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ABOUT OURSELVES

THE Editor has been quite ill. He is better now but not yet well. Nor, looking at the situation realistically and without wishful thinking (his age and the present state of his health) can he really hope for a return to the state in which he was before the latest blow laid him low. What then of *Opinion*? Obviously there should be a change of editors or a complete closure. Such young persons considered fit for the onerous duties of the position sniff at the suggestion when approached. There is of course no power of worldly welfare in it. It is mostly sweat, tears, and sacrifice. Of those who seemed tempted at the thought of their own independent paper, not having to truckle to any proprietor's word or nod nor to listen to any government or business hint, one said, "I am not sufficiently committed to *Opinion*'s views and ideas. I generally agree with most of them but I am not sufficiently convinced of many of them so as to expound them." To the reply, "A new editor and a new policy, mostly peripherally," the answer was. "But then it wouldn't be *Opinion* and I wouldn't like to be the one to break down the image it presents to the world today. *Opinion* is in fact the editor and without the editor it cannot be *Opinion*. So you had better get reconciled to the idea that *Opinion* cannot have any other editor, it must live with you and die with you." Well then, is it necessary that it should live? Quite a number of esteemed readers have expressed themselves strongly on this point. They refer to the Emergency and say that in those difficult times *Opinion* was the only paper that published the speeches of the Opposition members of Parliament on the Emergency, and that these speeches were most helpful in bringing the real issues of the Emergency out. They further refer to the fact that even after *Opinion* had been banned by governmental order under the relevant Act the editor, paying full postage, continued to send out cyclostyled personal letters on the condition of the country to a section of the readership and thus helped to keep the spirit of resistance alive. They say it brought out fully and firmly the Lie that was behind the whole new regime. How then, they ask, can the editor even contemplate closing down *Opinion* at a time when fresh dangers approach, as is clear from the nomination of Zail Singh (termed by many Zaleel Singh as a rebuke) for the Presidentship because he will be completely Indira's creature and the ready signer of the flow of ordinances that will begin soon after his appointment? The real crisis is coming now.

The editor is advised medically to relax and to avoid stra

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it is said, is the best part of the treatment. This then he must reconcile as far as possible with continuing *Opinion*. With the present four or five issues a month it cannot be done. Reduction of the number of issues to one a month might perhaps offer some solution. Accordingly from next month there will be one issue of *Opinion* a month, about the third week. It will naturally contain more pages than the current weekly issue. If *Opinion* must die with its editor it surely becomes the editor's duty to try his best to keep it alive while he lives. God willing, the effort will be made. The result is not in our hands.

ASSIMILATIVE HINDUISM

M. K. RATHISH

WE hear a lot about the amazing capacity of the Hindu religion to assimilate and absorb other religions and cultures. We are gleefully told of how Hinduism had swallowed Buddhism and Jainism and had reduced them to the position of being almost sects of Hinduism.

This is not altogether true. Hinduism has not always been successful in assimilating other religions. Hinduism has not been able to make any sort of dent on Islam.

Of late, unfortunately, Hinduism is losing its liberal traditions. Time was when you could be an agnostic and still be a Hindu. The Charvakas were accepted as good Hindus. And in Vedic times beef-eating was widespread even though the cow was venerated.

No such tolerance is in evidence today. Say 'ban cow-slaughter' and every one from the so-called Sage of Paunar to the little Sankaracharyas scattered all over will dance in agreement, no matter how old and decrepit they all are.

Years ago, when I was very young, I used to attend the RSS 'sakha' in my neighbourhood. One evening the 'sikshak' gave me a sheet of paper with the picture of a cow on top of it. He said I was to collect signatures on the sheet of paper, and the signatures would be sent to the President of India urging him to ban cow-slaughter. "But," I protested, "I eat beef." The 'sikshak' froze. "You should not eat beef," he said in an ice-cold voice. I was upset. When my parents did not object to my eating beef, here was one silly bigot telling me to change my food habits!

Thousands of Hindus in Kerala eat beef. It is a cheap source of animal protein. Mutton is very expensive. And cow-slaughter will never be banned in Kerala no matter which sage says what.

Even an otherwise intelligent Swami like Chinmayananda behaves like a fanatic when it comes to cow-slaughter. He says he is a modern-age swami who serves Vedanta to the educated like canned food. He too wants cow-slaughter to be banned and has the temerity to say that he is motivated by economics and not by religion. Some economics! No wonder we are still borrowing from the I.M.F.!!

* Hinduism needs is liberal doses of liberalisation. Religion

should not tell people what to eat and what not to eat. Such things should be left to the individual. The man who worships calendar gods should co-exist with the man who believes that there is nothing beyond matter.

An Australian missionary who wrote about his experiences in India, said he never used to oblige when Hindus came to him and asked him for the crucifix. He knew that it would adorn a corner of the pooja room and would be one among the tens of gods worshipped by the Hindu.

It should gladden the Australian's heart to know that such Hindus are becoming rare.

One perceptive writer has recently laid the blame for the trouble in Punjab at Swami Dayanand Saraswathi's (founder, Arya Samaj) door. It was Dayanand Saraswathi who first started emphasising the difference between the Hindus and the Sikhs.

Mr. Madhu Limaye has in a recent article suggested that it was Gandhi's religiosity that turned a liberal Jinnah into a communalist. Jinnah was showing Gandhi that two could play at the same game.

Hinduism needs a lot more loosening up.

Once in a while we read in the papers that the Vishwa Hindu Parishad has converted a few people belonging to other religions to Hinduism. These poor blokes do not know what they are heading for. When Hinduism treats a vast number of those born into it as outcastes, what chances do the new entrants have ?

Fundamentalism of all types are bad. Hindu fundamentalism is worse. Because it would mean the death of a once liberal religion.

COMMENT

Dr. Leo A. Rebello : Taya Zinkin's review of O. R. by Barrie Evans did justice to the book. That's how a review is to be written. Pompous critics, please take note.

Operating table is 95% demoralising and 5% rewarding. More so in India. How many anaesthetists would talk to a patient like Barrie Evans does to Bob ? Here they just bring in the patient, give him/her the anaesthesia and open him. In Deonar abattoir they do the same thing. Even genuine apprehensions and questions are resented and the patient snubbed.

There is a famous comic strip Dr. Kildare which many of us read regularly, accustomed as we are to reading anything that is 'phoren'. Marvel that dedicated, sincere, competent, humane Dr. Kildare and juxtapose him with his tribe in India and you will find that here Dr. Kill—Dares, in more senses than one !

* * * *

Amiya Rao : I have been reading the 'Musing' over and over again, the most moving piece that you have written so far. Age, affliction, mental anguish all have contributed to the hopelessness that has come out through these few lines. We are all suffering, Mr. Gorwala.

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just wish to tell you one thing that all you have done has not gone in vain; your *Opinion* has helped people like me and I am sure I could not be the only one.

During emergency *Opinion* gave me hope, and egged me on do the little things I used to do those days.

I am not a religious person, but I have deep faith in work; if we have done anything sincerely and honestly because we just couldn't stop doing it—our work has helped somebody or other. And I would like you to believe me that your work has been great—it has helped, it has brought hope to many.

* * * * *

G.K.W. What messes, both the Government and the Opposition, have made about the nomination for the Presidentship! To choose Zail Singh of all people for this august office is a sacrilege; to have made him with his previous record Home Minister was vile enough. To make him the only man in India who in exceptional circumstances can say no to the Prime Minister's wishes is to stultify the position altogether. The aim is quite clear: to reduce the Presidentship to a subordinate branch of the Prime Minister's office. It would serve Indira and the Congress(I) if by a sudden change of heart, all or most of their voters voted for the final Opposition candidate, the highly respected ex-Supreme Court Judge Mr. Khanna. Alas, however, that is not likely to happen. The Opposition almost put itself out of court by nominating Mr. Hiren Mukherjee, a practising international communist, for the post. Had they no sense at all? Such a lack of judgement showed them to be incapable of being trusted at all. A communist *per se* must put the interest of holy mother Soviet Russia above the interests of his own country. For him conscience as such does not exist. That alone is right which helps forward the case of the Party. And that alone wrong which hinders it. What can be said of those who put forward such a man as their Presidential candidate? They lack both sense and judgement and show themselves certainly unfit to be called to power. They should thank God on their bended knees that He has relieved them of the incubus they had put upon their back by not having Hiren Mukherjee's name in any of the electoral rolls.

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