

## **How politicians use religions - and the clergy betray the believers**

It stands on the ruins of a mosque: the controversial Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Now Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inaugurated it.

Religions and faith communities are convinced that they embody all the ideals that lead to a better world. As guardians of morals and ethics, the clergy believe that they can show their believers the path that will make them exemplary beings who go through life peacefully, sensitively, respectfully and tolerantly. Many believers are convinced that they are protected and guided by God so that they can lead a godly life and ultimately achieve eternal salvation.

But if you look at the world and history, there is considerable doubt as to whether religious communities make better people out of their members. And whether they have a positive influence on society and politics.

### **Oppression and revenge**

Countless examples could be cited that prove that many faith communities and religions are prone to conflict and contribute more to conflict than to peace.

A recent example is the inauguration of the new Hindu Ram temple in Ayodhya, the holy city in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. This is where the ugly side of Indian Hinduism shows itself. It's about oppression, revenge, ruthlessness and political power.

The aggressors are Hindus, of all people, who are often described in the West as peaceful and tolerant and are revered as exemplary by many ashram visitors. A bloody conflict simmered for decades over the new temple because it was built on the ruins of the demolished 16th-century Babri Masjid mosque.

Now the Ram Temple is being promoted into a meaningful Hindu symbol. It is therefore no surprise that Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his grand entrance at the inauguration ceremony.

His pathetic words speak for themselves: "Today is January 22, 2024. Not just any date on the calendar, but the beginning of a new era." After centuries of patience, countless sacrifices and penances, Lord Ram has returned to his birthplace, he said.

It is significant that his speech had more to do with politics than with religion: "Today we have freed ourselves from the mindset of slavery and embraced a complicated past," Modi claimed. "But the future looks bright from now on. We are creating a new story."

### **The conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus escalated in December 1992 and led to the destruction of the mosque. The bloody clash left more than 2,000 dead.**

Modi fulfilled a decades-long promise to build a temple at the site in honor of the important Hindu god. The monumental building is seen as a symbol of the power struggle with the Muslim population, which is oppressed in many places in India.

The new temple is an object of prestige not only for the believers, but also for the government of the Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Modi. This reached deep into the state coffers, as the temple complex alone cost around 200 million francs. At the same time, he invested several times more in the infrastructure of Ayodhya, because he wanted the city to shine with a splendour that gave the magnificent building the necessary dignity.

## **Legal dispute in favor of the Hindus**

The conflict between the Muslims and the Hindus escalated in December 1992 and led to the destruction of the mosque. The bloody clash left more than 2,000 dead.

A legal dispute arose, which the highest court finally decided in 2019. Unsurprisingly, it was concluded that the Hindus had the right to build a temple on this property.

At the inauguration of the magnificent building, Modi appeared like a priest. Dressed in the traditional golden kurta, he presided over the religious ceremony in the sanctum sanctorum of the temple.

There was hardly any public criticism, not even from more progressive Hindus. After all, it was an important festival for all believers worldwide. Only the political opposition was bothered by Modi appearing as a priest, because elections are taking place in India in April. It was obvious that the prime minister was using the monster religious ceremony as an electoral platform.

## **Dedication of the temple as an election platform**

The opposition boycotted the inauguration. They did not want to subsequently legitimize the injustice that had been done to Muslims. She criticized the ceremony as a show of force by the ruling Hindu nationalists.

The believers did not defend themselves against being used politically. In doing so, they betrayed their religious values and submitted to a ruthless politician who primarily focuses on his political career.

India is currently far from the only country where politicians abuse religions and faith communities for their personal political needs. A striking example is the Russian Orthodox Church, which is behaving as an active warmonger in the service of Putin.

Other locations include Iran and Afghanistan, which are already largely theocracy. In many other countries that are ruled by dictators or autocrats, clergy and believers allow themselves to be degraded into compliant instruments of governments hostile to democracy.

## **Power goals of religious leaders**

The religious leaders pursue similar power goals as the politicians and betray their religious values. In doing so, they lose their credibility and contribute to the blatant injustice and oppression of the population.

Most believers around the world are probably convinced that faith has made them better people. However, the history of religions and faith communities raises doubts about this. There is often a wide gap between expectations and reality.

Hugo Stamm 27/1/24

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