

# IN DEFENSE OF BISHOP DEREK - BELAGAVI

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There was a recent furore with regard to the saffron robe being worn by the Bishop of Belagavi who embraced the roots of being Indian and termed it inculturation. The opinions got divided and the Church in India remained perplexed at best.

The Indian understanding of inclusivity and openness is so tragically affected by social media changes, modernity, colonization and rapidly changing cultural ethos, that our native conglomeration of worship, values, belief systems and faith are irretrievably lost.

For Sunday Catholics, this becomes a fancy news story, for out-standing Catholics this becomes a brilliant piece to criticise, blame and rebuke. What remains best to be explored is to first respect individual sentiments and opinions. Saffron, White and Green is also a representation of our National flag to begin with. We must all begin to accept, we are Indians first in history, heritage, values and cultures and we practice or embrace whatever we wish to next.

It is also very important to know that Jesus, Ram, Prophet Muhammad were all guiding paths to help humanity live a life of peace, tranquillity and bliss. Hinduism as a way of life is google like in authorial diversity and very difficult to encapsulate. Varied traditions, scripts and practices guide the narrative which we all embrace in pride and richness. Christianity came to India centuries ago, remained a microscopic minority in the massive ocean and has established a strong reputation of intellectual capital and social wealth which defines the nation today.

Religious practice is something we all have adopted by birth, and to an extent by migration, marriage, philosophical convictions and to make a mountain of a mole hill remains uncalled for.

Catholics must understand that, more than mere spectacle of their name and their Sunday visits to the Church, the greatest gift on earth is to at least live the life of Christ even if it be in the remotest sense of the term.

Liberal Christians making noise must first accept who they are and where they come from. They must understand history, diversity, acceptance, tolerance and secularism in the widest of the term and then venture out to do good.

It is very easy to throw a stone at others, but can we begin to examine our own backyard? How have we contributed towards the world's good? How socially responsible are we?

Do we have a world beyond an I, me, myself culture? The manner in which Pope Francis brokered peace among warring nations sets an example to begin with. When he washed the feet of ladies as a Maundy Thursday practice at Vatican, the same very Catholics had a problem with him.

When the Archbishop of Canterbury (although from the Protestant denomination) lied flat in regret at Jallianwala Bagh during his visit to Amritsar and to the Golden Temple, a lot raised eyebrows as being a sign of shame, and now if a mere wearing of a robe hurts sentiments of people, then these same very people must re-examine their conscience and work very hard to become good individuals first. After all, we all are children of this universe, if not children of God. Ain't we?