



# Religion of **Temples** and **Temples** of Religion

Prabodhankar Thackeray

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by *Prabodhankar Thackeray*

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Prof. Wandana Sonalkar

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### Contact Address:

Lokayat, Opp. Syndicate Bank, Law College Road, Near Nal Stop, Pune – 4.

☎ Alka Joshi – 94223 19129

☎ Adv. Santosh Mhaske – 98222 50065

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# RELIGION OF TEMPLES AND TEMPLES OF RELIGION

*Prabodhankar Thackeray*

No matter how good an intention may be behind any situation or idea, time is such an adroit magician that with its racing tempo it completely changes the colours of that intent, and turns that thing, situation or idea on its head. It is baffling how something that seemed praiseworthy in the past proves to be objectionable today in all aspects. But it is not very difficult to unravel this. The movement of time is unstoppable. We find the same thing in nature: yesterday's child does not remain forever a child. According to the law of nature, with the movement of time, his inner and outer nature continues to develop, and in just eighteen years we see that winsome infant transformed into a strong and robust youth. Every situation and idea is swiftly left behind by the rapid speed with which time advances; and if an idea or situation were indeed to remain in a static state like rocks and stones, it would hardly be surprising or reprehensible if to a progressive eye it appeared outlandish and worthless. Where nature itself is so fiercely proud of its ever new transformations from moment to moment, man's pride in that which is worn out and obsolete is surely hollow. **The saying that old is gold may be valued as a linguistic embellishment, but all things from the past can never be sold in the market of the new age for the price of gold of a fixed standard.** If human beings, caught in the flow of evolution, do not change the frame of their thought and conduct in conformity with the changes brought by time and the changes in the natural world, then they will surely be torn to pieces in the cycle of time. Nature's laws, though blind, are relentless. We do not notice the slap given by time, but anybody who comes in the way of its rapid advance will be surely be thrust aside. Medication prescribed by a proficient physician may perhaps save a patient from death, but he who goes against nature will not escape punishment even if Brahma himself were to intervene. If those things that were revered in the past because they appeared to be or were of great virtue, but have now become repositories of sin, were to be put on a pedestal and worshipped today merely on the pretext that 'old is gold', that would be a mockery of the passage of time. We need not tell you what the consequences of such mockery will be.

The virtuosity demonstrated by the Hindus in making a mockery of time is reflected in their overall downfall and ruin. Today's Hindu society has become unworthy of being called a 'society'. Hindu religion is

**Hindu culture is a dented pot with no base.**

There is nothing more to it than this. At a time when there is a terrible drought plaguing India, the livelihood of the Brahmin priests has not suffered a pinch thanks to the wasteful and thoughtless generosity of the non-Brahmins. Because of this, their lungs have remained strong enough for them to shoot their mouths off giving lectures and *pravachanas* on religion, culture and organisation. And so many foolish persons imagine that Hindu society is still alive. We see each and every individual beset by contradictions and dilemmas (*dvaita*). Yet we have no dearth of philosophers who trumpet that it is within these contradictions that there lies unity (*advaita* reposes only in the *dvaita*). Even if such Brahmanical rantings do not convince reformers like us, we need not touch the feet of an astrologer to know the future of a Hindu community that disrespects the logic of time. The devious means being used by this priestly regime to spin out their own self-praise, and the way this is drawing the non-Brahmin people to their destruction like moths to a burning lamp, make it clear that the future of Hindu society is not bright. It is with great sorrow that this pen makes this remark. The real contemporary task of *prabodhan* is to suggest means to awaken Hindu society. The suggestions we put forward will not be of the delicate homeopathic type being proposed by other reformers of society, where

**a single mustard seed is put in a bucketful of water.**

The way of *prabodhan* is one of surgery. If you can stand it, then try it. You will be free of suffering in an instant. Otherwise you can resort to homeopathic gargles, or the concoctions prescribed by those in the Brahmins' entourage, or the bandages offered by lectures on the *Puranas*. And then of course you have the various medicinal oils proffered by all and sundry, you can spend the rest of your lives rubbing them in!

**Our dharma today is no religion at all. The prevalent Brahmin–priest-based (*bhikshukshahi*) Hindu religion is a shameful farce whereby the Brahmin priests (*bhats*) sway the moronic masses to stuff their pockets and their mouths.** The Brahmins have so completely captured the minds and imagination of the masses by disseminating false illusions that the latter behave more mindlessly than animals. Thus the root cause of our deplorable condition is to be found in the bellies of these Brahmins, not in their sweet-talking lips; and hardly had a handful of persons realised this than another century vanished into the void of history.

In this farce of the religious slavery of the non-Brahmins, the temples must top the list. Temples did not arise at the time of Brahmadeva's naming ceremony. They are a recent acquisition of Hindu religion. The Marathi word *deul* is derived from the Sanskrit *devalaya*, that is, 'abode of the gods'. In our philosophical works, the gods 'span the animate and inanimate worlds'. Then what was the need for this all-pervading god to come and stay within four walls topped by a dome and a *kalash*? I do not understand why this many-limbed all-pervading god has to abandon the whole world to set up home in the temples of Hindus, as if he were a passenger new to the city alighting at Boribunder and heading for a meeting hall or the Taj Mahal hotel. Until Buddhism was banished from India (that is, at the beginning of the Christian era), we do not find any trace of temples in Indian history. So, until then, where were our Hindu gods, shivering in the cold winds and sweltering in the sun? If, as our scholarly researchers say, we date the Rigvedic period to at most 7,000 years before the Christian era, then how and where did our *moksh*-giving gods survive without *devalayas* for so long? Look at the splendour of today's temples! While a living person has difficulty in getting a dry *bhakri* once a day, these gods get breakfast in the morning, a plate piled high with all sorts of goodies in the afternoon, then tiffin in the evening and dinner at night. Not a day passes without all this. Then of course there are the dawn prayers or *kakad aratis*, incense *aratis*, bedtime *aratis* and what not. Millions of poverty-stricken Hindus, especially our god-fearing faithful unfortunate untouchables, cannot find even a shred of gunny-sack to protect themselves from the bitter cold, but our gods cannot do without covered beds, mosquito nets, mattresses and pillows. Can it be that the Brahmanical priestly regime's Adi Shankaracharya had set up the *Mahaarwadas*, *Maangwadas*, *Dhedwadas* and *Bhangiwadas* just to demonstrate how the gods who loll about in luxury today lived in the days when temples did not exist? I am sure that when temples had not been built, like the Mahaars and Maangs,

### **our gods lived in the cremation grounds,**

an existence earned by their past karma. To escape from that life and and to gain this luxurious life of ringing bells and *aratis*, the gods must have pleaded with the Brahmins and licked their feet, whereupon the Brahmins in their Vedic generosity granted them this palatial Brahmin-approved prison-like temple life.

Before we consider how to deal with the gods and their temples, it will be useful to outline for our readers how these two institutions came to

exist. For this, along with Aryan culture, we need to briefly sum up the ancient history and culture of the Semitic peoples of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Like the Aryans, the Semitic people were hardy nomads who reared cattle, and made their settlements now in one place, now in another. The Aryans had, by the time of the composition of the *Rigveda*, that is, by the time of nature worship, roughly outlined some of their ideas about religion. But the Semitic people had not formulated their ideas about religion so systematically; they were in the process of formulating them. Even so, be it the Aryans or the Semites, neither of them had any conception of the kind of emotions that are conjured up in us today whenever the word 'religion' is uttered. Temples had not thrust their way into the religious ideas of the Aryans even several centuries after they had crossed Punjab. Even though in their *sangha*<sup>1</sup> system, the kings (kshatriyas) had been immediately followed by the creation of a class of *upadhyays* and mendicant priests, the notion of temples had not yet touched them. History shows that it was the Egyptian and Sumerian *sanghas* that took the lead in this respect. Cities first came up in Egypt and Mesopotamia. We find that each city had one or more temples. These temples were usually located near the king's palace. And the dome of the temple was so built as to be much higher than the dome of the palace. This practice of building temples later spread to Phoenician, Greek and Roman cities. Just as in Egypt and Sumer, in Africa, Europe and the western part of Asia too, wherever ancient culture laid its footprints, there we can clearly see, for the first time in history, the emergence of temples. This was how the imagination of a temple was born in the history of human evolution and culture.

In all these temples there would be an inner sanctum or room of the god. A grotesque image of an animal or a half-human would be placed therein. In front of this there would be a ritual altar (*yagnakund*) for sacrifice to the gods. This idol was thought of as the god or a symbol of the god and the temple was the abode of the god. As long as there were no temples, there were no gods, so their servants were also not needed and so they did not come into being. But once gods were installed in the temples, for worshipping them, hundreds of priests and priestesses, guardians of the oil lamps, sweepers, ritual personnel who did the animal sacrifice, censer-keepers and many other such designated persons came into being. Each one would have a different form of dress. These persons acquired acceptability in society for their work. With these people it was not as it had been with the Aryans, where a Kshatriya was also a Brahmin

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<sup>1</sup> Thackeray is here referring to pre-Buddhist *sanghas*.

and also a householder, and would do any job as the need arose. All of those performing a particular task formed an association. A priest was a priest, and so he would not perform sacrifices. There would be other, specialised people, for performing sacrifices. Thus did each defined occupation become a caste, and many clever persons among the *bahujans* entered these sedentary but profitable businesses in the temples.

The task of the priests was to perform the ritual worship (*pūja*) of the stone images of the god, and to get the sacrifices properly done. These yagnas etc. did not take place daily but only on certain days. The people had given up their nomadic habits by now and were habituated to city life. After six days of hard labour there would be a day of rest, and some days of the year would be observed as festivals. As this became the trend, the duty of deciding when the days of rest and festivals should be observed fell upon the temple priests. Since people would go to the temple to find out about holidays and festivals, the temple became a calendar of sorts.

Several other things also took place in these ancient temples. The art of writing developed at about this time. And so every occasion that took place in the city or the village, every function and fortunate or unfortunate event, began to be recorded in the temple. The temple was the public records office. It was also a storehouse of knowledge. It was not only at festival times that hordes of people would visit the temple; people visited the temple on any day, even alone, for some or the other work. The priests of those times were also doctors and tantriks. It was in their nature to be helpful. And so everyone felt the temple was their home, the place to go if a thorn pricked you or your husband was sulking. If your wife ran away, you went to the temple. If you recovered from an illness, you went to the temple to give a donation in gratitude. So it came about that thousands of matters were brought to the temple. It was the place for good things, as well as for bad things too. From the anointment of the king to making a stubborn bride disappear without trace on the complaint of a husband, everything began to happen in the temple.

In Hindusthan under the influence of Aryan culture, before the dawn of the Christian era, there were many conflicts between old and new ideas in the religious sphere, and the storms of ideological revolution were continuous. The self-interested priestly class constantly made efforts to kill every small and big movement based on new ideas. (The Brahmanical priesthood has descended upon the earth for this very purpose). Starting from the ritual sacrifice of any animal that came to hand, the drinking of soma, eating of beef, the Rigvedic Aryans underwent many revolutionary

changes in their ideas and practices, and by the post-Buddhist era, most of the Hindu society had given up meat eating to become a proponent of *ahimsa paramo dharma* (non-violence is the ultimate dharma). The ideas about god and religion had also been turned inside out. But broadly speaking, up to the 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, temples had not entered Hindu society and Hindusthan. The Brahmanical priesthood, protector of obsolete ideas and conscious of its self-interests, first defeated Buddhism, and then, during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries CE, to establish the hegemony of the Brahmins, proceeded to make insertions at will into the old editions of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and gave birth to the *Manusmriti*. But even then, we do not find gods and temples in any literature of those times. There is no denying that from the wealth of the Buddhist emperor Ashoka, huge *vihaaras*, caves, *sanghas* and even temples had come into being for the ascetic practices and self-study of the Buddhist *bhikkhus*. Later the Hinayana sect of Buddhism installed images of Mahatma Buddha in the *sangha* temples and began to perform ritual worship. If we go looking for the origin of temples in Hindusthan, we find it unerringly in the Buddhist *vihaaras*. **Then in the 7<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century CE appeared Adi Shankaracharya, resurrector of the Brahmanical priesthood.** He carried out terrible massacres of the Buddhists with the help of the Scythians, that is, the Rajputs, whom he first purified. Their *vihaaras* were razed to the ground. The few remaining Buddhists were banished from the country. Lakhs of people were deported to beyond the cemeteries. These unfortunate people were deprived of even a human fate. Thus, for the first time in Hindusthan, **untouchability was created in Hindu society by Adi Shankaracharya.**

Buddhist *vihaaras* everywhere were stripped of their holy artefacts, the statues of Buddha smashed and in their place, *pindis* installed. In many places the existing images of the Buddha were altered slightly and baptised as idols of Shankara. Thus were the Buddhist *vihaaras* transformed into Shankara temples.

**As long as there were no clay pipes, no one had need for cannabis.** But once the clay pipes of temples came up everywhere, what restriction was there on the imagination of the Hindus? They grew a veritable marijuana crop of different gods. Once the Shankara temples came up, it did not take long for Ganapati waving his trunk, Maruti wielding his mace, Krishna sporting his flute, to line up one after another. The lakhs of people who had been outcasted from society and declared as untouchables, for their own satisfaction also created their own gods—Mhasoba, Khaisoba,



Chendoba and many other obas—by smearing vermilion on stones. As the Brahmanical priesthood, enjoying a revival through the saintly acts of bloody carnage committed by Adi Shankaracharya, began to exert its power, the sprouting of temples and caste discrimination rivalled the spawning of a sow's litter. This is how the origin of Hindu temples has taken place.

**The Shankaracharya destroyed Buddhism to promote Brahmanical religion.** Its vengeful claws are so venomous and murderous that, right up to the present time, it openly insults and mocks at the Buddhist faith. One only needs to visit a Buddhist cave to understand how the poison of hatred against Buddhism still plays out in the minds of common Hindu people. In actuality, in these *vihaaras* or caves, the monks of Mahatma Buddha had practiced and preached the philosophy of *ahimsa parmo dharma* as well as the simple virtues of kindness to animals, mercy, peace. When the priestly hand of the Shankaracharya was drawn over these *vihaaras*, they turned overnight into graves. The poor public-serving Buddhists were ruined. Their non-violence melted into air. Very quickly, a ferocious idol of a god or goddess was installed in every former Buddhist cave, and troops of thousands of devotees began to flock there to placate them by offering sacrifices of goats and chickens. At this time, since a Brahmanical priesthood based on the eighteen *Puranas* had come into being, even though individual relationships in Hindu society were being strained through the sieve of caste hierarchy, still the network of the gods and goddesses and their offspring was growing. Since now even

### **gods had troupes of wives and children**

following them, Parvati—even though she was the mother of the whole universe—in the free imagination of the Brahmin poets had to get married to the feckless Shankara, and had to run his household, sometimes in a graveyard and sometimes in the Himalayas, with all kinds of beings from the nether world as her servants. This priestly class did not leave even Brahma, the lord of the universe, alone; after he had created the world, he had a whole string of relatives behind him, pulled out of the navel of Vishnu. In this crowd of descendants of gods—goddesses and their affairs, it is hard to find any trace of an ethical religion. We need not go far, take the Karla caves near Lonavla. These are in fact Buddhist caves. The stupa, sitting rooms and niches are all places in an ashram for Buddhist meditation. The story goes that here, outside, a goddess named Ekvira appeared. She is also called the goddess of Veher. Supposedly she is a sister of the Pandavas. Bhima carved out this cave for her in one night. She

has another history too—that she is Renuka, the mother of Parashuram. When Parashuram himself is the embodiment and supporter of inhuman cruelty, how can his mother be satisfied and bless her devotees without the sacrifice of goats? The *jatra* at Karla on full moon night in the month of *Chaitra* is famous. Thousands of Marathas, Kolis, quite a few Kayastha Prabhus and other non-Brahmin people gather there to offer their thanks for blessings and boons received. Since flocks and flocks of sheep and goats are slaughtered in gratitude, the Karla caves are bathed in blood. What happens at Karla is replicated in all such caves. Where there is no temple of a goat-eating god or goddess, people visiting the caves for pleasure parties also do not return without offering animal sacrifices. Are not these unending ‘templic’ practices being carried on at the caves of the non-violent Buddhists the epitome of Buddhism—hating? To sum up, **we must remember that the hatred the Brahmanical priestly regime bears towards its competitors lasts for generations.**

The *Manusmruti*, the *Puranas* and the temples form the threefold noose that the Brahmanical priestly regime has hung around the neck of Hindu society, in order to sustain the ritualistic domination of its caste based on its assumed virtues. The moment someone attacks this core, all reformist and deformist Brahmins hiss like snakes in chorus, surprising many of our dim-witted intellectuals and gullible non-Brahmins even today. **Every Brahmin today lives his life on the basis of these three things: the *Manusmruti*, the *Puranas* and the temples. But these very three things are millstones placed around the necks of the non-Brahmins. Destroy these three things, burn them to ashes, and the priestly regime will be ruined!** We will not be able to find even a stuffed specimen for exhibition in a museum. But for that golden day to dawn, the deadly mirage of vive and virtue impressed upon the minds of the non-Brahmins in relation to these three horrors will have to be dispelled, and that is not an easy task.

In the past, in ancient times, temples may possibly have been used for good purposes. History shows us what duty these temples or their stone gods—goddesses fulfilled by way of spreading religion or guarding it. Until Mahmud of Ghazni’s truncheons struck the Somnath temple, no one in history had even the slightest inkling that the Hindu gods were repositories of so much wealth that even the Imperial Bank paled in comparison. Until that moment, neither the Hindu devotees chanting the *Maharudra* and *Laghurudra* day and night, nor their valiant king, had any clue that the priests had been conducting the ‘religious’ business of storing treasure in the tunnels underneath the *pindi* of the Somnath temple. While Mahmud

of Ghazni divined this correctly, it appears that even the ill-fated Somnath had no inkling of it. That is why he did not know what had befallen him until he had been hit hard a few times by Mahmud's batons.

### The head is the temple of ideas,

so once it is smashed how will the idea remain there? And if it remains there like a faithful prostitute, how will Somnath understand it? By the time of Mahmud of Ghazni, the temples had become centres of all kinds of intrigues and crime. Until then, the Muslim cavalry had no conception, urge or craze for smashing temples or idols. It was Somnath that gave the Muslims the craving for smashing temples and idols. If three strokes of a cudgel yielded limitless lucre and documentary evidence of all kinds of political crimes, these intrepid Muslims would have to have been idiots or Hindus not to make a habit of smashing temples. Today's Muslims, in the matter of smashing temples and polluting idols, are only saying that this is a practice going on from before. There is nothing more to it than that.

The Brahmin of the priestly regime is the defender of religion, its guardian. If the Brahmin is alive, then religion is alive. Only when the Brahmins go to Omkareshwar<sup>2</sup> does religion come to Sonapur<sup>3</sup>. It is the cry of every radical/conservative/klutzy/time-wasting Brahmin of the priestly regime that 'the Brahmin class has sustained our religion until today'. Temples are the storehouses of religion. The Ganga of religion has its source here. The Brahmins are enthroned upon this source. The gods are actually present in the temples. The lord of the whole universe 'reigns over the animate and inanimate world', and yet now he has been stuffed into the Hindu temples. What can one do with such a god? If the god makes up his mind, or if his loyal devotee, the intermediary priest—who is chosen by birth from among gods and men—makes him take it into his mind, then within a blink of an eyelid he can destroy the whole world. The great achievement of such a god was that every brave man, before setting off to fight on the battlefield or the conflicts of daily life, would burn sackfuls of camphor and ask for his blessings or those of his (venerable) agents. **Where were these Brahmanical protectors of the faith**, used to feasting on the munificent donations of the Rajput kings, when Mahmud of Ghazni raised his truncheons against this world-governing omnipotent Somnath?

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<sup>2</sup> Probably Thackeray is referring to the Omkareshwar Temple in Pune situated next to the River Mutha which used to be used as a cremation ground for Hindus.

<sup>3</sup> cremation ground

They had already fled, clutching their waistcloths. Somnath is supposed to be an all-knowing, tough deity. But this god's alertness and toughness proved to be worthless on that occasion. **When the god was not able to save himself, then why should the Brahmin priests give up their lives for no reason**, and why should the Hindu kings, habituated to conducting all their affairs from politics to the harem through the medium of these priest-agents, take up arms for the sake of gods or temples? Where everything is perfidy, who will put their lives in danger for the sake of the hollow name of religion or for the insipid concepts of virtue and sin? Right up to the time of the attack, the chanting of the *Maharudra* and the *Laghurudra* was going on. As long as

### **voluptuous heaps of ghee and chapatis**

are falling gratis on one's plate, and as long as the pouches tied to the waists are stuffed with offerings of coins, the temples will shine with religious fervour and the priest-agents will grunt their religious teachings. But when it comes to risking one's life, who cares for the god and who sheds filial tears for the temple? It's a god if we call it so, otherwise it is a stone; it's a temple if we call it so, otherwise it is a brothel! **If anyone can show me even one Brahmin priest who has sacrificed himself for the idol of a god or for the prestige of a temple, I will give him my journal free for a year. And they have the gall to say that the Brahmins have saved religion!**

Now we must examine what kind of religion is practised in these temples of religion. The worship of idols or symbols can be thought of as a useful device for worshipping a god 'who has no beginning, middle or end and is almighty', and it is forgivable for some time, nay has been forgiven till today. **But the idol in these temples is not a god, it is a mere stone.** It is a trivial object like a doll used by children playing 'house'. From the priestly Brahmin agents to the men and women worshippers rubbing their foreheads before it, all are clearly aware of this. Every Hindu understands that worshipping and praying to such a piece of rock is not going to bring self-advancement, and is aware that if it comes to a matter of life and death, this decorated stone is definitely not going to be able to save itself or its devotees. Then **why do Hindus flock to the temples by the millions** every morning and evening to ring the temple bell? Fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers go; do they go for the sake of it, or are they drawn there by some magic spell? If the sentiments of Hindus towards their temples and their gods were genuine and inspired by intense love, neither a single temple nor a single god would have fallen to the Muslim attack. It

is like our theatres, cinema-houses and tamasha theatres, which are places to seek a moment's recreation, and where we are free to take the moral message conveyed or leave it behind. The Hindus don't seem to have given more value than this to their temples. And yet if we listen to the flow of words with which the Hindus express their love for their temples and their gods, even the Niagara Falls will not be able to match this flow! What can explain this Brahmanical chicanery?

The answer cannot be found anywhere on the map of India, but in the Brahmin priest's stomach. **The religion of temples is the secret key to the Brahmin priests' livelihood.** The Brahmins have generated the eighteen *Puranas* just so that the thousands of non-Brahmins may never be privy to this secret. No matter how many revolutionary and *satyashodhak* tomes there may be, these earthly gods who sustain their bodies on the temples and are always trumpeting about the *Geeta* and the *Upanishads* always base their morality on the *Puranas*. We do not intend to expose the worthlessness of the *Puranas* here. Every creature consumed by these *Puranas* is driven mad by the idea of god, so much so that instead of placing his head at the feet of the stone gods, **he places it on the feet of the Brahmin priests and gulps down the water that has been used to wash their feet as holy water.** The temples resound with story-telling, *kirtanas*, *pravachanas* and sermons. But they are all based on the

### **twaddle of the worthless *Bhagavat***

and the claptrap of the *Puranas*. The British rulers and their fair-skinned ICS intellectuals (*Bruhaspatis*), charged with implementation and fair administration, can never understand what filthy and perverted impact these *Puranas* have, are having and will in future have on the minds of the Hindus who regularly listen to and meditate on them. So they do not feel the pain that the sting of the obscene slanderous Brahmanical *Puranas* has caused to the non-Brahmins; and if an alert reformer among the non-Brahmins gives vent to this pain by putting on his shoes and vigorously shaking the pigtails of the Brahmanical priesthood, these foreign fair-skinned judges have no sympathetic feelings that might enable them to understand the reasons for this. Consequently, the judge's **scale of justice**, swaying from side to side like the movements of the *dhobi* thrashing his clothes while washing them, inevitably gets caught in the recitation of the *Puranas*, that is, **the sacred thread of the Brahmin priest.** The *Puranas* puff up the importance of the temples. Many thinkers say that the *Puranas* have the vitality of Holi. **I would rather say that they are wells of excrement.** Some cowardly reformers say that there are some good things

in the *Puranas*. Indeed there may be gold coins lying in the well of excrement. Those who wish can go looking for them; I will not stay their hands. If the *Puranas* are wells of excrement, one can only imagine what factories of vice those temples must be whose existence is rooted in those *Puranas*.

The temples are the birthright of the Brahmin priesthood, their inherited estates. It has become a rule of the orthodoxy that there are no temples without Brahmin priests, and no Brahmin priesthood without temples. That is why the *Purana*-spawning Brahmins, in order to hugely multiply the number of temples, have also increased the number of gods till it has reached 33 crores. And they have also created a caste hierarchy among the gods. In the *Vishnu Purana*, Vishnu is the best, all other gods are sly and cunning; in the *Ganesh Purana*, Ganoba is the best, all other gods are weak; in the *Puranas* of the goddesses, all the gods of the male gender are rascals. In this way they have set the gods quarrelling amongst themselves, and have given birth to different sects of Hindu society, each dedicated to the traditionalised worship of a different god. In this competition to build a temple for every god, the whole of Hindusthan has been deluged by temples. And even though the different gods and their devotees are always in conflict with each other, still, without any discrimination, a priest will turn up as the agent between god and man in every temple. Even if the priest-father is a pujari of Rama, the priest-son is always ready to offer puja to Ravana. Besides, there is now a custom of building several temples of the same god in the same town. The *pindi* of Shankara is everywhere of the same shape and colour, but a Shankara temple in Somwar Peth becomes Someshwar, if the temple is beside a big lake, it will be Bigeshwar, if Baloba Pagadbanda built it, then we have Baleshwar, if the *pind* was found near the 'Hanging Banyan' tree (a banyan tree from whose branches people had been hanged), then it becomes Hangeshwar. Thus the priests have created hundreds of gods and solved the problem of where their food will come from. The descendants of those who become *pujaris* (priests) through mere accident become the hereditary priests of those temples. The naive Hindus who have lost their reason through enslavement to the *Puranas* donate villages, land and jewellery to the temples, and these fall into the laps of the Brahmin priests. This possession of entire villages by priests is done in the name of god. A single temple estate overseen by a Brahmin priest has an annual income of twenty to twenty-five thousand rupees. Of this, hardly seven and a half thousand rupees is somehow spent in god's name. The rest disappears in the belching of the estate's Brahmin head. The jewellery donated to the

temple makes an appearance only at the annual temple festival. The rest of the time it adorns the bodies of wives and mistresses. It is said of many temples that the garland of flowers offered to the deity reappears within an hour as a festoon (*gajra*) in the hair-bun of somebody's wife.

### An idol of Tilak in Maruti's navel,

or god Datta sweating profusely—these are other-worldly miracles indeed! The income from the land and property of many temples runs into crores of rupees, and on top of it the earnings from the annual temple *jatra* never falls below a few lakhs. **How many lakhs of priests have bloated their stomachs on the strength of this wealth**, how many agents and lawyers live on mediating the civil wars among them—if a commission is appointed to investigate this, terrible things will come to light. If the last 50 years' record of criminal cases was examined, our Hindu temples will be found to be the birthplace and the arena of thousands of legal and moral atrocities. To conclude, however much the Hindus may celebrate the 'temples of religion', the religion of these temples has become so bizarre and filthy that it nauseates; even the 'sacred' Puranic account of how the *pindi* of Shankara originated seems civilised in comparison. The task of speaking or writing frankly on this topic should not fall to some enraged non-Brahmin, but to a commission appointed by our paternalistic British government—only then will this holy priesthood truly learn its lesson!

How much spiritual upliftment of Hindu society has taken place due to these temples and the deities within them—if we measure this by the bloated bellies of the priests and mendicants, we may as well declare that today's Hindus have attained the state of spiritual moksha. Why should a community that has become so lifeless bother itself about today's jostling over Swaraj or non-cooperation? The Brahmin priests, who till ten years ago on the basis of political machinations boasted of bringing about all-round rejuvenation of Hindus and creating homogeneous unity amongst them, are today using their priestly intelligence to sing the tunes of social reformers. Why should the Hindus, who have been led by the temples into a state of transcendence, have anything to do with all this clamour about social reform or politics? But since the clamour is going on, it has become clear that the temples of the Hindus and the stones and rocks inside them that are worshipped as gods have proven to be useless in matters of religion, morality, justice or social organisation. If we look at the history of these temples ever since Mahmud of Ghazni kicked Somnath on its head, the temples have done nothing but to impede the progress of Hindu religion, Hindu society and justice—morality; they have only allowed a host

of shaven-headed *gosavis* (clerics or priests), sycophantic beggars, idle louts and greedy priests to roll in opulence.

The political acumen of Brahmin pundits is shown only in shouting about how Hindusthan has become poverty-stricken, how the farmer who takes out grain from the soil has been driven to beggary, how our *desi* (domestic) businesses have been destroyed, how the middle class has become almost extinct, how educated degree-holders are forced to starve, etc. etc. It is time attention was paid to how much immeasurable wealth is locked up in Hindusthan's temples, and how it is not used for the liberation of the nation, but for the comfort and opulence of idlers, thieves, sycophants and rascals. Millions of our countrymen are dying from hunger in the famine, but the stones and rocks in the temples still get their servings of ghee and sweetmeats three times a day. Thousands of young people with degrees may be hunting for jobs, but the adornment of rocks and stones with jewellery worth billions of rupees goes on in the temples every day. **While the nation's farmers cannot afford to eat even chaff or mend their rough blankets, the ballooning stomachs of the priestly army in the temples has not seen the slightest compression till today.** While 96 out of 100 children are crying out for someone to teach them the basics of education, under the temple dome lakhs of moronic priests, *gosavis* and shaven-headed mendicants and wastrels with ash and vermilion lines on their foreheads, displaying their religiosity by muttering over *rudraksha* beads, are swallowing up sacks of grain and stuffing themselves sick.

Under the temple roofs, how many

### **descendants of declared celibates grow,**

how many devoted wives become mothers of sons without any help from their husbands, how many *gosavis* become moneylenders, how many heads of monasteries are completely drowned in drink during Gopalkala, how many gangs of useless idlers live like parasites—if a judicious survey of these matters was carried out, it wouldn't be surprising if bands of Hindu youth imbued with new revolutionary thoughts came forward, rolled up their sleeves and burned these temples to the ground in disillusionment, even before Muslims attack them or a storm of Bolshevik thinking arises. **The religion of the temples that were erected in the name of religion has today become so devilish that, without its abolition, it is unlikely that the future of the Hindu people can be without risk.** If the temples are sanctuaries of Hindu religion, then all Hindus must be welcome to enter there. However, the caste discrimination and caste hatred that these



Brahmins have spread in the outside world have entered these temples of religion too, and therefore it will not be wrong to say that the **temples are hell-holes of Hindu caste hatred**. The Brahmin priests through their prodigious imagination have given birth to mountainous piles of rocks and stones as gods and temples in order to preserve the dominance of their own caste; however much we may picture them as temples of the Hindus in our minds, they are therefore run to this day as the **'hereditary estates of the Brahmins'**. The holy river (Ganga) of religion flows in the temples, and the priests of the temples are for all of Hindu society the father, guru, judge, saviour and earthly god. Even if the entire Hindu community gives up all its worldly goods and pours it at the feet of the gods and their temples, still the real owner of the temple and the god is the priest. Without him the god will not accept anyone's prayers. If an upstart non-Brahmin declares that he will perform worship himself, the priests, who normally do not have to worry about their daily bread, get real scared. They create a huge furore. The god will not recognise the worship. The statue (of the god) will immediately develop cracks. He (the god) will break into a terrible sweat. He will get influenza. So he will not grant you your prayers. He will not sleep after the evening *arati*. He will not wake up for the dawn *arati*. He will not taste the *naivedya* (food) that is offered to him. He will not seat himself in the palanquin. If the god has a goddess, he will not enter her boudoir. He will not eat *paan* (betel leaf, traditionally offered to god after *naivedya*). Even if he eats it, he will neither swallow it, nor spit it out. So many times, like a cunning prisoner escaping from prison, the god even vanishes from the temple, and Poteshwar of Pune re-emerges as Phadeshwar of Paithan. Since in the entire universe only our Brahmin priests have the capability of handling these wayward gods and goddesses, only they can decide about how close or how distant the non-Brahmin Hindus should be to the gods and their temples; this power has been bestowed on them from the times these temples were founded. Even though there is nothing surprising in this, it is here that we can most clearly see the history of the slavish mentality of the non-Brahmins.

### **Bullets for you and bread for me,**

this is the orthodox credo that the priests have sustained with assiduous effort up to now. After Jagadguru Shankaracharya through the Brahmanical priestly regime inserted a division in the social sphere between touchables and untouchables among the Hindus themselves, his successors and the 'holy' priests have with great effort used these accursed Hindu temples to draw a sacrosanct chalk circle between Brahmins and non-Brahmins among

the ‘touchables’ as well. **The hellish river of the Brahmin–non-Brahmin dispute has its source in the temples;** and all those rational touchable and untouchable Hindus who from the bottom of their hearts feel that this dispute should be finished at its roots should strike their first blow of rejection at these temples. Unless the grandeur and power of the temples is destroyed, the dualism that has been the main cause of the slavishness of Hindu society will never be banished from Hindusthan.

Even if we leave aside the question of whether idol worship is good or bad, true or false, beneficial or harmful, devotees earnestly feel that there is some special godliness in the temple gods. Take the words of the abhang:

*Standing at god’s door / Even for a moment*

*This action brings you freedom / You attain it*

However sweet these words may sound to the ear, in relation to the Hindu temples and their gods they don’t ring true. The poet who stands ‘at god’s door’ ‘for a moment’ or pleads to be allowed to stand there is mentally a slave to the greatness of the Brahmin priests; little will that dunce know about what tricks the gods are up to inside the temples. Even if someone tells him, will he be convinced? When one enters the temple, one becomes anxiety-free for a moment, is at peace, forgets the world for a second, and, placing his head at the feet of the god, immerses himself in the infinitude of nature—what is there in these idols of gods that one develops these feelings? For, what applies to humans applies also to the gods. The luxuries that humans enjoy are also enjoyed by gods; human feelings are also gods’ feelings. Humans shiver in the cold, so do the gods. When summer heat grips the village, the god’s fan starts up.

### **Pitchers dripping water are tied above Shankara’s *pindi*.**

If humans take a siesta after their meal, so does the god. Humans sleep at night, the god too lies down on the bed as soon as the evening *arati* is over. Then the gods will not wake till the time of the dawn *arati*. To sum up, since we hold these stone gods responsible for all the good and bad thoughts of human beings, the dividing line between man and god is like the ‘breadthless length’ of Euclid’s line, it has become something to be taken for granted. It is all very well to say ‘like devotee, like god’, but we cannot ignore the fact that because of people’s infatuation for god, their mental outlook has started degenerating.

Even in this situation of debased sensibilities, the god is the god of the Hindus and the temples are temples of the Hindu people. Even accepting

that temples are only for Hindus, and not for non-Hindus, everyone who calls himself a Hindu—whether he be a Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya or a Shudra, whether he be a Mahar, Mang, Dhed or an untouchable, or whether he has been converted through purification—each one must have a **religiously sanctioned right** to enter the temples and offer prayer to the gods according to his faith and his means, or at least to lay his head at the feet of the god. Wherever this right does not exist, wherever caste divisions, differences in views or conduct or custom that exist in the world run riot in the temples, wherever the rubbish-heap of our misanthropy is laid out before the god of whom it is said, ‘O Merciful One, You are the protector of the poorest orphan’, then the radical reformers amongst us who swear by democracy should openly declare, not caring for anyone’s feelings, that **these are not temples but houses of the devil**. The reader should decide for himself how vain and devious are the boasts of those bands of purifiers who defend these temples that nurture enmity and hierarchy between man and man in the Hindu fold.

These days the winds of democracy are blowing around us. Today nobody has the power to oppose the freedom of the individual. At such a time it would be fitting if the storms of democracy were to enter the temples as well. Those who uphold political independence must also work to abolish slavery and to destroy institutions that promote slavery. We suggest three ways in which the temples that spread hatred between people (misanthropy) within the Hindu community can be dealt with.

### **First Way:**

The first path is that of boycott. This is a liberal, mild path smacking of *Birbalgiri* (the methods of Birbal). If in Hindu temples, Hindus are denied the right to enter and worship without Brahmins, a right which is sanctioned to them by religion, then **we must look at the temples not as belonging to the Hindus, but as cremation grounds of the devil, and boycott them**. We should slap ourselves hard in the face for the idiocy of having sustained them till now by foolish donations and gifts, and swear **‘by our mothers’** that we will never again support them directly or indirectly, nor will we ever try and construct new temples. However, this is not such an effective path. If we take this path, much time will elapse before these corrupt edifices are extirpated, and till then the process of Hindu lives becoming infested with worms will continue. The farsighted Brahmin priests have filled the coffers of each holy shrine with so much wealth that, even if the entire non-Brahmin world boycotts them, the varna tradition of these temples can carry on without hindrance for a

thousand years. Even though the whole non-Brahmin world has, following nature's laws, been born out of its mother's womb, since the Brahmin caste alone has been born from the mouth of Brahma, all the magical powers of that four-headed creator incomparably shimmer in the Brahmin caste. So which ordinary human can oppose the members of this wizardly caste who are one step ahead of Brahma himself? They will find one trick after another to overcome such a boycott. Foreseeing that the old temples and the old gods will not remain profitable after a time, they have already started a project of creating temples of a new kind. The statues that we see today, and the new ones that are being made, and the lakhs of rupees of people's money that is being shamelessly sunk into them and quietly swindled—just take a glance at these, and you will catch on to the fly of suspicion that is buzzing in my mind. The four pillars with heavy chains that we see in the backbay of Bombay today will soon be transformed into a towering temple, and the god Tilakeshwar residing in this temple and competing in height with the dome of Babulnath temple will bless his devotees 48 times every 24 hours. The point is, the path of boycott is not as intimidating as it might appear.

## **Second Way:**

The second path is to stand in the way of existing practice, or rather to make mincemeat of accepted practice. Staking a bold claim to Hinduism, **all Hindus should audaciously assert their right to temple entry and to worship the gods in the temple.** Tradition is the true sister of rituals. Only the impotent, slaves and idiots should care for it. What difference is there between the Hindus of Amaravati who put forward oral and written petitions—pleas saying, 'We are Hindus. Please will you allow us to enter the temple for a glimpse of our god?' and the Indians making Congress-like pleas, 'We are capable of self-governance. Please will you give us Swaraj?' **If the question of Swaraj is like a fish swallowing a ruby, the question of temples is about the Brahmins having swallowed religion.** There is a common prevalent misconception that the government does not interfere with religion. If the government's laws take the side of the Brahmin priests and come in the way of worshippers boldly entering the temples, then this is an insult to the Hinduism of all Hindu non-Brahmins. Would it not be better to die doing a satyagraha rather than tolerate such an insult? Of course, this is a path to liberation for those selfish superstitious Hindus who worship stone gods and goddesses. Progressives holding modern views unequivocally reject the slavery of temples.

### Third Way:

Humans tend to hold in tight loving embrace anything that is ancient. Even if it needs to be renounced, human beings are reluctant to give it up. But there cannot be progress in any matter without sacrifice. This is an ancient law of nature. If the Hindu community wants to hold its own as 'Hindu society' in the competition with other human races, it will have to forswear its love for temples that spread the poison of dualism within its social organisation. Why did temples betray their original religion? Because they came under the autocratic power of the priests and monks. Why was the Brahmin priest able to enter the temple and become all-powerful there? Because some or the other stone god was ensconced in the temple. Because of the god we have the priest; because of the priest we have the temple. If we sack the gods from the temples, then the priest and his monarchic power can be permanently dislodged, and the temple buildings and their wealth will be freed for whatever nation-building purpose we may wish. All idols and *pindis* of Hindusthan should be collected and they should be permanently exhibited in some centrally located big city, so that future Hindu generations and historians can use this exhibition to study the religious evolution of the Hindu people. An all-India Hindu Association should be formed to decide the ways in which the vacant temples and their income running into crores of rupees can be used for the reform and progress of Hindu society. If some such plan is made, then distinctions based on sect-opinion-party will end and the temples will come to be used for many good purposes. Public libraries, research institutes, meteorological centres, scientific laboratories, clinics, orphanages, social clubs, auditoriums, gymnasiums, places where all people irrespective of caste eat together—it should be possible to use the temples for all sorts of nationally beneficial purposes, without any discrimination. To sum up, once the male and female scarecrows who have been spreading filth and divisions among the Hindu people are removed from the temples and lodged in a permanent central exhibition, the path to organising Hindu people will be cleared to a great extent. If the Hindu people cannot show the gumption to make this sacrifice, then not only are they not fit for Swaraj, they are not fit even to survive—there is no doubt about this.

In the end, I would like to offer a single-minded prayer to the great god of existence, consciousness and joy: that he may inspire my Hindu brothers and sisters to abolish this religious servitude to the temples. I dedicate this somewhat lengthy musing to my readers for a revolution in their thoughts and conduct.

## GLOSSARY

- abhang:** a form of devotional poetry sung in praise of the god Vitthala
- advaita:** unity; in Indian philosophy, oneness of the soul with the Almighty
- arati:** hymn in praise of god; kakad arati: dawn arati
- bahujan:** the term was used in Buddhism to mean the majority, as in *bahujan hitaay, bahujan sukhaay*, or for the good and the happiness of all. In modern times it was used by the social reformer V.R. Shinde, who preferred it to the term *brahmanetar*, or non-Brahmin, to refer to the common people, not primarily in a caste sense. Thackeray is using the term here in the Buddhist sense, talking about the origins of the caste system, which in his view is related to the institution of temples.
- Bhagavat:** the Bhagavat Purana, one of the Puranas, probably composed between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century CE
- bhakri:** flat bread made from different kinds of millet, staple all over Maharashtra
- bhikkhu:** Buddhist monk
- Chaitra:** month in the Hindu calendar, begins with the new moon in March/April
- dvaita:** duality
- Gopalkala:** festival of the birth of Krishna
- gosavi:** religious mendicant
- jatra:** religious pilgrimage
- kalash:** the metal facsimile of a clay water-vessel that tops the dome of a temple
- kirtana:** a genre of religious performance arts, connoting a musical form of narration or shared recitation on religious themes
- Mahaarwada:** the part of a village (usually on the boundary, in a low-lying area) where the Dalit caste of Mahaars live. They also traditionally defend the boundary of the village. The other *wadas* refer to colonies of other castes then considered untouchable by upper-caste Hindus: cleaners of animal carcasses, ropemakers and hangmen, sweepers and cleaners of human excrement
- Maharudra and Laghurudra:** elaborate hymns in praise of Shiva
- pindi:** Marathi name for shivalinga
- prabodhan:** awakening, enlightenment
- pravachana:** religious discourse
- Purana:** one of the eighteen sacred poetical works commenting on the Vedas, comprising the body of Hindu theology
- rudraksha:** a seed traditionally used for prayer beads
- sangha:** means 'association' or 'community'; most commonly refers to Buddhist monastic community of bhikkhus (monks) and bhikkhunis (nuns)
- satyashodhak:** literally 'truth-seeker'. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule started the Satyashodhak Samaj to work for values of equality in society and an end to discriminatory and exploitative caste practices. His writings, and those of his followers, are referred to here as 'satyashodhak books'.
- upadhyay:** the priest who conducts all the ceremonies and sacrifices for a family, community, village
- vihaara:** Buddhist monastery

## PRABODHANKAR THACKERAY

(September 17, 1885—November 20, 1973)

*A 65-year-old man was getting married to a 12-year-old girl called Manju. A grand pandal was erected for the rich and powerful guests. This was the time when Sarda Bill (Child Marriage Restraint Bill) was being discussed in British India Legislature in late 1920s. When the old man was about to garland poor Manju, her teenager friend gate-crashed into the venue in a manner that would eventually be known as 'Bollywood style'! In his firm voice, he asked to stop the wedding! When ignored, he lit a matchstick and actually set the tent on fire!*

This boy was Keshav Sitaram Thackeray. His son Bal Thackeray, founder of the Shiv Sena, is more well-known to non-Maharashtrians (and even the younger generations of Maharashtrians), but it would be unfair and misleading to introduce him as Bal Thackeray's father. Keshav, popularly known as 'Prabodhankar' was an eminent social reformer, political activist, author and an editor.

Keshav Sitaram Thackeray was born on September 17, 1885 in the town of Panvel to a family that originally hailed from Pali village in Raigad district.

His father lost his job when Prabodhankar was young, forcing him to take up work. The young Prabodhankar took to making signboards, rubber stamps, painting jobs and repairing machines. However the adversity didn't bog him down and he also continued his studies. It was during this time that he also began writing articles, and very soon, acquired a reputation for his writings.

Keshav Thackeray acquired his nickname 'Prabodhankar' after he started his newspaper 'Prabodhan' meaning 'enlightenment'. He also penned many plays, biographies and booklets. His books include the biography of Pandita Ramabai, whose immense contribution in the field of women's education had gotten eclipsed following her embrace of Christianity. He also acted in several Marathi films like *Shyamchi Aai*, *Mahatma Phule* and *Majhi Laxmi*. Many of these films are placed among the all-time classics.

Apart from being a journalist and writer of high repute, Prabodhankar also fought against casteism, untouchability, child marriage, tonsuring heads of widows and other evil practices prevalent in the Hindu religion. He joined the Satyashodhak Samaj, the movement

launched by Mahatma Jyotirao Phule in 1873 to fight caste oppression and caste hierarchy, and make the Shudras and the Ati-Shudras aware of their civil rights and free them from the religious and emotional slavery enjoined by the Brahmanical scriptures. He very soon became an important member of what was then called the non-Brahman movement, and his writings galvanised people against Brahmanical oppression of the lower castes. Chatrapati Shahu Maharaj, who played a key role in taking ahead the work of the Satyashodhak Samaj after Jyotiba's death in 1890, had a high regard for Prabhodhankar and called him 'kodund' meaning 'bow' for his sharp writing skills.

Prabodhankar was also a close associate of Karmaveer Bhaurao Patil, who set up a network of schools and colleges across Maharashtra through his Rayat Shikshan Sanstha. The two also started a boarding facility for students from the Ati-Shudra castes.

In 1921, Prabodhankar started the 'Swadhyay Ashram', a social organization to create consciousness of social issues among the masses. The organisation took special efforts to work for empowerment of women and upliftment of the under-privileged. It would regularly organize widow remarriages. 'Swadhyay Ashram' also fought against the social evil of dowry, and would hold protests with donkeys outside wedding venues, where dowry was accepted. The practice of dedicating young girls to the god as devadasis was abolished in Goa largely due to the efforts of Prabodhankar and volunteers of his 'Swadhyay Ashram'. At a time, when love before marriage was a social taboo, Prabodhankar actively supported love marriages and got dozens of youngsters married. He also actively supported inter-caste marriages and ensured that they took place without any opposition.

After India won independence, Prabodhankar became actively involved in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement (movement for unification of Maharashtra), and played a crucial role in bringing the Left, Right and Dalits together.

Prabodhankar breathed his last on November 20, 1973, at the age of 90.



## **ABOUT US: LOKAYAT**

### **[AFFILIATED TO SOCIALIST PARTY (INDIA)]**

The Directive Principles of the Constitution direct the Indian State to orient its policy towards:

- building an egalitarian society; ensuring there is no concentration of wealth; ensuring adequate means of livelihood and raising the standard of living of the people; improving public healthcare; and making provision for free and equitable education for all children.

Unfortunately, the major political parties that dominate the Indian Parliament have decided to abandon this vision of the founding fathers of the nation. Ever since India's ruling classes decided to globalise the Indian economy in 1991, the country is being run solely for the profit maximisation of big foreign and Indian corporations. In connivance with the politicians–bureaucracy–police, giant corporations have launched a ferocious assault to dispossess the poor of their lands, forests, water and resources—to set up mining projects, build airports/expressways/malls/golf courses/villas/etc. Public sector corporations, including banks and insurance companies, are being privatised and handed over at throwaway prices to these scoundrels. Indian agriculture, on which 60 percent of the Indian people still depend for their livelihoods, is being deliberately strangled—so that it can be taken over by giant agribusiness corporations. The consequence: 3 lakh farmers have committed suicide since the reforms began. Tens of thousands of small businesses have downed their shutters. Even essential services like drinking water, education, health and transport are being privatised and transformed into instruments for profiteering. The ration system designed to check speculation in prices of foodgrains is being eliminated. There are simply no decent jobs for the youth; probably nearly half the population is unemployed or underemployed.

As the economic system becomes more and more sick, the social and political system is also becoming more and more degenerate. All-pervasive corruption; continuation of the age-old caste-based social system because of which atrocities on dalits take place almost daily; a communal political system that divides people in the name of religion and fills them with hatred against each other; a value system that promotes crass selfishness and unconcern and apathy for others—this is the reality of today.

The common people have not been silent spectators to this betrayal of the Indian Constitution. People are coming together all over the country,

getting organised, forming small-small groups and raising their voices in protest.

We must stop being sceptics, dream of a better future and believe that it is possible to change the world. Yes, Another World is Possible! But to make it a reality, we too must start our own small struggles. These will ultimately unite, like the small rivulets hurtling down the Himalayas which ultimately form the mighty Ganges, to transform and build a new society in accordance with the dreams of our nation's founding fathers. And so, we have started this forum, Lokayat.

The deepening economic crisis due to globalisation has been accompanied by a gradual growth of fascist forces in the country. With the coming to power of the BJP in 2014, not only is it implementing the globalisation policies of the previous government at an accelerated pace, it is also implementing a very regressive fascist social agenda, wherein it is attempting to not just promote backward, feudal, unscientific and irrational and even Brahmanical values amongst the people and divide the country on communal lines, it is even indirectly attacking the very spirit of the Indian Constitution. To fight this vicious fascist offensive and provide a political alternative to the people, it is necessary for all progressive forces to unite. At the national level, Lokayat is affiliated with the Socialist Party (India). Unlike the mainstream political parties, the Socialist Party (India) has consistently opposed globalisation and communalisation, and has not made any unprincipled compromises to somehow form coalitions and win political power.

We organise a wide range of activities / programs in Pune colleges, schools, city and slums, including:

- Seminars, talks, film screenings, songs concerts, street campaigns, street plays, poster exhibitions, rallies—dharnas and even solidarity hunger fasts, on various issues of deep concern to common people, such as: rising inflation; privatisation of essential services; destruction of the environment and livelihoods of common people in the name of development; the growing fascist offensive against secularism and democracy; the rising number of atrocities on dalits; and so on.
- Lokayat's women's wing, named Abhivyakti, actively campaigns and organises programs on the various aspects of gender inequality and social roots of violence against women.

Dear friends, if you would like to know more about us, you may contact us at any of the addresses on the inside cover page.

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Our dharma today is no religion at all. The prevalent Brahmin–priest-based (*bhikshukshahi*) Hindu religion is a shameful farce whereby the Brahmin priests (*bhats*) sway the moronic masses to stuff their pockets and their mouths.

The religion of temples is the secret key to the Brahmin priests' livelihoods. The Brahmins have generated the eighteen *Puranas* just so that the thousands of non-Brahmins may never be privy to this secret.

The temples are the birthright of the Brahmin priesthood, their inherited estates. . . . The income from the land and property of many temples runs into crores of rupees, and on top of it the earnings from the annual temple *jatra* never falls below a few lakhs. . . . lakhs of priests have bloated their stomachs on the strength of this wealth . . .

The caste discrimination and caste hatred that these Brahmins have spread in the outside world have entered these temples of religion too, and therefore it will not be wrong to say that the temples are hell-holes of Hindu caste hatred.

These days the winds of democracy are blowing around us. Today nobody has the power to oppose the freedom of the individual. At such a time it would be fitting if the storms of democracy were to enter the temples as well.

#### About the Author

**Prabodhankar Thackeray** was an eminent social reformer, political activist, author and an editor. He was a member of the Satyashodhak Samaj, the movement launched by Mahatma Phule, and fought against casteism, untouchability, child marriage, tonsuring heads of widows and other evil practices prevalent in Hindu religion. After independence, he was actively involved in the Samyukta Maharashtra movement.

