages on boats during war and similar other occasions.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya mentioned that he had received a suggestion just then that a committee be appointed to consider the Brahmin and Non-Brahmin dispute and another suggested that they should express their opinion about the Madras Religion Endowments Bill. Pandit Malaviya and Gandhi were about to meet in the pandal. These questions would be discussed at the normal annual session of the Maha Sabha next March at Calcutta.\(^{14}\)

The Conference then concluded amidst cheers.

**THE ALL INDIA HINDU MAHASABHA\(^{15}\)**

The special session of the All India Hindu Mahasabha met at the Congress Pandal Madras, On the 29th December at 2. p.m. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya presiding.

Srinivasa Iyengar in proposing Pandit Malaviya to the presidential ... said that Pandit Malaviya had made the Hindu Sabha movement his own. The Sabha was a power in Northern India Panditji is the leader of the Sanatana Hindustan. He, the speaker, considered that the accession of the Panditji to the presidentship of this session was the removal of untouchability from this province. The removal of untouchability could not be done by legislation or by the Congress. The Hindu Sabha alone could do it. The Panditji had helped a good deal in the National Congress to find a solution for the Hindu-Moslem problem. The Sabha was not antagonistic to Mahammadan interest. No one was better fitted to occupy the presidential chair than Panditji. He, the speaker, was sorry to announce the death of Hakim Ajmal Khan who had been ill for some time past. The A.I.C.C passed a resolution of condolence this morning. A similar resolution would, he said, be passed here also. Hakim Ajmal Khan had laboured hard to being about the Hindu-Muslim unity.

The Motion was seconded by C.V. Venkatramana Iyengar, supported by Kumar Gangananda Sinha and carried with acclamation.

Pandit Malaviya then addressed the Conference first in Hindi and than in English. He explained the objects of the Sabha and appealed to all sections of the Hindus to be united.

**Pandit Malaviya's Address**

Ladies and gentlemen, I am very deeply grateful to you for having elected my to preside over this special session of the Hindu Mahasabha. I take this opportunity
to put before you some of the ideals which the Hindu Mahasabha has for its existence and to ask to cooperate in carrying out these ideals. I wish you to remember that this Hindu Mahasabha was never brought into existence as a communal organisation to fight against any community. It is national to the core. Nationalism is as much the creed of the Hindu Mahasabha as Hinduism itself. The main object of the Sabha are (a) to promote greater union and solidarity among all the section of the Hindu community and to unify them closely as parts on one organic whole and (b) to promote good feelings between the Hindus and the other communities in India and to act in a friendly way with them with a view to the attainment of a united self-governing Indian nation. You will see from these objects that they are not and national but entirely consistent with the national aim. Ever since its inception up to date, not a single resolution has been passed by this Sabha which any reasonable man who has any sense of nationalism in him can take exception to. India is the home of the various communities, and Hinduism teaches you to pray for the prosperity and well-being of all the communities, not of one particular community alone. You should act in such a manner as to create harmony between the various communities which will lead the country to a position of power and prosperity. The Hindu Mahasabha does not ask you to exercise your political rights but it tells you what you should do in matters of a socio-religious character.\textsuperscript{16}

The Hindus are asked to look after the education of their children under the Hindu faith just as Christian are looking after the education of their children under the Christian faith and the Muhammadans under the Muslim faith. The Hindus are also asked to look after their own classes of worship in temples. Are not Christian missionaries in India labouring in different fields for the benefit of the people of this country although they are foreigners. The Mussalman preacher (Mullah) considers it his duty to make the principles of his religion known not only to Muslims but also to Non-Muslims so that, they may, if convinced, adopt the Muslim faith. The Christian missionary does the same thing. You do not expect the Mohammedan Mullah or the Christian missionary to look after the Hindu religion. Therefore the Hindus should have their own organisation to look after their socio-religious matters. This is what the great Sri Sankracharya and Sri Ramanujacharya did. Since the advent of the British rule, owing to the glamour of British civilisation, our people and children know more of the Bible and the sermons preached by the Christian missionaries than their own religion, their own Sastras, and Vedas and commentaries. There should be an organisation like the Hindu Mahasabha to do these things. Mr. Srinivasa Iyengar just now told you that the necessity for such an organisation does not exist in this presidency. I regret to say that I widely differ
from my esteemed friend. On the other hand, it is more needed in this presidency than in any other part of the country. The teachings of Sri Sankaracharya, Ramanujacharya and Madvacharya can be popularised in this presidency as you have a good number of learned men in Sanskrit. Just as Christians have institutions to protect orphans and widows, you should also have similar institutions. In Christian schools, Bible classes are compulsory whereas in a Hindu school, religious classes are not compulsory. Hinduism always expects you to adopt an attitude of justice and truth. Do not waste your time in unnecessary discussion over the question as to whether your descent is Aryan or Dravidian. The Brahmin-Non-Brahmin question is, I understand, very keen in this presidency. So far as I know, the division, Brahmin-Non-Brahmin, does not find any place in the Shastras. Our daily national prayer is that all men to whatever community they may belong should flourish on this earth. I appeal to you, Brahmins and Non-Brahmins, to desist from this unsastraic attitude and re-establish brotherly feeling towards one another. If you cannot give up this quarrel, you can never attain freedom and liberty. Your communal controversy has resulted in making you look like a flock of sheep without a shepherd.

Coming to the question of untouchables I am aware that Madras has made great progress in recent years in this respect, but there yet remains more to be achieved especially in the matter of the entry of the so-called untouchables into temples for worship. Every man has got a right to worship God. I appeal to you to remove this disability and the Mahasabha has this question of the removal of untouchability as one of its objects. In Benares, untouchables freely enter the temple of Viswanath and worship God. In the Rama mandir at Ayodhya, the Mahant has not the least objection to the untouchables entering the Mandir. Bagavad-Gita says that the moment a man utters the name of God, he becomes pure. I can multiply instances, where untouchables freely enter places of worship along with higher classes. The mere fact that a man is an untouchable does not disentitle him to enter the temple and worship God, if he is pure in mind. God accepts his prayer and he should therefore be allowed to worship God in temples. God welcomes the man who is morally pure more than the man who is physically pure.

RESOLUTIONS

Hakim Ajmal Khan’s Death

The condolence resolution touching the death of Hakim Ajmal Khan was put from the chair and carried:—“The Hindu Sabha places on record its profound sense of loss which the country has sustained in the sad and sudden death of Hakim Ajmal Khan whose services to the country in the field of medicine and politics are too well
known to require a mention and offers its deep sympathy to his son Hakim Mohamed Jamial Khan and other members of his family.”

Boycott of Simon Commission

The following resolution regarding the boycott of the Simon Commission was moved by Mr. C. Vijiarghavachariar, duly seconded and supported and carried.

“The Hindu Maha Sabha in this special session assembled records in consonance with the strong general feeling of the country its emphatic condemnation of Government in the matter of appointment of the Statutory Commission in violation of the fundamental rights of self-determination and self-government of the people of this country and in defiance of their demands in this connection and is of opinion that this action of the Government is a violation of the promises and pledges made from time to time especially during the great war in appreciation of the great service and immense sacrifices made by this country in the hour of the peril of the Empire and as such it is nothing short of studied insult to the nation.

REFERENCES

1. He was a staunch Hindu, of course with an ardent tinge of secularism in his mind and heart. He was a supporter of Hindu-Muslim unity.

2. Ibid.

3. Though a staunch Congressman till his death, he took social advantage on the Hindu Maha Sabha forum.

4. See his Speeches and Writings.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Significant Resolutions passed at the session. See N.N. Mitra, Indian Annual Register.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Lala Lajpat Rai and Swami Shraddhanand a spoke on the Kohat Riots.

13. Dr. Moonje requested the Hindus to start Hindu Sabhas all over the country. See N.N. Mitra, op. cit.

14. Ibid.
15. The Madras session was historic in contents, Malaviya emphasised development of education among the Hindu children.

16. For details see his speech at the Madras Session.


21. Resolutions passed.