

[Legal Threat Forces Aerosmith CD Change](#)

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PROTEST

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Malaysia Hindu Sangam gets offensive album withdrawn from stores throughout Malaysia

First the American Hindu Anti-defamation Coalition (AHADC) of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America lambasted Sony for the Aerosmith band's CD cover based on the traditional image of Lord Krishna dancing upon and subduing the multi-headed serpent Kaliya [July, 1997]. Their protests resulted in an apology from Aerosmith and a promise from Sony to change the cover as soon as the first run of four million was sold. The AHADC requested the CD be pulled immediately from the shelves, but was unsuccessful in getting this demand met. The same cover was still on sale in American stores in October, though the new cover was on the group's website.

Not so in Malaysia, thanks to the Malaysia Hindu Sangam. They bludgeoned Sony and its distributors with section 295 of the Penal Code of Malaysia which "does not allow anything offensive to any religion to be published." No such legal recourse is available in America, where the Constitution's First Amendment on free speech allows one to say just about anything about a religion.

P. Murugiah, chairman of the Social and Welfare Committee of the Sangam's Penang State Council, brought the album to the attention of the Ministry of Home Affairs, who in turn contacted Sony. Peter Wong, Sales Manager for Sony Music Entertainment (M) SDN BHD of Malaysia, summarily issued a letter to its dealers informing them, "It has been brought to our attention by the Ministry of Home Affairs concerning the purported offensive cover of the Aerosmith Nine Lives album. Due to the sensitivity thereof, we would request that the sales of this album be stopped immediately. Kindly make the necessary arrangement to take these albums off your shelves. Our sales representatives will be collecting them to enable us to exchange them with the new album covers."

This must have been a painful move for Sony, for the local newspapers were giving the album rave reviews. As of October, the CD and cassette versions were back on Malaysian shelves, with the new cover. The album is apparently popular, a tribute to people's desire for coarse and obscene lyrics sung to uninspired American rock tunes.

Murugiah has called on MHS members throughout Malaysia to act as the eyes and ears of the Hindu community by monitoring and reporting any item which might have contents offensive to the Hindu religion. Mageswaran Palany of Malaysia told Hinduism Today, "The Hindu population here is less than ten percent, and yet we made it happen. I hope that every country can do this so that no one will think of playing with Hindus' religious feelings in the future."

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