

The non-issue of politics over Ram Mandir

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The consecration of the Ram Lalla idol at Ayodhya and even the construction of the temple are unnecessarily being dragged into political mire by vested interests. What should have been a smooth and happy event after the unanimous Supreme Court judgment in favour of the temple is sought to be besmirched with allegations and counter-allegations by various political parties? It is a pity that some Indian politicians cannot partake of the joy that has enthused people and governments in many parts of the world. Above all, there seems to be a lot of confusion about what exactly constitutes politicization of the January 22 event.

The names of invited persons as also the modus operandi adopted to extend invitations for the consecration ceremony has been faulted. On that basis, some leaders have decided to stay away. The Congress camp in the I.N.D.I.A. grouping looks at it as the BJP-RSS event which must be boycotted on that ground. There are other leaders like Laloo Prasad Yadav, M.K. Stalin and Sita Ram Yechury who have chosen not to attend the ceremony. While Yadav might have in mind his blocking of the Advani rath and arrest of the veteran leader in 1990, Stalin has spoken vehemently against Hinduism citing his grandfather's stand. Communism, as an ideology, is anti-religion, but that has not restrained Yechury's party to have Muslim League as an ally in Kerala. The most potent reason common to all of them is the belief that they will get Muslim votes, i.e., from that segment of Muslim voters who have not accepted the SC judgment.

But then the opposition won't like to lose the Hindu vote bank either, because a large number of their party workers are practising Hindus which situation presents a perplexing dilemma to them. It is hard to believe that Rahul Gandhi, who has professed religion as a personal affair which he won't like to "wear it over my shirt" really regrets having declared himself a Shiv Bhakt and worshipped in a Shiva temple while donning the holy thread (janeu) not long back. Mamta Banerjee regularly attends Durga Puja programs in her state. In a similar vein, while declining to attend the Jan. 22 event at Ayodhya, Arvind Kejriwal is seen attending Sundar Kanda recitations sponsored by his party all over Delhi. Udhav Thackeray will pray at Kalaram temple in Maharashtra on Jan. 22. Many of the I.N.D.I.A. leaders including Akhilesh Yadav and Sharad Pawar say they will be visiting Ayodhya later.

Even the list of attendees and the method of sending invitations to different parties was criticized. Some rued not inviting a particular leader from their party, others got the invite late, still others wanted it to be delivered through some higher functionary of the organizing committee! Come to think of it objectively, those who made the construction of the temple possible ought to be invited first. That category would include the families of Ram Sewaks who lost their lives and those who are alive, members of the trust that holds charge of the temple, religious heads, the governments that helped build it, leading public figures, administrators, NGOs and general public – mostly in that order. Of course, leading public figures would include opposition leaders.

But to term the participation of the prime minister or the chief minister as a political move hardly carries sense, nor is the presence of the RSS supremo undesirable; afterall RSS which took a leading role in organizing the public movement to bring into existence the temple. Those who put hurdles in the process and are now pontificating too ought to and have been invited but they would surely be suffering from guilt complex and won't find it easy to attend it.

The one potent reason being forwarded is the involvement of government agencies in facilitating the event, but then governments in the states or at centre have had that role in one way or the other – the funding of the Haj pilgrims or the Delhi CM's Teerth Yatra program. Governmental role becomes unavoidable when arrangements are to be made for large gatherings having participation of leading public figures. The specious calls to treat religion as a personal matter which the political parties or the government of the day cannot stray into is hypocritical also because when you represent people, you represent their faith as well, but to play people of one faith against another is not only bad politics, but also a crime against humanity.

What we have seen is that the political leaders who are boycotting the Ayodhya event are either in dilemma about securing their minority vote bank which again is misleading the minority, post-Supreme Cour judgment, or they are smitten by the guilt complex carried from their past actions. Fortunately, the many sects within Hinduism are united in taking pride in the construction of the Ram temple, which should be a new milestone in Indian politics symbolizing the resolve to usher in Ram Rajya held as an ideal by that great leader of the Congress Party — Mahatma Gandhi. We shall achieve Ram Rajya when all are treated equal in the country, the governments at various levels act positively to create a truly welfare state and the leaders are ready to forgo their personal interests in order to uphold the Raj Dharma.

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