

WAKE UP, INDIA

A PLEA FOR SOCIAL REFORM

BY

ANNIE BESANT

THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

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THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE

Adyar, Madras, India

To
THE MOTHERLAND

FOREWORD

THESE lectures were delivered in Madras in October and November, 1913, to mark the beginning of an earnest concerted movement for the uplifting of India. Religious reform has been brought about, very largely by the efforts of the Theosophical Society and various religious bodies. Much has been done for educational reform. The Indian National Congress and its adherents have laboured splendidly for political reform. A comparatively small body, composed partly of Freethinkers and partly of Theosophists, have worked with much self-sacrifice in the field of social reform.

These lectures are intended especially to help the last, whose work is the hardest and the most thankless of all. The details of a new organisation for social reform will be found at the end of this volume, and it is intended to supplement, not to supplant, the societies already in the field. In the Order of Service of the T. S. there are several Indian Leagues which have been toiling for years for one or other of the reforms dealt with in these lectures, and much quiet and useful work has been done by them. The present movement is but an enlarged continuation of that work, and is intended to make it more public and more effective.

May the Guardian of India bless this effort inspired by Him.

ANNIE BESANT

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BROTHERS OF SERVICE

Brothers of Service Series No. 1

CONFERENCE OF THEOSOPHICAL WORKERS
AT ADYAR

"THEOSOPHY must be made practical" was a sentence written and published long ago by one of Those whom Theosophists regard as Masters. Since Mrs. Annie Besant came to India in 1893, she has been seeking for ways of service to India, so that the country of her adoption might rise in the scale of nations, and take the world-position to which her past entitles her and which her future will justify. Rightly or wrongly, she judged that the great Forward Movement must begin with a revival of spirituality, for national self-respect could only be aroused, and the headlong rush towards imitation of western methods could only be checked, by substituting spirituality and idealism for materialism. Great success attended the work, and she then added to it educational activities, so as to appeal to the citizens of the future and shape their aspirations towards Nationhood, as an integral part of the coming World-Empire. Cautiously she carried on some Social Reform Activities, organising propaganda against child-marriage, and in favour of foreign-travel, helping the latter by the establishment of an Indian Hostel in London, and of a

Committee of friendly Theosophists who would welcome youths arriving in England as strangers. For many years many of her more attached followers have been pledged to delay the marrying of their children for some years beyond the custom of their caste and neighbourhood. In politics, she has urged the larger ideals, and has, especially in England, spoken for the just claims of India.

Now another step has been taken, and some of the best T. S. and E. S. workers enrolled themselves on the 20th September, 1913, in a band who have taken the following sweeping promise :

"Believing that the best interests of India lie in her rising into ordered freedom under the British Crown, in the casting away of every custom which prevents union among all who dwell within her borders, and in the restoration to Hinduism of social flexibility and brotherly feeling,

" I PROMISE :

" 1. To disregard all restrictions based on Caste.

" 2. Not to marry my sons while they are still minors, nor my daughters till they have entered their seventeenth year. ('Marry' includes any ceremony which widows one party on the death of the other.)

" 3. To educate my wife and daughters—and the other women of my family so far as they will permit—to promote girls' education, and to discountenance the seclusion of women.

" 4 To promote the education of the masses as far as lies in my power.

" 5. To ignore all colour distinctions in social and political life, and to do what I can to promote the free entry of coloured races into all countries on the same footing as white immigrants.

" 6. To actively oppose any social ostracism of widows who remarry.

" 7. To promote union among the workers in the fields of spiritual, educational, social and political progress, under the headship and direction of the Indian National Congress."

Breach of any clause entails expulsion from the organisation. Those who are not prepared to take the whole of this, may take any clause or clauses which they feel they can work for. Thus some who are in Government Service, take all but 7, as they cannot participate in the Indian National Congress as a movement. Non-Hindūs take clauses 4, 5 and 7.

On the 21st another meeting was held of all who were working for education, or social or political reform. Various matters were discussed, and the members agreed to do everything possible in their respective neighbourhoods to unify the various bodies engaged in progressive work; to establish Libraries for books about the four departments of the forward movement; to form translation committees for the publication of leaflets and pamphlets for propaganda purposes. The co-operative movement was recognised as one of vital importance in the Department of Social Reform.

Mrs. Annie Besant's carefully planned and sequential work of the last twenty years seems to be issuing in her carrying with her the bulk of the Theosophical Society—while guarding it from committing itself *as a whole* to any special opinions or activities—along the line of National Service to India, just as in England she is leading the way along a similar path, ventilating plans for profound social reorganisation, with love instead of hatred as an inspiration. She aims at the ever-closer union of the British and Indian races by mutual understanding and mutual respect. The present bold step has been led up to very gradually and quietly, and its effect on Indian public life will be watched with interest.

Brothers of Service Series No. 2

FOR THE UPLIFT OF INDIA

SOME earnest workers for Social and Religious Reform have determined to make a resolute effort to serve India by bringing about the changes necessary to enable her to take her equal place among the self-governing nations which owe allegiance to the British Crown. They are prepared to sacrifice themselves for this purpose, and to face the difficulties in the way of all who are ahead of their time, allying themselves with all who are working for the same end. With this object in view they have taken the following promise:

"Believing that the best interests of India lie in her rising into ordered freedom under the British Crown, in the casting away of every custom which prevents union among all who dwell within her borders, and in the restoration to Hindūism of social flexibility and brotherly feeling,

"I PROMISE:

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" 6. To actively oppose any social ostracism of widows who remarry.

" 7. To promote union among the workers in the fields of spiritual, educational, social and political progress, under the headship and direction of the Indian National Congress."

Those who cannot take the whole of this promise may choose any one or more clauses of it, which they feel they can honestly carry out. Everyone who takes the whole, or any part of it, must understand that he must personally maintain the principles he has accepted, and must face, for himself and his family, any social difficulties that may arise in consequence of it.

It is earnestly hoped that many religious Hindūs will join this band of workers, in order that they may preserve to India the ancient and priceless religion of Hindūism, now threatened with decay by its practical separation from the Movement of Progress in India. The splendid heritage of spirituality and philosophy transmitted from the past is in danger of being identified with a narrow and unprogressive orthodoxy; the life of a religion is shown by its power to adapt itself to new conditions, and while its roots are deeply struck into the past, its branches must spread far and wide, and shelter all progressive movements into which the life of the Nation is flowing. Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Islām, are moving forward towards a future in which all shall dwell together in civic amity, and shall co-operate for the

common good. Hinđūism, the oldest and the most widely spread faith in India, must take her place with the sister faiths, and must no longer stand apart in social isolation. Let her cast away the unessentials, and cling only to the essentials—the Immanence of God and the Solidarity of Man. All gracious customs and elevating traditions may be followed by her children, but not imposed on the unwilling, nor used as barriers to prevent social union. So shall she become a unifier instead of a divider, and again assert her glory as the most liberal of religions, the model of an active spirituality which inspires intellectual vigour, moral purity, and national prosperity.

ANNIE BESANT

Packets of this leaflet, containing 500 copies may be had for Rs. 6/- 1,000 Rs. 10/- post free.

Brothers of Service Series No. 3

THE STALWARTS' PLEDGE

" BELIEVING that the best interests of India lie in her rising into ordered freedom under the British Crown, in the casting away of every custom which prevents union among all who dwell within her borders, and in the restoration to Hinduism of social flexibility and brotherly feeling,

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" 5. To ignore all colour distinctions in social and political life, and to do what I can to promote the free entry of coloured races into all countries on the same footing as white immigrants.

" 6. To actively oppose any social ostracism of widows who remarry.

"7. To promote union among the workers in the fields of spiritual, educational, social and political progress, under the leadership and direction of the Indian National Congress."

(Date).....

(Signature).....

(Address).....

.....

.....

Those who are not prepared to take the whole of this, may take any clause or clauses which they feel they can work for, writing these out and signing them. Thus some who are in Government Service, take all but (7), as they cannot participate in the Indian National Congress as a movement.

* All communications should be sent to

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