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Letters

The Limits of Tolerance?

I ENJOY READING YOUR PUBLISHER'S DESK. Each is very thought provoking and full of wisdom. Your last one on "Forgiving Others Is Good for Your Health" [Publisher's Desk, November, '97] is very important when people are so angry and intolerant. Our tradition has taught us to be very tolerant. Sometimes I wonder if we should have some limits or guidelines. For the past thousand years we have tolerated many foreign invasions. These invaders have converted us to their religion by sword, or a bowl of rice, or by offering education, and we have tolerated them. Foreign rulers have abducted our women, and we have not been able to do anything about it. Some of them have made us crawl on our streets, killed us and beaten us up with the help of our own brothers, and we have tolerated that. Should there be any limit to our tolerance? Are there any guidelines--what and how much should we tolerate and under what circumstances? What is important--our peace of mind or our freedom of choice and the welfare of all Hindus?

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* Yes, the history is horrific, and we should not forget. But the size of the crime does not limit tolerance. Indeed, the greater the transgression, the more true tolerance is required. It's easy to forgive small injuries. It's hard to absolve the kinds of

misdeeds you speak of. An unforgiving mind is no foundation for Hindu welfare.

Our Very Existence Is a Success

IN JAMAICA WE HAVE A HINDU ORGANIZATION called Prema Satsangh of Jamaica. We have been dedicated to the propagation of our culture and our religion, reaching out to people in different spheres of life and assisting all. We hold free medical clinics, celebrate festivals and conduct camps in aid of teaching the young children about their culture. Our islandwide membership of about 200 has worked hard these past 25 years to develop this worldwide reputation that Prema Satsangh can be proud of. Should anyone be interested in participating in any of our charities please e-mail or write to us.

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Not a British Lackey

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GLORIOUS ARTICLES on Vaishnavism. I eagerly read the article "Tradition in Decline" [Monastery, November, '97]. In the eighth paragraph, Bhaskar Misra is quoted, "The deterioration started right after the British annexed Orrisa. Mr. Kedarnath Dutt, administrator for the British, heavily criticized the maths of Orrisa in 1860, and in 1868 an ad hoc committee was appointed to review their affairs." I agree with everything he says except the portrayal of Mr. Kedarnath Dutt as an administrator for the British. Mr. Kedarnath Dutt (Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur) is a prominent Vaisnava Acharya in the Madhva-Gaudiya sampradaya. He is well known even today for his volumes of heartfelt writings.

Mr. Kedarnath Dutt's motive for criticizing the leaders of the maths was not done to serve the British. He wanted spiritual leadership to be exemplary. He campaigned for everyone to live up to the brahminical principles of purity, austerity, honesty, mercy and devotion. Srila Bhaktivinode Thakur was the father of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Thakur, who remained celibate his entire life. Both of them wrote extensively in English and sought to spread Sanatana Dharma all over the world. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati is the guru of my beloved guru, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, Prabhupada. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati Maharaja instructed Srila Prabhupada to go preach in the West. Their collective motive has always been to spread Krishna consciousness worldwide because they are dedicated servants of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, not the British.

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Bhakti Reinforcement Needed

I READ WITH INTEREST YOUR ARTICLE "Tradition in Decline," as I had visited Puri recently. Since so many maths are becoming destitute, it's no wonder they have become so rupee conscious. Knowing beforehand I would not be allowed to enter, I made a pilgrimage to Lord Jaganatha's and Sri Sakhigopal Mandirs due to their unparalleled history of bhakti. The demands for hundreds of rupees (actually, it started at over a thousand) to view the temple from adjacent compounds is nothing more than a business. This is why I don't find it surprising that Haridas Thakur's Mandir is doing so well. All I heard there was the sweet sounds of bhajans, so they got the biggest donations.

Jeff Claussen, Sioux City, Iowa, USA

Law Needs Changes

THERE IS THE POPULAR MYTH IN THE minds of many Trinidadians and Tobagians that our nation is a secular nation that does not discriminate against any of its citizens [Legal Inequity, law and order, December, '97]. Within the laws enshrined in the statute books there is legislation which protects Christianity and provides legal muscle to suppress non-Christian religious groups. The Maha Sabha again has adopted a Civil Libertarian stance on this matter, advocating that the laws not only accommodate the rights of Hindus but also that of Muslims, Baptists and other faiths. The magnanimity of Hinduism allows the Maha Sabha to do no less. To some, these are laws which are never enforced, like so many other laws in Trinidad, and therefore the Hindu community need not fear. Yet the law of blasphemy that continues to protect those who attack our religion requires changes.

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There Is a Distinction

TEN YEARS AGO A GOOD FRIEND, WHO WAS suffering from cancer, decided to fast to death [A Saint's Self-Willed Death, controversy, September '97]. He stopped taking food and liquid. As he was at home, his beloved wife and children were able to be with him. It all happened in peace. A few moments before his death, he opened his eyes, looked at each one of them and said, "Goodbye." His death was a conscious death, and in peace. This was not a suicide. The action and reaction of suicide can never be peaceful. The result of suicide is very, very painful, especially for the person in question and those who stay behind.

Amrita Sivanand, Capelle A/D Ijssel, Netherlands

Corrections

The National Research Institute for Self Understanding of Ghanshyam Singh Birla in Quebec [To Goddess, With Love, December, 1997] should have been referred to as "The Palmistry Center." In their website address, "Galaxy.html" should be capitalized.

Addresses for agencies that assist Nepal's Deuki [In God's Name, Dec. 1997] are:

1) Child Protection Center, Mehlauli, District Baitadi, West Nepal; 2) UNICEF, Country Office, Phulchowk, Lalitpur; 3) UNICEF, Regional HQ for South Asia, Lainchaur, Kathmandu; 4) Snehi Women's Awareness Center, Deomandu, District Baitadi, West Nepal.

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