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We must do more to help others — judge

JEWES could do more to support other minorities, according to Judge Henry Lachs.

"We have tried to play a significant part in the general community," he told the Indian Jewish Association Millennium Seminar at Manchester Metropolitan University last week.

"We have made a very real effort to contribute to the host communities. But we have possibly not done enough to link arms with other minorities."

He told the packed gathering at the association's first public event: "The law for fair treatment to strangers and minorities is mentioned 36 times in the Bible.

"It is not a just and fair society if we do not respect minority rights. But the corollary of rights is duties. We ought to be giving, too."

He referred to the prophet Jeremiah's message to the Babylonian exiles: "Build houses, plant gardens, marry, have sons and daughters, seek the welfare of the city of exile and pray for it."

Liverpudlian Judge Lachs said: "This was an extraordinary message, not just to sit and sulk and complain about the unfairness of ethnic discrimination but to contribute to society and pray for its welfare."

He added that Jews owed their survival through "landless" centuries of persecution to their emphasis on education as well as their pursuit of justice.

A former chief justice of the Punjab, Justice Rama Jois, said: "The millennium is a time of introspection to see whether we are going on the right lines or whether we need a corrective.

"We have to review what has happened this millennium."

Astounding

He added that, despite the "astounding scientific achievements this century, many have behaved uncivilly in the horrors of the two world wars, the genocide of the Jews and Hiroshima and the massacre of the partition of India".

He was also concerned about the "large-scale manufacture and storage of arms, enough to destroy the world, terrorism and hijackings, alarming proportions of child abuse and the threat to family life".

Justice Jois added: "The family is the factory of the next generation."

He went on: "The most ancient religions of Hinduism and Judaism have the solution to the problems of humanity.

"The five fundamentals of Hinduism are strikingly similar to those of the Ten Commandments — no violence, controlling the senses, honouring father and mother and teacher, mutual fidelity in marriage and joint responsibility for the education of children."

He added that Jews had been persecuted in lands other than their own, whereas Hindus were being persecuted in their own land.

Justice Jois said that Hinduism was not a religion, but a code of conduct. People could practise other religions and still be Hindus.

Education had to be character building, rather than just information gathering. Their economic message was to live "a simple inexpensive life, with the minimum use of natural resources, to leave the earth to the next generation".

The political message was: Equality for all and no corruption.