

**Thaipusam: Najib's religious faith quite intact**  
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I was born in Malaysia and lived most of my first 30 years or so in the country. In May, 1969, I resigned my mid-academic position and moved to live in North America. I have a Catholic background that goes back to my great-grandparents at the least.

The topic I wish to address is the controversy that has arisen from the prime minister of Malaysia attending a Thaipusam celebration.

In my youth and early adulthood, it was very common to see people of different faiths sharing festivities, attending weddings and funerals of people of other religious persuasions.

My own wedding mass (a religious ceremony) was attended by Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Christians of various denominations. So also was the case with a couple of funerals in the family. These friends all sat respectfully through the rites but knew that they didn't need to participate in the rituals.

I am sure that they didn't feel that their beliefs had been compromised or their purity contaminated. We felt graced by their presence. Their attendance was a great joy in our celebrations or great comfort to us in our loss.

In areas of the world where there are sparse populations, such as in northern Canada, for practical and economic reasons, adherents of different religions have actually worked out arrangements to share common places of worship.

A building may be a church on a certain day of the week and a mosque on another day or a temple on yet another. Each congregation always made it a point to leave the building ready for the next set of occupants to use.

The people who might have used it on a Thursday, for example, would be sure to put away their icons and the chairs, they would mop the floor to spotless cleanliness in readiness for the Muslims to use for their Friday prayers.

The salient point to be made is that such arrangements could not possibly have been practical if the users feel that their religious principles have in any way been compromised or diminished.

That the prime minister of Malaysia, a country that prides itself for its multi-culturalism and religious inclusiveness, should attend the ceremony of one of its major population components is a strength and a given. His religious faith, I am sure, is quite intact and it would be judgemental to suggest otherwise.

Puristic adherents of all religions should learn that we don't measure God's love, mercy and compassion by a limited human scale.

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