

## Exposing the Tolerant Indian Hindu of the 21st Century

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There are many screenshots from WhatsApp groups that I wanted to originally use as a case study but the repercussions of even asking for permission from group members distressed me. On these WhatsApp groups and elsewhere in real life, there's the conservative's fear of the "post-modern" Hindu showcasing liberal individualistic thoughts; and on the other hand, there's the "liberal individual" Hindu that rejects the conservative's integration into a defined political agenda, and to overcompensate the shared identity promotes gestures that are symbolic of a sense of "real" history by means of sharing posts of a "traditional" recipe of the land or by wearing "traditional" clothes. This paper attempts to investigate the positioning behind the political correctness of the 21st CE urban-educated global Indian Hindu who projects himself/herself as a tolerant Hindu. Popular media has tried to repeatedly distinguish the good Hindu vs the fake Hindu. A good Hindu believes in equality of all and is in philosophical agreement with Swami Vivekananda and wants no part in violence and chants Mahatma Gandhi's 'ishwar allah tero nām, sab ko sanmati de bhagavān', along with the national anthem. "I cannot accept Hindutva because I am a Hindu," says Nayantara Sahgal writing for The Wire.

One often hears...

I am a Hindu, but I don't believe in Hindutva. I am a Hindu, but I am tolerant of all religions. I am a Hindu, but I attend my Muslim friend's wedding. I am a Hindu and a vegetarian, but I don't impose myself on my beef-eating friends. I am a Hindu, but I don't believe in caste, there are only classes of people. I am a Hindu and I am a global

citizen, but you ought to accept that it all happened in India: the Vatican, of course comes from the sanskrit word Vatika [meaning garden]. I am a Hindu and I listen to Bob Marley, but I also secretly like a social media post that says “Bob Marley is Baba Murli”.

This paper tries to look at such apologists who are tolerant Hindus listening to Santha Shishunala Sharifa to showcase their secular composition. But as a matter of fact, Shishunala Sharifa is said to have been born to parents who were practising Basavanna’s teachings.

In “Critics of Hinduism” Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, responding to Mr. Hastie’s comments on Hinduism and idol worship, questions Hastie’s right to speak as an outsider on matters of Hinduism.

...who is best qualified to expound the ideas and conceptions which cannot be translated - the foreigner who has nothing corresponding to them in the whole range of his thoughts and experiences, or the native who has nurtured in them from his infancy? (...) I added that he should take his lesson not merely from a Brahmin, but from a Brahmin who believed (in them).

The tolerant Hindu proclaims this line of thought without batting an eyelid. All intelligentsia trained in Western thought that pretty much makes up the opposition is disregarded with this line of thought. It frames all legitimate knowledge in a very small number of people who mostly escape accountability. This seeming attack of Western thought really writes down who the insiders and the outsiders are. It also makes it a matter of knowledge transaction alone when it is mainly a matter of socio-cultural transaction.

Hinduism vs Hindutva is the conflict zone through which a tolerant Hindu defines himself/herself as the widely circulated infographic across social media platforms suggests:

# HINDU ≠ HINDUTVA

The **opposite** of **Hinduism** is not Islam. It is not Christianity. It is not Socialism.

It is **Hindutva.**

Hinduism is a great union of various Indian cultures and traditions, with diverse roots and no founder.	Hindutva is a homogenous racial-territorial category propagated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.
Hinduism is thousands of years old - one of the oldest practised religions / spiritual paths / way of life in the world.	Hindutva was first proposed as a political idea in 1923 by Savarkar.
Hinduism does not have one, but many central texts - the Vedas, the Puranas, the Itihasas, Nyaya, Vaisesika, Yoga, Samkhya, Mimamsa, Vedanta...	Hindutva has one central text - the political pamphlet 'Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?' published in 1928.
Hinduism is pluralistic. It is a union of many ways of life.	Hindutva is monolithic. In that, it is more like Islam and Christianity than Hinduism.
Hinduism is unique in its inclusiveness. It embraces multiple systems of thought within its umbrella. It looks at the entire world as its family.	Hindutva is exclusive and practitioners of Hindutva actively hate and fear the other religions. Especially, Islam and Christianity.
Hinduism is synonymous with secularism. "Aano bhadra krtavo yantu vishwatah," - the Rig Veda. "Let noble thoughts come to me from all directions."	Practitioners of Hindutva oppose the traditional secular Hindu way of life - the very tenet that makes Hinduism unique.

SO ARE YOU A **HINDU** OR A **HINDUTVAVAADI**?

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Should the reader be sympathetic to the confusion of the Modern Indian who is trying to negotiate his spiritual world with the political just the way Swami Vivekananda was? This secular seeming question is problematic because it lacks an understanding of both what is Hinduism? and who was Swami Vivekananda? Jyotirmaya Sharma answers the latter in his book "A Restatement of Religion: Swami Vivekananda and the Making of Hindu

Nationalism” where he clearly states that Swami Vivekananda was among the first ideators of political Hinduism that bears resemblance to present-day Hindutva. This paper reminds us that a return to history to understand the present is as important as raising the right questions about the present in the present.

The bottom line being, the relations of power are increasingly made difficult to counter. Tejasvi Surya, MP from Bengaluru South and a representative of BJP in whose office is a life-sized picture of Swami Vivekananda alongside a portrait of Modi, has openly declared allegiance to the LGBTQ community. He has asserted that legalizing same-sex marriage would be a natural consequence after the Supreme Court repealed Section 377.

Swarajya’s Arihant Pawariya, along with a regular podcaster Kushal Mehra, has argued that if Hindus are against a Muslim lecturer being appointed in BHU, they are not supporters of Hindutva at all. A seemingly liberal thought when probed shows that the real reason is that one needs to re-integrate the people of the land into the Sanatana dharma and Sanskrit becomes an important tool in doing so.

The above-mentioned podcaster owns a channel called “The Carvaka Podcast” and claims to be a nastika who does not believe in the Vedas. I do not want to question his cool quotient in this paper, but he’s often caught saying and I paraphrase “If you’re a true believer, you must be tolerant of all thoughts and ideas.” But how do you measure if this tolerance has a natural threshold or if it is forced? Because such a situation makes it harder for the relations of power to be studied and deconstructed. If Modi, like Trump, would simply speak his mind unfiltered, he would be less dangerous when compared to the Gandhi-reverent man he portrays himself as. If a Zizekian is to speak, this political correctness would be seen for what it is: a post-modern form of totalitarianism. Because a direct form of authority is much easier to rebel against. For example, A Brahmin man calling someone asprushya/untouchable is much

easier to rebel against as opposed to calling the same person a Harijan. Zizek, as must all of us, sees something very fake about political correctness. Of course, it could be a step towards acceptance as the particular incident was pointed to in the case above with Tejasvi Surya. But more often than not, the tolerant Hindu is extremely dangerous to the progressive secular space of the nation.

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