

FROM THE EDITOR

THE HIMALAYA: HINDU OR MUSLIM?

The other day some people stormed into the office of the Doordarshan in a certain city. They were demanding live telecast of a great Hindu festival, a demand which the Doordarshan authorities were unable to meet primarily on account of technical reasons. The storm-troopers destroyed the furniture and files of the office and left.

Were they taking such pains for God's cause? Were they really in such a hurry to enlighten the people with a spiritual message and that is why dashed the office telephone set on the ground and set fire to the racks in their anguish and despair? Needless to say, they were only exploiting the religious sentiments of the people either to satisfy some absolutely mundane motive of theirs, political or otherwise, or were just giving vent to their propensity for violence. Such actions have nothing to do with religion or culture.

Similarly, those who are planning a march to Ayodhya to offer Namaj inside the Ram Janmabhoomi premises are not really anxious to get close to God at an accelerated speed or to uphold God's cause on the earth or to promote any lofty ideal. The inspiration behind their action is no different from the inspiration behind the action of the group referred to earlier. It is a wrong inspiration.

Man is disenchanted with the political, scientific and material means of satisfaction at his disposal. He is haunted by a sense of futility. Hence his interest in religion. This is a healthy sign provided we remember the spirit of religion and are not swept by dogmatism and institutionalised, formal trappings of religion. Religious sentiments are liable to wrong application everywhere. Unless we rise in our spirit, the forces of darkness will continue to delude us.

Most of the formidable problems will appear childish when viewed from a mature plane of consciousness. We may not rise to that plane all at once. But we can, with all the experience of history behind us, behave a little more intelligently, patiently and benevolently. This is not too much of a demand from us when we remember the eventful aeons we have crossed to arrive at this point of our evolution.

A solution is there to every problem, but to find that we have to grow a little within or expand our vision. Take the Ram Janmabhoomi issue. Rama is a glorious element in the heritage of India, far transcending the Hindu religion. Rama lived and Valmiki's Ramayana was written long before the term Hinduism came into being, long before the current concept of religion was formed and fighting on religious issues became a part of our life-style. In fact, the legendary Rama and the Ramayana are an indispensable part of human heritage. They are not limited to India, though India should be proud of them.

Once we realise this, we should feel ashamed at making Rama an object of our quarrel. It is a failure on the part of our education to present Rama in the proper national and world perspective.

It is a fact that the Hindus worship Rama as God. But the Hindus also worship the Himalaya as God and the Sun as God. The Himalaya and the Sun do not cease to be important to others because of the Hindu attitude.

The situation no doubt is a challenge to us, but a challenge to our patience, not to our passions.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

THE OLDEST CORPORATION

The oldest Municipal Corporation of India—that of the city of Madras—completes three centuries of existence this month.

There was a time when the Municipal Corporations and similar civic bodies were considered more important than they are today, although their sizes have increased. Why this paradoxical development? One reason is, the glamour of elections has gone over to the Assemblies and Parliaments, the boiling cauldrons of Elitics. Secondly, many of the important functions which a corporation used to do have been taken over by governmental departments or other bodies formed to accommodate ambitious politicians hungry for positions or .sometimes for genuine reasons.

Occasions like centenaries should not be limited to formal celebrations; they should remind us of our responsibility towards these institutions, while all the time these institutions are discharging (or are expected to discharge) their responsibility for we the people.

Indeed, how much can an institution do without the public support?

Free from narrow political interferences, the civic bodies, with the help of experts on environment, health etc. can do much to improve the condition of life in the cities. For them to be effective, what we need is non-political citizens' committees advising and assisting them. The more there is a public awareness on civic matters, the less such bodies will be subjected to abuse by the vested-interest.