Muzzling the Hindus
Category : April 1985
Published by Anonymous on Apr. 01, 1985

Muzzling the Hindus

New Saivite World: Mr. Rajagopal, what kinds of images and impressions are you taking back with you to Malaysia?

A: This was my first trip outside of Malaysia. The fact that I am visiting my Guru led me to a different scope of America. I didn't come with hopes of visiting or sightseeing: more on spiritual development.

I have not been to any temple that had such a strong vibration and peaceful surrounding [as the Kadavul temple here], the way the pujas are conducted, etc. Because here the monks are totally involved in the religion. Whereas in Malaysia the priest profession is all a paid job, so they do it for the sake of money. If you pay a bit of extra money the puja is entirely different. Also if you are well known to the temple or if you are an official of a temple or of the government, the puja is also different. So here is a categorization of pujas going on in Malaysia.

Also, I did not feel any disparity of color, as we born Indians mixed with the American Saivite people. I didn't feel any inferiority complex. The main reason is culture: we are all Saivites and are working our minds together.

Q: Did you read the NSW article about the Malaysia Islamisation issue which caused the Winter edition to be banned in your country? What are your reactions?

A: It is not surprising that they did such a thing, because they are only trying to protect the influence of other religions into Islam. So they want to uphold Islam as the top religion, or the national religion of Malaysia. What is written in the paper actually reflects only 50% of what happened at the conference. There was much

more discussed that was not reported on the Islamic issue itself, Islamic values and Islamic government. Among the Muslims themselves they had different ideas.

Q: Obviously the Islamic government is seeking to limit any coverage which makes them look bad, and they have made a strong statement by burning the newspaper, saying in effect, "Don't write anything more about the government or we won't let you distribute the paper in our country." Has that worked? Do you of the Mandram hope that the NSW doesn't say anything more about the Malaysian government?

A: The main thing that I feel is that, being a Mandram member, out main mission in Malaysia is to propagate Saivism as widely as possible. If this issue just keeps on building, the government is going to mark our Mandram. You know they just might find some loophole to shut down our Mandram itself. Under the Internal Security Act they can do anything they want without going through court procedures. For example, say they want to close up the Mandram for some reason or other. Without even telling us the reason they can do it. And you can't appeal to any courts to ask why these steps have been taken. That is the fright that we are having because we don't want this to kick back on us so that we can't do our missionary work. We also want to follow the government's policies and cooperate with them in all details of our work.

Q: So their objective-to muzzle our outspokenness-is working. They are succeeding to make us all feel afraid of what they might do if we say anything more. If that accurate?

A: From our point of view, yes, that's what we feel...We are trying to get in the line with the government policies so that we can move smoothly and not have any obstacles with them. That is the main reason why the other organizations are not doing much.

Q: How does this relate to the pamphlet that you produced on the threat of Conversion in Malaysia?

A: We wrote a really strong article. What was printed is only about 10% of what

was originally written. And the Malaysia Hindu Sangam [under whose name the document was published] refused to accept it in full, thinking that it was too powerful and their officials might get in trouble. In fact, that is why we gave the whole thing to them, And they reduced the whole thing. We issued at Thai Pusam at Batu Caves, about 15,000 pamphlets.

Q: On the balancing side, we understand the government does provide some subsidies for Hindu temples, though little compared to what it gives for Islam.

A: The government does give support for temple construction. Every year they allocate a certain amount. There is one Sivan temple in Sentu facing the graveyard. Now they have built a 200-foot gopuram, the biggest in Southeast Asia. Earlier the government allocated a certain sum for it and they have agreed to give more.