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With this explanation to a few hundred readers, *The Hindu* launched itself in Madras, which is now Chennai, on September 20, 1878. On the occasion of the inauguration in Chennai of its 125th anniversary celebrations by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, *The Hindu* reproduces its first editorial titled "Ourselves"; an ad-filled front page of the newspaper from 1883 encloses it here. The editorial presents a vision that remains relevant today.

Ourselves

In accordance with the long-standing etiquette obtaining among the journalistic community, we, seeking admission into it as a new member, herald our first appearance before the public by a leader rather ostentatiously styled "Ourselves", in which we will presently set forth the circumstances that justify the appearance of a new paper, its professed intentions and aims, the line of policy it proposes to pursue and the principles by which it is to be guided. It is with great diffidence that we usher this paper into existence presuming that the indulgent public will give us a warm reception by supporting and encouraging us in spite of our shortcomings. We say with great diffidence because we had the misfortune of witnessing several attempts similar to that of ours that were made only to fail. Our diffidence does all the more weigh upon us when we remember that our predecessors were men of longer experience and superior attainments. But their lamentable failure is, in our humble opinion, owing to their individual drawbacks, and to the fact of the public not being prepared to encourage such attempts. Within recent years, circumstances have combined to produce so many changes in our society in all its aspects and these changes have so rapidly succeeded one another as to justify fresh attempts of this kind at very short intervals. When we cast a glance around us we are struck with the existence of very able and eminently successful organs of the public, ever on the alert to ventilate the opinion of the public together with their wants and grievances on the one hand, and to guard enthusiastically the honours and prestige of the ruling Power on the other. But we are at the same time struck with the humiliating fact that all of them with a single exception are conducted either by disinterested Europeans or enterprising Eurasians. We beg leave to state that there is room as well as necessity for more than a single native organ in the metropolis of Southern India. We hope the public will pardon us the wretched platitude that one of the greatest evils that keep behind the advancement of our people is the absence of an organised public opinion. We do not share in the opinion that the educated Hindus are without convictions. On the other hand, it is not so much the alleged born ways of thinking and speaking imputed to the educated Hindus that has occasioned the absence of public opinion as the want of a well conducted native press to which the public may look to regulate their opinion. The Press does not only give expression to public opinion, but also modify and mould it according to circumstances. It is this want that we have made bold to attempt to supply. It is the duty of that section of the native community that claims to be educated to fill up as far as it is possible and practicable the gap separating the governors

from the governed. We feel this and we attempt to do justice to our feeling.

We shall confine ourselves as much as possible to Indian politics. We do not belong either to that class of men who altogether ignore the superiority of a Western rule and find fault with everything the Government does or to that of those who are so far carried away by the influence of their English education as to cry down everything native and advocate as a rule the preferability of Western institutions to those of our country. With many Anglo-Indian statesmen such as Sir T. Munro, Sir H. Lawrence and several others we are of opinion that there has been a tendency on the part of our rulers to interfere too much in the internal administration of the country. We are inclined to be conservative as much as is consistent with the material progress of the nation. The whole world is destined to be guided by Europe and it will not be desirable even if it were possible to withstand the pressure of the European influence brought to bear upon us by the spread of Western knowledge and civilisation amongst us. The principles that we propose to be guided by are simply those of fairness and justice. It will always be our aim to promote harmony and union among our fellow countrymen and to interpret correctly the feelings of the natives and to create mutual confidence between the governed and the governors. In religion, though there have been, of late, occasions to look with unpleasant feelings and suspicion upon the conduct of a particular sect of missionaries, we shall observe strictest neutrality; sectarian disputes we shall never allow to appear in our columns. But when religious questions involve interests of a political and social character we shall keep our columns open to any prudent remarks and legitimate criticisms. We have thus endeavoured to give an account of ourselves. We are fully conscious of the difficulties and responsibilities that devolve on the conductors of the Press; and we feel ourselves so unequal to the task that we have no other apology to make than the fact that the importance of the undertaking has tempted us to make an effort. If our attempts prove successful, we shall have reason to congratulate ourselves and feel proud that we have succeeded in doing what we consider to be our duty. But owing to a want of encouragement and co-operation from the public, if our attempts follow its predecessors to the "undiscovered country" we shall retire from the field with the melancholy conviction that the native public of Southern India are not prepared to support among them more than one Native Newspaper and beg the pardon of the public for having disturbed their equanimity.

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