Deep Scars Of Bondage
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Hinduism has passed through a thousand years of foreign domination. During these centuries, its deepest ideas and cherished institutions were under great attack. The trauma of this period has produced deep psychological scars. Hindus have lost self-confidence; they have become passive and apologetic - apologetic about their ideas, their institutions, about themselves and about their very name. They have become self-alienated.

As a result, what India faces today is not so much a minority problem, but a majority one, the problem of a Hindu majority, poor, neglected, ideologically disarmed, spiritually under attack and almost disenfranchised, without honor in the only homeland it has. How will such a nation fare in the world?

There are many great Hindus who accept and cherish Hindu scriptures like the Upanishads and the Gita; others admire its ancient artistic creations and display them at world festivals. But they neglect their adhisthan, their foundation support, the Hindu society that has given them birth and affectionately borne them. They have little concern for it, its corporate life, its history, its heroes, the dangers it faces, its future continuity, its institutions. They forget this side, too, is important and cannot be neglected. Hindu identity and institutions need nourishing. How can Hinduism contribute to the world if it loses its name, identity and corporate life?

During the period of foreign domination, Hindu religious and educational institutions suffered grievously. Many Muslim rulers destroyed Hindu temples and converted them into mosques. The British stayed away from this vandalism, but they stuck at the economic foundation of Hindu society; they took away most of the Indians' lands and converted them into monetary 'grants,' and left them poor and

starved. Independence has brought them no relief, and in fact, their condition has become worse. It is a big subject and we cannot go into it here. But we may cite a few illustrative examples.

From a study of the temples of Tamil Nadu which the government of India made some years ago, we find that from all their immovable property, the top 10,515 temples had a total annual income of Rs. 27,685,518 only. Half of them had only an annual income of less than Rs. 500 (U.S. $18). The conditions in the north are no better. No wonder the religious functionaries connected with these temples are starved. Renascent Hinduism should learn to take up such basic issues at the grassroots.

There was a time when sannyasins and monks provided leadership to the Hindu society, as, for example, at the time of Alexander's invasion, as we have learned from Plutarch. But times have changed. Today all religions are regarded as equal and Hindus feel so special responsibility towards Hinduism. The failure is not only on the spiritual field, it is conspicuous in the intellectual realms as well. India's scholarship is not is own; it is borrowed from the West. Macaulay wanted to create a class Indian in blood and color but English in taste, intellect, opinion and orientation, and he succeeded admirably. Today our intellectual elite have added Marxism to Macaulayism, a natural development, which has made their viewpoint even more European. We now understand Hinduism through their eyes and through their needs.

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