

Mr. SPEAKER

Mr Bali Ram Bhagat, who has been elected Speaker of the Lok Sabha, brings to bear in the discharge of the duties of the high office, a vast and varied experience at a comparatively young age. Fifty-three-year-old Bhagat was an active participant in the "Quit-India" movement and a leader of the All-India Students' Congress. He came to the Provisional Parliament in 1950 at the age of 28 and has stayed in the Lok Sabha ever since. That he has been returned to the Lok Sabha in all the five General Elections is a tribute to his dedication to the service of his people and his immense popularity. Mr Bhagat soon made a mark by his valuable contribution to economic and financial questions in Parliament and Dr C. D. Deshmukh, the then Finance Minister, who had an eye for picking up talent, soon took him in his Ministry as Parliamentary Secretary. Given an opportunity, Mr Bhagat showed his mettle and rose to all the positions in that Ministry short of heading it. He served as Minister in the Ministry of External Affairs and led the Indian delegation to the U.N. General Assembly.



Thereafter, he rose to Cabinet rank as Minister in charge of Foreign Trade, which position he held till 1971. Mr Bhagat attended several international conferences like UNCTAD and ECAFE, Colombo Plan, IMF, Asian Development Bank, etc., and always acquitted himself creditably. With his long parliamentary experience, a genial temper and personal charm, he will undoubtedly make good as the Speaker. He can be trusted to hold the scales even between the Government and the Opposition and maintain the highest traditions of the Speaker of the Mother of Parliaments.

The Speaker, on election, ceases to be a partyman and becomes the custodian of the rights and privileges of the House. He can

neither allow the Government to take the House for granted, nor the Opposition to disrupt the functioning of democracy by obstruction. Had the British convention of not contesting the Speaker's seat and of re-electing the Speaker been adopted in India, the institution would have developed on the right lines and led to better traditions. Unfortunately, electoral contest for Speaker's seat had driven the latter to the necessity of seeking party support and had roused the suspicion of leanings towards it. By the same token, the Speaker should not seek or accept any political office if the Opposition should have confidence in his fairness and impartiality. The practice of Speakers transmuting themselves into ministerial offices, however well they may deserve it, is not in the best interest of parliamentary democracy. The Speaker, like Caesar's wife, should be above suspicion and that he will be, only if it is known that he is beyond temptation. We have every confidence that Mr Bhagat will set a shining example as Speaker, not only in the conduct of the business of the House, but also in maintaining the highest traditions of that great office.

THE SAGE OF KANCHI

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ting free from mind starts with *karma-anushthaana*? Whether we find an answer to these questions are not, it is unquestioned that this foremost of *Jnanins*, who is beyond all rules and rituals, is the most meticulous follower of the do's and dont's of our *Dharma Shastras*.

GRACE ABOUNDING

Don't, for a moment, imagine that His Holiness, willingly submitting himself to the rigour and vigour of scriptural rules, is immune to love. Far from it. He is nothing but love. A rugged tree in his disciplines, the tree is ever putting forth the tenderest shoots of love, compassion, sympathy, intimacy, mercy and grace abounding. In fact, he is a standing testimony to the truth that if

only the dictates of our *shastras* are rightly understood and observed, a society based on them will be the very heaven of amity and unity, as it really had been for ages in our *Bharata Varsha*. For, above all the do's and dont's of the scriptural laws His Holiness is living those great do's which are "His Rules" according to John Wesley (and also according to our *Rshis* with their refrain of *Loka-sangraha*):

*Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever you can*

Love is his religion, as any religion worth its name is.

Hinduism, with *ahimsa* as its first law among the *Saadhaarana*

Dharmas, is certainly the religion of love. Different schools sprang within its fold. The wise ones allowed for this as another factor helping the "Coherent heterogeneity". Anyhow, in the flux of time there are periods when the harmonious spirit permeating the diversity is lost upon an understanding people, and bigotry and mutual recriminations become the marks of religiosity. A stage is reached, when in the words of Swift "We have just enough religions to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another". When the crisis is reached, the Cosmic Mind throws out the Great Unifiers. His Holiness comes in that hallowed line. Many are the schemes piloted by him for bringing together the mutually bickering sects of Hinduism. Through the Vyasa *Bharata*

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