

Dear Sir,

One of the joys of having dual allegiance is the opportunity to celebrate when your adopted land does well as well as celebrate the achievements of your country of birth. Many Indians have this pleasure. Conversely, you are also called to answer for the sins of both countries.

As an Indian Australian who came here as a student nearly 36 years ago, this has been my lot. I just returned after a trip to India and heard the anguish of my Indian friends at the unfortunate events in my adopted city of Melbourne.

Melbourne, which has constantly figured in lists of the world's most liveable cities, has shown its dark underbelly. Wonderful Melbourne, where I have raised my family and where my parents and my wife's parents have chosen to spend their retirement is being seen through my Indian friends eyes as an ugly city. How can I reconcile these varied attitudes and perceptions?

Not long back, I found myself in a similar situation. Attempting to explain to my dear Australian friends that not all Indians were right wing zealots who take pleasure in crafting a world according to their myopic vision.

Every society has its share of saints and sinners. The saints of India and Australia elevate us all while the sinners divide us and distract us from common goals. Not long ago, Melbourne had a Chinese mayor; the Premier of Victoria was of Lebanese descent and the Governor was born in Colombo. India's achievement in integrating people from many ancient religions is a wonderful ongoing experiment. Yet both societies have sporadic events when it appears that the sinners overshadow the saints. Such events should not thwart the achievements of the majority in building a fair, just, equitable and safe society. In my years in Australia, I have received immense goodwill and friendship. In my vast circle of friends of Indian origin, I have not heard of gratuitous violence and the recent attacks are a sad aberration. Nevertheless, experiences do vary and any violence is to be condemned.

A society is known by its laws not its lawbreakers. Neither India nor Australia has racist laws and as such, in my view, name-calling and finger pointing does not get us anywhere and the sinners win. Rational minds would not allow miscreants and thugs to change the nature of relations between societies who have much to gain and learn from each other.

Unfortunately, these arguments do not assuage the hurt felt by the victims of crime. Hence, it is imperative, that Australian authorities take urgent action to

reduce the growing violence in our cities for the sake of all its residents not just Indians. I hope the media, will take care to report incidents in a calm and rational manner.

I hope this happens soon so that we can all go back to celebrating our saints.

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