

Pope Benedict disappoints Hindus during his Malta visit

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Acclaimed Hindu statesman Rajan Zed, in a statement in Nevada, United States of America, said that it appeared that Catholic Church in Malta was not serious to share minority viewpoint and discuss issues of religious equality with minority religions/denominations, which was very sad. He had earlier urged Malta Archbishop to organise the meeting of leaders of various religions and denominations with His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI during this visit.

Zed, who is president of Universal Society of Hinduism, stressed that as a dominating majority in Malta, Catholics and Pope had a moral responsibility to take care of minority brothers/sisters from different faith/denomination backgrounds. Besides Catholic majority, Malta has minority communities of Protestants, Orthodox, other Christian denominations, Muslims, Hindus, Baha'is, Jews, Wiccans/Neo-Pagans, people with 'no religion', etc.

Rajan Zed urged Malta to treat all religions and denominations equally in front of the law. Malta Criminal Code reportedly makes one liable to imprisonment up to six months for publicly vilifying 'Roman Catholic Apostolic Religion', while committing such act against 'any cult tolerated by law' makes one liable to imprisonment only up to three months.

Zed further said that under the subject of 'religion', Malta should come up with a 'comparative religion' class teaching basics of all major world religions, including the viewpoint of non-believers, in its public primary and secondary schools. According to the Constitution of Malta (Chapter I, Article 2, Item 3): "Religious teaching of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Faith shall be provided in all state schools as part of compulsory education. "

Rajan Zed argued that Pope's reported staying away from religious minorities during Malta trip was kind of 'un-Christian' and added quoting from The Bible: "The Lord builds up Jerusalem; he gathers the outcasts of Israel (Psalm 147:2)" and "...Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another (Gospel According to John 13: 34)." Pope needed to grow-up, he added.

"Apostolic Journey to Malta on the occasion of the 1950th Anniversary of St Paul's Shipwreck on the Island" (on his way to stand trial in Rome, which is said to have brought Christianity to the island) was the third visit of a Pope to the island, who was reportedly invited by Malta's President George Abela and Archbishop Monsignor Paul Cremona.

Maltese islands were first settled reportedly in 5,200 BCE. Few European countries have such concentrated architecture, history and beaches in so small an area as Malta. Hinduism, oldest and third largest religion in the world, has about one billion adherents and moksh (liberation) is its ultimate goal.