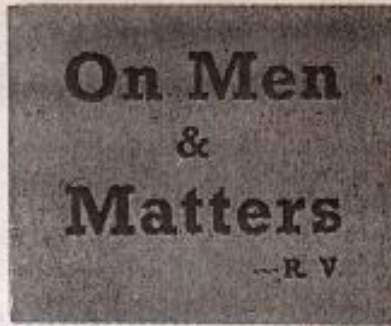


**WORLD HINDU
CONFERENCE**

THE HINDU religion and culture have spread across the remotest corners of the world from pre-historic times and evidence of such diffusion as available in all parts of the globe were brought out by Dr Lokesh Chandra at the World Hindu Conference held last week at Dharmaprakash, Madras, under the august auspices of His Holiness Jagatguru Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. Dr Lokesh Chandra cited customs of Indonesia and Japan reflecting the influence of Hindu culture and the tradition of *Ramayana* in the Near and Far East in support of his thesis. Hinduism has spread during historic times into countries like Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia and Sri Lanka and Hindu culture is preserved in those parts even today. In recent centuries, Hindus have migrated to South Africa, Mauritius, Fiji, West Indies and so on for economic reasons and have settled in their places of employment as citizens thereof. The facility of modern communications has helped the process and it is no exaggeration to say that there are clusters of Hindus in almost every country in the world.

It is the habit of Hindus to carry their religion and culture



wherever they go and try to preserve them as far as they can in the environment and circumstances in which they are placed. The life of a Hindu is incomplete without temple worship and observance of rituals and festivals. Individual *Puja* rooms, *Bhajan* parties for congregational prayers and celebrations of festival days are some of the ways through which they find expression of their religious fervour.

While the Hindus in the neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Sri Lanka have put up temples long ago, a wave of enthusiasm for establishing new temples is spreading in Western countries also. The projected temples at Pittsburg, New York and the London Murugan temple are instances of such religious revival. Though it is possible for Hindus abroad to get published works of saints and scholars and hear some

of the visiting men of learning, they do not have constant communication and touch either with the Hindus in other parts of the world or with the Hindus in their homeland. It is, therefore, of great significance that the Hindus from different countries have met in a conference under the august presence of His Holiness Jagatguru Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Swamigal to discuss informally among themselves their needs, desires and aspirations. This conference was unique in the sense that it had no president (though for various discourses there were *ad hoc* chairman), no fixed agenda, no resolution and no *mahazars* and petitions to be presented to anyone. A true exchange of thoughts and ideas in a free atmosphere of mutual understanding and cooperation was the highlight of this meeting. Visiting Hindus from Indonesia, Kuwait, Mauritius, Singapore, South Africa and Sri Lanka, while fully realizing that they are nationals of their respective countries, regard India as their spiritual home and want the mother country to lend guidance and assistance in their endeavour to preserve and foster Hindu religion, its precepts and practices. For instance, they want to have men versed in the performance of *Puja* and *Agama* for

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