Let's Sue the New Age
Category : September 1987
Published by Anonymous on Sep. 02, 1987

Let's Sue the New Age

Naturally, the first thought that comes to mind is, "Call the lawyers and set a court date. What's the most we can hope for - $500,000 in damages, plus $2 billion punitive?" We're talking megabucks here. We're talking making Hinduism rich again, getting back to the abundance we enjoyed before the Dutch despoiled, the Portuguese pillaged, the Persians purloined and the British burgled our wealth. Before the world came to save us, we were the wealthiest religion on the earth. Rather that lament our privation, let's get it all back the honest, American way - let's sue. "Sure, but whom?" you ask grammatically.

The events of this week have provided the perfect answer: File a class action suit against the entire New Age Movement It's perfectly logical in this litigious nation. There are millions of men and women out there buying Mercedes and building financial empires all based on Hinduism's knowledge and wisdom. I know, I know - we never copyrighted the texts, never patented the methods, never registered the trademarks. We just didn't realize how valuable it all was, thought it was as free as the air, as plentiful as salt in the oceans. We were wrong. So, to compensate for that little oversight, we'll be reasonable, keep our demands under $100 per person.

This all came to us last week. It was an amazing week for encountering the New Age, as you will see. The staff was on a rare outing at Sizzler's (where an avowed vegetarian can get a good meal) here on our Hawaiian island, when the waiter, a stranger, started asking all these beautiful questions about yoga, gurus, auras, self-knowledge and enlightenment. Not great service, mind you, but wonderful conversation. When our publisher mentioned a karmic principle in explanation of a now-forgotten query, the waiter smiled and offered, "Karma, that just God's way of doing things anonymously, right?" It was as good a definition as any. We left marveling mat the seeds planted in the 1960's, and which had lain dormant through the '70's were blossoming in the '80's. But that was not the end.

The following day we were on the phone coordinating with our agent in Arkansas the purchase of a "super crystal," perhaps the largest (40 inches, over 500 pounds) and most perfect single crystal ever mined in the United States. It arrived on Kauai just this morning and is destined to be the Swayambhu Lingam in a white granite temple here. In the process of acquiring this "Earthkeeper" crystal, we discovered a crystal underground. Did you know there are thousands of people out there, maybe tens of thousands, meditating on crystals, healing with crystals, balancing energies with crystals? Even the staid New Yorker published a piece in its August 10th edition on crystal consciousness, so you know it's got to be widespread.

What is most interesting here is that the crystal people don't know (or at least don't admit to knowing) that crystals and their mystic properties were known and taught in Hindu scripture millennia ago. The Spatika or crystal Lingam is the highest form, recommended for kings and Brahmins. So what is "new" to the New Age Movement is really old.

Right there in one of their crystal textbooks which are selling like hot cakes around the country (we'll ask for 20% of gross sales in our suit and settle for 10%) they explain how to use crystals to balance energies in the chakras. Here is their definition which our attorneys will read aloud to a stunned and generous jury: "We have energy centers in the body called chakras. When the ancient clairvoyants looked at the energy centers, they saw them as spinning wheels of light, so they were called chakras, which in Sanskrit means 'wheel.'"

Ancient clairvoyants? A clear case of misrepresentation. Do they say the chakras are a Hindu concept, as old as the hills? Do they mention our yogis, our texts? Do they acknowledge their sources? Not a chance, and this is where we get them for illicit use of corporate secrets or unauthorized access to privileged information or something like that. You can hear the pulses in the courtroom hastening, see the indignation beginning to surface, sense the edginess of a wily defense team suddenly shaken by our evidence.

It's time to lay out the whole, unseemly story. Our attorneys call a hundred witnesses, each reciting a litany of infractions. One admits that macrobiotic clinics and New Age Nutrition Retreats charge $250 per day to show people the marvels of vegetarian diet, whispering that their texts are Hare Krishna cookbooks with the covers torn off. Another describes "rebirthing," reading guiltily from a New Age brochure, "Rebirthing is a safe breathing process that releases negativity back to,

and including birth..." He is stopped midsentence and concedes, under relentless scrutiny that, yes, "rebirthing" (which he get $1200 per weekend for teaching to individuals) is, in fact, pranayama, the ancient Hindu spiritual methodology. Where did he learn about it? "In India," comes the plagarist's muffled reply. The jury is motionless and mute.

"OK," confesses the next witness, "so my Past Life Regression therapy is stolen from Indian texts. So I make $150 an hour for it. So sue me." Her companion, wearing a golden Aum on a thick 24-karet chain, plea bargains for immunity and spills his, guts about how the local YMCA is really leaching hatha yoga and not some modern aerobics technique. He adds that the Subconscious and Subliminal Affirmation Brotherhood is really a covert band of japa yogis using Hindu mantras, and describes how the vegeburger at Chez Lemuria, a posh restaurant around the comer, is a Madras housewife's recipe, how the Holistic Gemstone Healing Center surreptitiously reedited Ayurveda sutras without so much as an acknowledgement, how the Nuclear Freeze Movement built its foundation on ahimsa, nonviolence, from the Eastern tradition, how the Sanat Kumar Astrological Institute was secretly based on Hindu principles, how the Center for Centering had based its non-dogmatic self-inquiry practices on Ramana Maharishi's "Who am I" teachings, how the Terminal for the Terminally Ill had unconscionably counseled and consoled using the ancient writings of the Tibetian Book of the Dead copied on a Xerox machine as they were too cheap to buy copies for each of their 50 branches.

Witness after witness added to the mountain of evidence and slowly, inevitably, the whole insidious plot came unraveled before the world. The press called for justice. It took only an hour for the verdict to arrive. "Guilty," the foreman's somber voice filled the chamber. "Guilty," the entire gallery echoed.

The ten billion dollars in damages was a shock, even considering the judge's observation that this chicanery had been going on for centuries and the interest had piled up. But more shocking still was the plaintiffs' reaction. They stood foursquare before the court and asked the judge to return the money. "We appreciate the judgement's fairness. Your Honor, but Hinduism doesn't have any special claim on Truth or on the ways good men and women go about discovering it. No one can own these spiritual treasurers. We only hope that the world is a bit wiser now, and knows that these are not new paths in a New Age, but an old path trod by new seekers.

Article copyright Himalayan Academy.