

We Don't Need Religious Freedom Lectures From the US

By Colonel Anil Athale (retd)

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[Readers, please also read my comment at the end of the article. – Skanda987]

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Dear members of US Commission on International Religious Freedom:

It has become a virtual annual ritual for you to bash India in your report.

We understand your zeal to promote a 'Flat Earth' ideology or encourage the harvesting of poor souls in India (the sort of soul commerce that evangelists of your country are busy at in our country).

Out of politeness, we will not point out instances of racial discrimination (real or perceived) that has seen violent expression in your country in the recent past.

We Indians are grateful that you took the trouble to read our Constitution and reminded us about Article 25 and the importance of religious harmony.

It is self-evident to most of us and despite the adverse propaganda by our adversaries, we are proud that we are one of the few countries in the world that give not just equal but special rights to the religious minorities.

Your constant reiteration on the lack of religious freedom in India has sown doubts about the kind of information that you are being fed and based on which you seem to be making adverse references to India and its tradition of religious tolerance.

The partnership between India and the US cannot have much of a future if there are such obvious gaps in the perception of the Indian reality.

It is hoped that this letter will help remove the cobwebs of misinformation regularly churned out by our own RNIs (Resident Non-Indians) that seems to have affected you.

Nearly a century-and-a-half ago Thomas Babington Macaulay had described these WOGs (Westernized Oriental Gentlemen) as Indians in appearance but foreigners in thinking!

You are obviously influenced by non-governmental organizations in India who have perfected the art of crying wolf on religious freedom to garner dollar donations to enrich themselves.

It needs to be remembered that Indians embarked on path of a plural democracy in 1947 in wake of a secession of a part of India on the basis of religion.

India is plural, not because of its Constitution or Article 25, but this liberal Constitution is due to the fact that the majority in India has pluralism and religious tolerance as its civilizational ethos. It must be reiterated that India gave equal rights to all its citizens on August 15 1947.

Your country gave these rights to the colored people only in 1963; and that champion of parliamentary democracy, the United Kingdom, gave equal political rights to the Roman Catholic Christians of Northern Ireland in 1968.

It is more than a little rich for the West to lecture India on equality.

Some of you spend time in India in a security bubble. But if you go to the terrace of your hotel early in the morning, you would have heard the azaan broadcast from Delhi's numerous mosques. You can experience this in every Indian city.

If you go to any Indian city, you will find educational institutions run by Christians occupying a prominent place in urban life.

For the minuscule Christian population, you will find a large number of churches, a relic of Christian British rule of over 200 years.

India has sport/entertainment icons belonging to different faiths. In fact, our film industry, the second biggest after Hollywood, is dominated by Muslims.

I wish to remind you that others like one of the richest Indians, Azim Premji of Wipro, or the heads of large pharmaceutical companies like Cipla, Wockhardt or Himalayan Pharma are all Muslims.

As far as the Christian minority is concerned, at one time we had an air force chief, defense minister and ruling party supremo all professing the Christian faith.

Despite all this, an assiduous attempt has been afoot to portray India as a country where religious minorities are being oppressed or are under threat.

There is also a new 'mythology' conjured up in our neighboring country of Partition having taken place due to the 'oppression' of Muslims.

The stark and undisputed fact of the history of India is that a large swathe of territory in northern India was ruled (often brutally) by a Muslim minority. Except for a brief period in the 18th century, this Muslim rule was replaced by the rule of the Christian British.

The religious minorities in India were the oppressors of the hopelessly divided so-called majority.

The consequences of this were that our 'Bethlehem' and 'Jerusalem' were lost, our oldest universities at Nalanda and Taxila burnt down and the natives treated as second class citizens with a religious tax like jizia imposed.

Many religious minorities have not yet adjusted to their loss of political power and patronage and hark back to the bygone era. Loss of special rights and privileges is portrayed as 'oppression.'

This does not mean that the religious minorities in India do not face problems, they do. Some members of these communities are socially and economically backward. They also suffer from hidden discrimination in day to day life. These are the real issues and not an issue of religious freedom. The problematic relationship between the communities in India is far more complex than the black and white picture you seem to have painted.

A couple of years ago, as a reaction to events in Myanmar and Assam, Muslims in Mumbai indulged in violence against the police, Oriental-looking Christian Indians from the North-East were hounded out of some cities.

Till date, over 400,000 Kashmiri Hindus live as refugees since they were driven out of their homes 25 years ago by Muslim separatists.

Indians, irrespective of faith, played down the plight of the Kashmir refugees so as to prevent a backlash against Muslims in other parts of the country.

Even during the Bangladesh war of 1971 the fact that Pakistan had carried out a selective genocide of Hindus was kept carefully hidden from the Indian public (with the consensus of all political parties and the much maligned Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh).

This does not mean that there are no crazies in India. Like the Tea Party fringe in your country, there is an extremist fringe in India as well. But like the US, this does not represent the majority and is just that, a fringe element.

Frequent uninformed interference in India's internal issues will only delay the process of Indian minorities' acceptance of equal status and giving up the yearning for a return to the days of special privileges.

Way back on October 1, 1906, a delegation of 35 Muslim leaders led by the Aga Khan met British Viceroy Lord Minto.

The principal demand of this delegation was that giving due weightage to past rule by Muslims over India, though just 13 per cent of the population, the Muslims should get 50 per cent representation in government.

This was the rationale behind the secession and much of the current anguish of the minorities in India.

[COMMENT: And yet, only in 'DHIMMI' India, will the progeny of that 1906 Agha Khan be conferred with the Padma Vibhushan!! One can't find a bigger DHIMMI Nation in the globe than 'MERA BHARAT MAHAN'!!]

Curiously, Lady Minto, the Viceroy's wife, writing in her diary, debunked this exercise and mentioned that this was engineered by the British as a part of their divide and rule policy. America is deficient in genuine social science research.

When it comes to understanding foreign civilizations or nations, Americans have a dismal record.

Even your best and brightest leaders failed to read Vietnamese nationalism -- as a result you fought a 10-year war and lost 60,000 men.

This letter is a humble attempt to promote a holistic understanding of the Indian situation lest you lose a country that has nothing but friendly feelings towards the United States.

One hopes that your comments are motivated by intentions other than following the British example. The harping on religious freedom when the real challenge is elsewhere is neither in the interest of minorities nor of India.

For the sake of the future of India-US relations one hopes that better sense will prevail.

Yours sincerely
An aware Indian

[Skanda987's comment: The intent of the above article is good and just. However it also describes some points that are the problem for the Hindus, but are described as positive points. Below are some facts as I know.

- 1. Pluralism works against the Hindus and supports anti-Vedics to work against the Hindus in Hindustan.*
- 2. The Vedic dharma (also the culture) is inherently tolerant of all the tolerant faiths. It is not tolerant of intolerant religions and ideologies. This is the reason when Arjun said he does not want to fight, Bhagavan Krishna told/advised him that he must fight.*
- 3. Islam, Christianity, and Communism are foreign religions and or ideologies that have invaded in Hindustan. They are anti-Vedic, and do not belong there. Therefore, the need is to purge out these ideologies from Hindustan and make Hindustan a Vedic State, not secular. Secularism is a Western /European medicine against Christianity. We the Vedics do not need it.*
- 4. Under confusion caused by Buddhism, Jainism, Gandhism (Gandhi was a Jain at heart), and due to lack of proper understanding of what the Vedic dharma really is, the Hindus allowed the anti-Vedics to live in Hindustan. Many Hindu incorrectly think that all religions are equally good. This is because the Vedas say that all paths lead to the same destination. The Hindus did not realize that when the Vedas said so, there was only one religion—Vedic—in the world. Therefore, “all paths” means all the Vedic paths or yogas or sadhanas. It does not include Islam, Christianity, etc. Therefore, the Vedic*

preachers need to awake the Hindus, and encourage them to live per dharma as it is, and help them stop any malpractice of dharma.

5. *The Vedic dharma provides complete spiritual science for mankind. It is non-sectarian. In contrast the invaded religions or ideologies are exclusive. Therefore, American say, “God Bless America.” They do not say “May God bless all, सर्वे भवन्तु सुखीनः” like he Hindus say. The reality is not binary (yes/no) which the Hindus know, but the Westerner do not. Therefore, father 9/11 Bush said something like, “In fight against terrorism, if you are not with us, you are our enemy.”*