

DOCUMENTATION CENTRE

University of Durban-Westville

ACCESSION NO. 1/442

Printed by
UNIVERSAL PRINTING WORKS
53 Beatrice Street, Durban

The
Hindu Heritage
in
South Africa

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Published by
THE SOUTH AFRICAN HINDU MAHA SABHA
49 Lorne Street, Durban
November 1960

stark relief the naked, essential, religious aspect alone. There will be the symbolic drapery and other embellishments to emphasise the significance of marriage and its relationship to Dharma.

There was a time until quite recently when festivals and ceremonies were built elaborately and intricately round some event of historic or religious importance to Hindus, such as the birthday of an Avatara, or of some great religious personality, the symbolic representation of the conquest of some evil power by Divine Grace, the New Year Day and the worship of certain attributes of the Divine, e.g., Brahma, Vishnu, Siva, Durga, Luxmi, and Saraswati. Special *pujas* and various other observances centring round these show evidence of declining interest and popularity.

Among the young, ignorance was widespread as to the origin and purpose of these "religious occasions". In a vague way it suggested to many opportunities for feasting and rejoicing under the banner of religion. Such a suggestion was not entirely without foundation, for there was much feasting and merry-making with very little religious practice about some of these occasions.

With the awakening of religious consciousness among the more educated and imaginative, a fresh interest in these religious events punctuating the Hindu calendar, has been revived. The realisation that these special occasions, commemorations and celebrations

could be employed as a means of importing the real philosophy and religious principle inherent in them or associated with their conception, has shifted the emphasis from blind faith to purposeful enlightenment of the fundamental aspect of Hinduism.

A study of the celebration of Krishna Jayanti which is increasing in popularity annually, illustrates the change that is taking place. As an even commemorating the anniversary of the birth of Lord Krishna, one would expect that the events preceding and related to his birth, his death, and some details about his life and work would form the central theme to be underlined on such an occasion. Because of the enigma surrounding Krishna's personality, the myths and legends that have grown round him as an epic character, and many other mystic factors not easily appreciated by the ordinary mind—even scholars have been baffled—there is a marked shift of emphasis from Mathura, Gokul and Brindaban to Kurekshetra, in order to focus attention on the Bhagvat Gita, the nectar of Hinduism which draws its spiritual essence directly from the Upanishads of the Vedas.

This new attitude is resulting in an increasing emphasis on the fundamental and the cardinal and characterises the change taking place in the profession and practice of Hinduism today in this country. What the precise scope and form of Hinduism will be at any particular time in the future, I must confess, is beyond my imagination.



Ambassadors of Hindu Culture, Religion and Philosophy

By SOOKRAJ CHOTAI

THE Hindus who migrated to this country under the indentured system brought with them their religious beliefs and rituals, traditional practices and customs, music and art, language and dressing, and feasts and festivals. But as the majority of them came from the lower ranks of society they were in the main illiterate. There was very little sign of social, religious or cultural awareness, but nevertheless within the hearts of many there was hidden the germ of religious and national pride, inherited from their ancestors. At the first opportunity, after the demoralising effects of the system under which they had come and the humiliating treatment which they had received at the hands of their masters had disappeared on the expiry of their indenture, they blossomed into their own, exhibiting the strength of their spiritual background and the fragrance of their religious observances. They banded themselves together, contributed their mite from the niggardly sum they earned and established small schools for the teaching of their mother-tongue and built temples to satisfy their spiritual needs. In spite of their attempts to keep Hinduism alive some of the Hindus who had received English education were attracted to the western way of life, whilst others, mainly the ignorant mass, observed alien festivals and practices. The situation need a saviour.

August 5th, 1905, was indeed an auspicious day when Professor Bhai Parmanand set foot on the shores of South Africa. It was through the initiative and zeal of Mr. Mokam Chand Varman, who was very much concerned about the degeneration of Hindu society, that Professor Bhai Parmanand was sent out to this country by Mahatma Hansraj, the Principal of Lahore College, India, as a torch-bearer of the sublime teachings of Hinduism. Being an

excellent orator both in English and Hindi, Bhaiji was able to attract within a very short time thousands of followers. Though he was an ardent Arya Samajist he concerned himself with the unification of all the different linguistic and denominational groups of Hindus and to achieve this he established Hindu Young Men's Associations (H.Y.M.A.'s) wherever he went. Eloquent addresses on Hindu religion and culture were delivered by him in all the main centres of South Africa. In Johannesburg the chairman of the reception committee was Mahatma Gandhi. Professor Bhai Parmanand stayed in this country for just over four months and, therefore, was not able to stabilise his work but still he succeeded in raising Hinduism to an exalted place. The H.Y.M.A. of Pietermaritzburg stands as a monument to his work.

The religious fervour created by Bhai Parmanand continued to exist after his departure. Efforts were made to invite another preacher but it took almost three years before success was attained. It was on 4th October, 1908, that a large crowd waited at the Durban harbour with enthusiasm and excitement to welcome a Sannyasi who was later to become their guru (preceptor). He was none other than His Holiness Swami Shankeranandji. His tall and lovable figure, clothed in saffron robes, was at once inspiring and magnetic. He received a reception befitting royalty. From the very moment he landed he began to radiate spiritual energy and religious consciousness.

His brilliant discourses covering many aspects of life—culture, religion, civilisation, ceremonies, mother-tongue education, faith in God—were listened to with rapt attention. In his lectures he laid stress on the observance of Hindu festivals, the performance of ceremonies and the importance of the mother-

tongue. Swamiji exhorted his people to celebrate Deepavali instead of alien festivals, some of which had become the principal festivals of the Hindus. He introduced a procession of raths (chariots) and explained the significance of the Births of Lord Rama and Lord Krishna.

The message of Swamiji reached every nook and corner of Natal. There was a demand for him everywhere. He was an eloquent orator, being endowed with a powerful voice and possessing an excellent command of the English language. His lectures always left behind an indelible impress on the minds of his audience which in most places included Europeans who had become his admirers. In order to consolidate his work, just as Professor Bhai Parmanand had established H.Y.M.A.'s, he founded Veda Dharma Sabhas (V.D.S.'s) at various centres. The one in Pietermaritzburg, which he formed on 10th April, 1909, is testimony to his zealous missionary work there. When his work was beginning to gain momentum he was called away to India to see his ailing guru, Swami Atmanandji. Within a year he returned to continue with his work. On 31st May, 1912, he founded the South African Hindu Maha Sabha. He did not confine his work to Natal but travelled to the principal cities of the Transvaal and the Cape, enchanting everyone with his masterly exposition of the Vedic religion. He left for India suddenly on 17th May, 1913. His service to the cause of Hinduism in South Africa is immeasurable. He will continue to live enshrined in the hearts of thousands of Hindus in this country.

The missionary work of the Swamiji was continued by Pandit Bhawani Dayal (later known as Swami Bhawani Dayal Sannyasi) who was the first colonial-born South African Indian to enter the holy order of Sannyasa. He was educated in India through the medium of the Hindi language in which he gained great proficiency. His knowledge of the Vedic religion was broad and deep. His activities as a public worker covered many fields but what seems to have been his main contribution lies in his dedication to the dissemination of the message of the Arya Samaj, the furtherance of the Hindi language and the emancipation of Indians from political subjection.

Immediately on his return to this country in 1912 from India he came under the influence of Gandhiji. His wife, Jagrani, and he under-

went imprisonment for participating in the Satyagraha movement, launched by Gandhiji.

As a protagonist of mother-tongue education he towers head and shoulders above the others. He encouraged the formation of Hindi Pracharni Sabhas for the promotion of the Hindi language. Wherever he went he laid emphasis on the significance of Hindi and the sublimity of the Vedas. He excelled as an orator and author in the Hindi language. He edited and published a weekly newspaper, *Hindi*, through the medium of which he rendered invaluable service to the Hindi-speaking world. As the first president of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha he helped to put this institution on a sound footing. As a missionary of the Arya Sarvadeshik Sabha of India he toured extensively the various centres of South Africa and Portuguese East Africa and preached the Vedic religion.

His services in the political field were also second to none, and in recognition of this he was elected the President of the Natal Indian Congress in 1938. His last days were spent in Adarsh Nagar, Ajmere, India, from where he published his monthly journal, *Pravasi*.

On the invitation of the Arya Yuvuk Sabha, Swami Manglanand Puri came to Natal in 1913 from the Transvaal. As the climate of this country did not agree with him he left for India within a very short time, but during the period he was here he impressed everyone with his eloquence as a speaker of the Hindi language.

The first snatak (graduate) to come out to this country from the Gurukul was Pandit Ishwardutt Vidyalkar. He reached Natal from the Transvaal on 22nd October, 1921, as the guest of the Arya Yuvuk Sabha. His interesting and inspiring lectures were attended by Hindus and Parsis, Christians and Moslems, alike. He showed the people here the correct way of performing the havan and the sanskars. His melodious recital and lucid explanation of the Ramayana drew hundreds to him. For the first time in South Africa feats of Indian archery were displayed by him. He also performed Yogic exercises and pranayam (control of breath). Though he was frail looking he could have a heavy stone placed on his chest and broken to pieces. He kept his audience wherever he went spell-bound with oration and performances.

On 23rd February, 1922, Pandit Pravin-singh arrived in Durban on the invitation of

Mr. G. B. Rughubeer. He used songs as a means of propagating the teachings of Hinduism. In spite of being old he drew large crowds. He left within six months for India. In 1927 he was brought back by the Shree Ramayan Sabha of Overport to teach music and Hindi. Later he conducted a Sanskrit class and imparted Hindi tuition to the girls at the Surat Hindu Association Hall.

On a mission of collecting funds for the D.A.V. College at Kadiana in India, Pandit Karamchand arrived in South Africa on 1st June, 1927. During his three months stay here he gave a number of lectures on various aspects of Hinduism.

The first Hindu preacher to come out to this country with his wife was Dr. Bhagatram Sahagal. His tour was sponsored by the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. He arrived on 2nd February, 1929. The presence of his wife inspired the women of Durban to establish the first Stree Arya Samaj on May 25th, 1929. Before the arrival of Dr. Sahagal very few Hindu institutions, though following the Arya Samajic principles, bore the name of Arya Samaj. He urged them to change their names to "Arya Samaj" and, in fact, established a few new ones himself.

Whilst Dr. Sahagal was busily engaged in the formation of Arya Samajes in this country there arrived from Mauritius Pandit Ramgovind Trivedi, a Sanatanist preacher. The first welcome was accorded to him by the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha. Pandit Trivedi was very desirous of establishing a Sanathan Dharma Maha Mandal but this did not materialise during his six months stay here.

The credit for inviting Professor Ralaram, M.A., Principal of the D.A.V. College, at Hoshiarpur, in 1931, goes to the Durban Central Arya Samaj. Professor Ralaram's arrival was made possible through the indefatigable efforts of Mr. M. C. Varman, who was devoted to the Arya Samaj movement. As a powerful speaker, both in Hindi and English, he created very good impression on the minds of Indians and Europeans to whom he lectured on Hindu religion and philosophy at different centres.

Among the Vedic missionaries who have travelled widely throughout the world preaching the glory and civilisation of India, the name of Pandit Mehta Jaimini stands foremost. Before coming to South Africa, Panditji had already visited Japan, America, West Indies,

East Africa, Zanzibar and Indonesia. Once again Mr. Varman was responsible for the arrival of Pandit Jaimini in this country. Pandit Jaimini, old as he was, had a remarkable memory for quoting copiously from various books to substantiate his talks on the influence exerted by Vedic religion and culture on the thought and religious system of the different parts of the world. His depth of knowledge and the convincing manner in which he delivered his lectures are still fresh in our memory. His wide travels enabled him to give first-hand information on the traces of Hindu civilisation in many parts of the world. Under the auspices of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha, he delivered a series of lectures on India's contribution to world thought and culture. The mammoth Hindu Conference held in the Durban City Hall in 1934 was presided over by him.

Swami Adhyanand, noted for his erudition and oration, arrived in this country in 1934 as the first preacher of the Ramakrishna Mission. His lectures on Hindu philosophy were of the highest order. They were much appreciated especially by high school and university students. Swami Adhyanand performed the official opening of the Hindu Conference organised by the South African Hindu Maha Sabha in 1934.

To dispel the belief that women in Hindu society were relegated to a place of inferiority, Pandit Anand Priyaji, the Principal of Arya Kanya Mahavidyalaya, toured this country in 1934 with 22 of his students. They are popularly known as the Indian Girl Guides of Baroda. Their itinerary in this country was drawn up by the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha whose patronage they enjoyed. The Girl Guides took this country by storm with their marvellous performances of physical culture, archery and garba (folk-dancing). Twice they gave a display of their feats in the Durban City Hall. Each time the hall was packed to its capacity. Commendation came from all sources, from Indians and Europeans alike. Over ten thousand people witnessed their show at Curries Fountain in Durban. They were privileged by special invitation to put on a show for the pupils of the Durban European Girls High School. Their excellent displays of items, such as garba dance, dagger drill, dagger fight, sword fight, double-sticks-play, sword and shield and staves fight, yoga asanas, held their audiences enthralled wherever they went. From

their many shows held in several parts of the country they realised a total of £5,000, which went towards their Mahavidyalaya. They were missionaries in a different sense. They helped tremendously to enhance the glory of Indian womanhood.

It was in 1937 that Yogi Yashpal arrived. He mystified his audiences with the performance of Yogic feats and archery. He was buried alive at Curries Fountain and two hours later was exhumed alive to the amazement of the thousands that had assembled to witness his remarkable performance. His feats in archery progressed from the apparently impossible to the absolutely incredible. They included five arrows, five marks; two simultaneous shots in opposite directions; blindfold sighting by sound and touch. In his own inimitable way he carried the torch of Hindu Dharma and culture.

It was Mr. M. C. Varman again who invited Pandit Rishiram to this country. Pandit Rishiram arrived in 1937 from England. His lecture tour was organised by the South African Hindu Maha Sabha. Panditji was a good exponent of the Vedas, Upanishads and the Gita. His lectures testified to his deep study of the works of Gandhi and Tagore, Radhakrishnan and Aurobindo. His series of lectures on "The Nature and Destiny of Man" were acclaimed by all. Pandit Rishiram advocated the building of friendly and harmonious relationship with the indigenous people of this country. He established the Gandhi-Tagore Lectureship Trust to ensure the continuous flow of missionaries from India, but due to the diplomatic breach between this country and India, the Trust has been prevented from fulfilling the aims and objects for which it was founded. He returned to this country in 1947 and again in 1952 with new ideas and a new approach to his missionary work. His religious and philosophical discourses, infusing new spirit, awakened the consciousness of all Hindus, nay of all Indians, in respect of their rich cultural heritage.

In 1938 it was the honour and privilege of the Indian community of South Africa to have with them for a very short time Dr. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan (now Vice-President of India), the world famous Indian philosopher. The speeches which he delivered were few but they were memorable. People marvelled at his intellectual genius.

The second missionary of the Ramakrishna

Mission to visit this country was Swami Ghanananda. He landed in 1947. His masterly presentation of the philosophy of Vedanta in polished English language attracted several young men to the Ramakrishna Mission, a branch of which he formed at Sea View.

To grace the Silver Jubilee of the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, held in 1950, Pandit Ganga Prasad Upadhyaya, M.A., General Secretary of the International Aryan League, India, was specially invited. He is a prolific writer, with no less than 30 books in English and Hindi on Vedic religion to his credit. The theme of his inspiring lectures was based on the philosophy of Swami Dayanand. His catechism on the Essential Teachings of Hinduism is of special interest to South African Hindus.

The saintly personality of Shri Ram is still vivid in our minds. He arrived in this country in 1952 as a representative of the Theosophical Society. His lectures which soared to great spiritual heights dealt with the divinity in man.

The missionary who was permitted to visit this country at the beginning of this year after a long spell of eight years was Bhikku Chamanlal, a Buddhist monk. With his unique exhibition of art and architecture in photography as well as actual specimens displaying "the glory that was Hind"; with his screening of films on the vestiges of Indian civilisation in various parts of the world; and with his thought provoking commentaries he was able to capture our imagination.

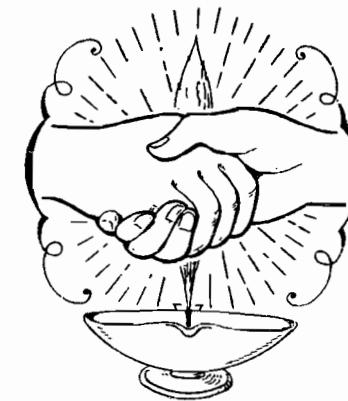
Other great personages who have come to this country, though not missionaries in the religious sense, were, nevertheless, mighty ambassadors of Indian culture. Mahatma Gandhi who initiated the Satyagraha movement, the Rt. Honourable Gokhale who made the first breach in the infamous £3 tax, Sarojini Naidoo who exploded the myth of white superiority, Mr. Sastri who championed the cause of higher education for Indians, Sir Kurma Reddi who awakened Andhra consciousness, Kunwarani Maharaj Singh who concerned herself with secondary education for Indian girls, and Lady Rama Rau who glorified the religious literature of India, have each in their own way made valuable contribution to the enhancement of the prestige of Indians in this country.

Amongst those who are the custodians of our religion, philosophy and language, and are at the very moment engaged in the dissemination of the very best in our culture must be mentioned the names of Pandit S. N. C.

Varadacharyulu, Pandit Nardev Vedalankar, Swami Nischalananda, Brother V. Srinivasen (Swami Sahajananda), Pandit Harischandra Arya and Dr. N. P. Desai. The heart and soul of the Ramakrishna Centre of Southern Africa is Swami Nischalananda while Brother Srinivasen is the founder of the Divine Life Society in South Africa. The stalwart of Hindi and a Vedic priest of high eminence is Pandit Nardev Vedalankar, founder-president of the Hindi Shiksha Sangh of South Africa. His counterpart in the Telugu world is Pandit Varadacharyulu who is proficient in five languages—Sanskrit, Telugu, Hindi, Tamil and English. The mainstay of the Hindi Vidya Mandir of Johannesburg is Pandit Harischandra Arya who has popularised examinations in Hindi, Sanskrit, Gita and Upanishad in the Transvaal. Only last year he held a wonder-

ful exhibition entitled "Glimpses of India". A deep student of Hindu culture, religion and philosophy and a great public worker is Dr. N. P. Desai, the founder of the Kathiawad Hindu Seva Samaj who has championed courageously the rights and privileges of Hindus in this country as an official of the South African Hindu Maha Sabha.

A hundred years has elapsed since our ancestors arrived. The impact of modernism and the process of westernisation are powerful agencies attempting to despoil the soul of the Hindu. The spiritual legacy and the cultural heritage left by our forbears have to be carefully protected. The Hindus have to meet a new challenge for the preservation of their identity. Honest, sincere and devoted missionaries of the highest calibre from within this country and Mother India are required.



They Served Hinduism



PROFESSOR BHAI PARMANAND
The First Hindu Missionary to arrive in
South Africa in 1905



PANDIT RISHIRAM
Hindu Missionary who visited South Africa three
times and founded the Gandhi-Tagore Lectureship
Trust



SWAMI BHAWANI DAYAL SANNYASI
Distinguished Vedic Priest and Hindi Scholar.
First South African Indian to enter the Holy
Order of Sannyasa



MOKAM CHAND VARMAN
who rendered great service to the Hindu
community of South Africa by inviting six
Hindu Missionaries to this country at different
times

The Maha Sabha —and its work