

# MALAVIYA JI'S SPEECH ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BHU BILL

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 Malaviya 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.

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.

Two Hon'ble Members have taken exception to the proposed University on the ground that it will be a 'Sectarian University'. Both of my friends the Hon'ble Mr. Ghuznavi and the Hon'ble Mr. Setalvad have expressed an apprehension that being sectarian in its character, it may foster or strengthen separatist tendencies. They have said that the existing Universities have been exercising a unifying influence, in removing sectarian differences between Hindus and Muhammadans. My Lord, the University will be a denominational institution but not a sectarian one. It will not promote narrow sectarianism but a broad liberation of mind and a religious spirit which will promote brotherly feeling between man and man. Unfortunately we are all aware that the absence of sectarian religious Universities, the absence of any compulsory religious education in our State Universities, has not prevented the growth of sectarian feeling in the country. I believe, my Lord, instruction in the truths of religion, whether it would be Hindus or Mussalmans, whether it be imparted to the students of the Benares Hindu University or of the Aligarh Moslem University, will tend to produce men who, if they are true to their religion, will be true to their God, their King and their country. And I look forward to the time when the students who will pass out of such Universities, will meet each other in a closer embrace as sons of the same Motherland than they do at present;

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 if 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.

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 be 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 religious ceremonies which are practised by Hindus. 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. With that knowledge they will make larger endowments to support the University than they would make if the endowment was to be administered by men of different persuasions and faiths. There is nothing uncharitable in such an arrangement. Besides this, there is a second reason. When the Sanskrit College was first established in 1793, in the time of Lord Cornwallis, there was provision made for the teaching of the Vedas and other religious books in it. Later on, some missionary gentlemen took exception to the idea that a Christian Government should encourage the teaching of what they described as heathen religion ;

and for that reason the teaching of religion was stopped in that institution. In formulating proposals for the Benares Hindu University, it was felt that, so far as possible, no room should be left for any apprehension which might prevent religious-minded Hindu donors from making large contributions to the University, and that the best means of giving them an assurance that instruction in Hindu religion shall always be an integral part of the education which the University will provide, and that their religious endowments will be administered in conformity with their wishes, was that the membership of the University Court should be confined to Hindus. There is, however, no such restriction in regard to membership of the Senate. In the Senate, which will be the soul of the University, we shall invite co-operation, we shall seek it and welcome it, fully one-fourth of the Senate may not be Hindus. There will be no disqualification on the ground of religion in the selection of professors. No restriction is placed upon students of any creed or any class coming to the University. It will thus appear that while we confine membership on the administrative body of the University, the Court, the members

of the Hindu community, we keep open the Senate which, as I have said, is the soul of the University, to teachers of every creed and race. That is a real provision. And we intended to get the very best teachers irrespective of any consideration of race or creed, from whichever part of the world we can, in order that our students should sit at their feet and learn the knowledge that they can impart.

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.

## MALAVIYA JI'S SPEECH WHILE PASSING THE BHU BILL BY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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 ji in supporting the Bill, spoke as follows :

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, that 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 key- note 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 where we remember that the London University took seven years to be established from the time the idea was taken up.

***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 Agha 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. We are indebted to His Highness the Agha Khan for having given practical shape to the question of a Muslim University at Aligarh ; and to my friend, the Hon'ble the Raja of Mahmabad for having carried on the first correspondence with the Government which elicited the Secretary of State's approval to the idea of a denominational University in this country. My Lord, I confidently hope that it will not be long before a Muslim University will also come into existence, and that the two, the Hindu University and the Muslim University will work together in friendly co-operation on the good of the youth of India, Hindus and Mussalmans, that they will work as sister institutions to promote that real cordiality of feeling between, them, the want of which so much hampers our progress and is regretted by all who desire the good of India.***

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. That was unanimously supported by the Government of India, and our most sincere thanks are due to them for that support. But unfortunately for us the Secretary of State did not think it right that the Viceroy should be the *ex-officio* Chancellor of the University ; he decided that the University should have the power of electing its own Chancellor ; but he also decided, and we are very thankful to him for it, that the University should have the power to appoint its Professors without reference to the Government. The privilege of having the head of the Government as head of the University was one that was naturally highly valued by us, and we submitted a representation asking that the decision of the Secretary of State on that point might be re-considered. But on being given to understand that decision was final, we reconciled ourselves to it, finding solace in the fact that the University would have the right instead to elect its own Chancellor. But subsequently the Secretary of State decided that even this privilege should be withheld from us, and that the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces should be the Chancellor, *ex-officio*, and should exercise all the powers which the Governor-General was to have exercised. This new proposal met with strong disapproval both from the Muhammadan and the Hindu community. It was thought that; we had arrived at an impasse, and that the scheme would have to be dropped.

It was in that state of affairs that, with the generous sympathy of your Excellency's Government and of the very kind support which the Hon'ble Sir Harcourt Butler gave us, we were able to arrive at the compromise which is now embodied in the Bill, under which the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces has become the official Visitor of the University, and the University has the right to elect its own Chancellor. This conclusion has secured much of what the Government wanted ; but it has, at the same time, allotted to us a sufficiently large measure of independence and freedom in the internal affairs of the University, My Lord, we did not reconcile ourselves to this solution without reason. We felt that as the University is to have its home in the United Provinces, it will be an advantage that the head of the United Provinces Government should have an official status in the University. We recognised that will be the best arrangement to ensure that the relations between him and the University should be cordial and friendly. I hope and trust that the fact of the Lieutenant-Governor being the official Visitor of the University will prove to be a guarantee and an assurance that such cordial relations will exist between the University and the Government.

My Lord, much objection has been taken to the large powers that have been reserved to the Governor-General under section 19 of the Bill. We have accepted them, because, as the Hon'ble Sir Harcourt Butler has explained, they are only emergency powers, which may never be exercised, and can only rarely be exercised. I do hope they will seldom, if ever, be exercised. But assuming that the Governor-General in Council should at any time think that there is anything wrong with the University which requires an explanation, we shall neither be afraid

nor reluctant to offer such explanation. The movement has from the start been worked in the conviction, the deliberate conviction, that it is essential for the success of the University that it should secure the good-will and sympathy of the Government, and that it should always retain that sympathy. The section in question provides that the Governor General in Council may, in certain circumstances, ask the University to submit an explanation in regard to certain matters, and that if the explanation should not satisfy him, that he may offer such advice, as he may think fit to the University. I hope that the existence of this provision in the Act will not be felt in the real working of the Act, But even with the power which the Government have thought it fit to reserve in their hands, it is only fair to say that no University existing in India enjoys so large a measure of freedom in the management of its affairs as your Excellency's Government; has been pleased to secure to the Benares Hindu University, and we feel very deeply grateful for it. The University will have full freedom in appointing its own Professors and Examiners. It is conceivable that among the Professors so appointed there may sometimes be a case I hope there will never be one in which the University did not know as much about the person appointed as the Government. I have no doubt that if such a case should ever arise, it will be dealt with satisfactorily by correspondence. I am sure that with the explanation and assurance given by the Hon'ble Sir Harcourt Butler that if it should become necessary that an explanation should be called for from any member of the staff engaged by the University, the person concerned will not be in a less favourable position than any one serving under Government. The provision in the Bill to that effect will not prevent any good man from offering his services to the University.

My Lord, some of my countryman, who are keenly interested in the proposed University and the educational movement which it represents, have somewhat 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 he 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 but decided to give. I hope, my Lord, the future will prove that we have not acted wrongly.

I am certain that as in the course of time experience will show that there are amendments needed in the Act which I hope will be passed today the Government will receive representations for such amendments in a thoroughly sympathetic spirit, I take it, my Lord, that the object of the Government! and the University is to create a great centre for education, where the education imparted should be the soundest and the best. And, in that view, I feel assured that there will be no difficulty in Government agreeing to any amendment which may be found necessary. As this Bill is being passed in very special circumstances, and we have agreed to avoid controversy at present, I fear some amendments will have to be made at no distant space ; but it has perhaps that we should bring them forward when the University Court and the Senate have been constituted, and when we have found out by actual experience where exactly the shoe pinches.

My Lord, I thank God that this movement to provide further and proper 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 elsewhere?' said Lord Curzon. 'As the name implies, it ought to be a place where the 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, I hope and pray that though we shall begin in a humble way in the fulness of time that the proposed University will fully answer this description.. His Lordship wanted to see in India a University which would really deserve the name, as he said :

' A University which shall gather round it collegiate institutions proud of affiliation, and worthy to enjoy it ; whose students, housed in residential quarters in close connection with the parent University, shall feel the inner meaning of a corporate life; where the governing body of the University shall be guided by expert advice and the teachers shall have a real influence upon the teaching where the courses of study shall be framed for the development, not of the facial automation, but of the thoughtful mind ; where the Professors will draw near to the pupils and mould their characters for good ; and where the pupils will begin to value knowledge for its own sake and as a means to an end I should like this spark of the sacred fire that has been brought across the seas lie in one or two places at least before I leave the country, and I would confidently leave others to keep alive the flame.'

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.

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 as 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. I

venture to hope, my Lord, that the good influence of the Benares Hindu University in the matter of religious instruction will be felt in other institutions, far and near, and that in the course of a few years religious instruction will become an integral part of the education imparted in schools and Colleges supported by the Government and the people.

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 millions, 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.

There has been no complaint that the instruction so imparted has been found to be unacceptable to any Hindu boy who has gone to that institution. We have, no doubt, to adopt a compromise in these matters. If we do so, no difficulties will be found to be insuperable. I should like, in this connection, to remind those friends who are apprehensive that we may not be able to 'agree in regard to matters relating to religion, to remember some wise words of Cardinal Newman. Speaking of the constitution of a Faculty of Theology in a University, and pointing out how incomplete a University would be which did not possess such a Faculty, that great teacher has said :

No two persons perhaps are to be found, however intimate, however congenial in tastes and judgments, however eager to have one heart and one soul, but must deny themselves for the sake of each other much which they like and desire, if they are to live together happily. Compromise in a large sense of the word, is the first principle of combination and every one who insists on enjoying his rights to the full, and his opinions without toleration 'for his neighbours, and his own way in all things, will soon have all things altogether to himself, and no one to share them with him.'

In matters of minor differences that there must be a compromise, I believe we have shown by sixteen years of work at the Central Hindu College, that; we can drop minor differences, while we adhere to the substantial object which we have in view, and therefore, though the provision for religious instruction has not been put in the Act in the form which I thought was best. I am thankful that it is there to give an assurance to the public that religious instruction shall be a compulsory part of the education at the University. My Lord, I do not wish to dwell upon the amendment which I suggested in my note to the Report of the Select Committee, as I am convinced that no good purpose will be served by my doing so. I accept the provision for religious instruction, as it stands, in the hope and faith that there will be no such differences in the University regarding religious instruction as will defeat one of its basic principles, namely, that religious instruction should form an integral part of the education imparted by it.



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.