

Paris, June 14, 2006

**On tolerance and intolerance, on appreciation and criticism.**

There have been arm-chair 'intellectual' comments from time to time that Shibendu is intolerant of beliefs and criticises guides. What is tolerance ? What is criticism ? Why should one be tolerant or intolerant ? Why must one appreciate or criticise ? Is it not possible to be free of and aloof from opposites ?

Facts do not demand either tolerance or intolerance, do not bother to criticise or appreciate. Ideas and opinions, formulations and fragmentations are endlessly caught up in opposites and dilemma. A deep religious consciousness (without the shoddy little illusion called "I" which is always in need of psychological investments and involvements) has no belief, image, symbol, motive, ego-trip (subtle or gross) in any form, guide, guilt, gratification whatsoever. Tolerance may be the want of energy to see "what is" which keeps us amused in "what should be". Facts are there for us to face them or escape from them. Why do we beat this drum of tolerance ? All beliefs, in different religions, are a source of enmity between people. Is it being intolerant to point out that obvious fact ? But if I am unwilling to look at the fact, I shall say that you are intolerant ! The fact is so patent that as long as we are divided in many beliefs (Hindus, Buddhist, Jews, Christians, Muslims etc) and disbeliefs (communists, atheists etc) as also in many "isms" (nationalism, capitalism, socialism, racialism, casteism, linguism, liberalism, conservatism, individualism etc), it is bound to create antagonism ! We are human beings, we are lives, not a mass of conflicting beliefs, ideas and isms. But we have a vested interest in our beliefs and isms. These are profitable. Societies are founded on it. Priests and politicians thrive on it. To them any questioning of belief is intolerance. But one who faces facts as they are, is surely not concerned with either tolerance or intolerance. Beliefs and disbeliefs are the result of our background, upbringing, undertaking, fears, cravings, demand for dependency, conditioning and so on. These have nothing to do with understanding, bliss, freedom, compassion and divinity. Still we go on believing because it is so much more convenient, so much more respectable and safe. If we do not believe, we may lose jobs, we might suddenly find that we are no body ! It is being free of belief that matters, not being tolerant or intolerant.

As regards guides and gurus, you follow because you have a motive, an incentive. So you are always seeking and hoping that your guide (guru) will help you to find. Seeking and becoming generates time and a stupid mind. Mind is time. Mind is fear. Freedom from time is not possible by following a guide who exploits your desire and fear. Following gratifies and helps you to escape from guilt through gullibility. Flowering, not following, leads you to Reality which is outside the field of mind-time.

It is only when there is no seeking (except in technical matters without any psychological residue or sediment), when the embodied consciousness is indeed quiet, completely still, without any form of incentive, that there is the abiding thing (rather "no-thing" or nothing!) which can not be captured by mind, which is not found in books or scriptures, and which is outside the domain of the borrowed knowledge acquired by any guru or guide. Knowledge is not knowing. One who claims to know does not know ! "No-thing" encompasses everything!

Jai Nothing-ness, Emptiness, Shunyam.