

Inclusivism and Tolerance

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, Paul Hacker's idea of inclusivism and its distinction from tolerance will be problematized; but not before the very notion and idea of tolerance are discussed, that might actually be conditioned by modern worldview and experience. Paul Hacker argues that Hinduism is not tolerant but an inclusivist religion and that a tolerant religion can only be one where a clear difference between "itself" and "other" is established. The article will present examples of Bhagavadgītā, which corresponds to Hacker's notion of inclusiveness, and the example of Dārā Śukūha, which corresponds to the concept of tolerance. However, while tolerance is a concept developed in the Western cultural and religious milieu, in Hinduism, there are many examples of inclusivism without the hierarchization of included concepts. That is why this paper would propose to postulate two types of inclusivism, one with hierarchy and the other without. An example of inclusivism without hierarchization might be Ramakrishna. The conclusion is that the situation is complex and that both types of inclusivism, the one with hierarchization and the one without, have the potential to regulate the daily practice of toleration in society.

Keywords: Exclusivism, Hinduism, Inclusivism, Intolerance, Tolerance.

SAŽETAK

U ovom radu problematizirat će se ideja Paula Hackera o inkluzivizmu i njegovom razlikovanju od tolerancije; ali ne prije nego što se prodiskutira sam pojam i ideja tolerancije, koja zapravo može biti uvjetovana modernim svjetonazorom i iskustvom. Paul Hacker tvrdi da hinduizam nije tolerantna već inkluzivistička religija, te da tolerantna religija može biti samo ona u kojoj se uspostavlja jasna razlika između "sebe" i "drugih." U članku će biti prikazani primjeri Bhagavadgite, koja odgovara Hackerovom pojmu inkluzivnosti, i primjer Dārā Śukūha, koji odgovara konceptu tolerancije. Međutim, dok je tolerancija koncept razvijen u zapadnom kulturnom i religijskom miljeu, u hinduizmu postoje mnogi primjeri inkluzivizma bez hijerarhizacije uključenih koncepata. Zato bi ovaj rad predložio postuliranje dva tipa inkluzivizma, jedan s hijerarhijom i drugi bez. Primjer inkluzivizma bez hijerarhizacije mogao bi biti Ramakrishna. Zaključak je da je situacija složena, te da oba tipa inkluzivizma, onaj s hijerarhizacijom i onaj bez hijerarhizacije, imaju potencijal regulirati svakodnevnu praksu tolerancije u društvu.

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INTRODUCTION

Originally, this paper was presented at the symposium "Faith in God—unites or divides?" which was held in the beautiful atmosphere of the European Academy in the Banja Luka diocese. The context of the symposium is a commendable project of the European Center for Reconciliation, Peace, Interreligious and Interethnic Cooperation at the "Maria Zvijezda" Meeting House. Within the project of developing interethnic and interreligious dialogue between the Bosniak (Muslim), Serbian (Orthodox) and Croat (Catholic) communities, this paper will problematize some aspects of interreligious relations in the context of the Indian subcontinent. This paper is conceived as a kind of meditation on the issues of inclusivism and tolerance within the framework constructed by the German Indologist Paul Hacker (1913–1979). The issue that this paper will address is the relationship between the concepts of inclusivism and tolerance; are they mutually exclusive? Do they belong to different sides of the same spectrum? A related question

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is whether they operate in different thought and value systems. The question of toleration, or rather, the peaceful coexistence of communities belonging to different religions, is deeply related to the main framework of the project, namely the question of how much religion divides and how much it unites members of different communities.

Religions of the Indian Subcontinent and Paul Hacker's Concept of Inclusivism

From an early age, the Indian subcontinent was considered a place where different religions coexisted in peaceful coexistence. Halbfass¹ cites the early (possibly even the earliest) example of Francois Bernier (1620–1688), who stayed in India from 1658 to 1670. Bernier conveys the opinion of a Hindu Brahmin priest who does not claim that Christianity is wrong and that it is quite possible that it is good for Christians and that God has created different ways to reach heaven. Halbfass also conveys a very similar claim about the Brahmins made by Immanuel Kant, probably referring to Bernier. Another early example of a report on Hindu tolerance could be, according to Halbfass, the missionary Bartholomäus Ziegenbalg (1682–1719), who also described religious tolerance and pluralism in India. During romanticism, the news of Indian tolerance is transmitted by Herder, and to this day, it is a matter of widespread popular opinion to consider India a distinctly benevolent and tolerant country.

This notion was examined more closely and questioned by Paul Hacker. He gradually developed the concept of inclusivism in his works. Hacker's posthumously published work, *Inklusivismus* (Hacker 1983), contains the main tenets of the theory at its most advanced stage.

The concept refers primarily to a specific Hindu way of dealing with foreign religions and worldviews, which, contrary to the widely accepted view, does not correspond to the notion of religious tolerance. Hacker understands inclusivism as a tendency to assimilate certain alien religious notions and ideas or earlier stages of one's own religion. It is important for Hacker to emphasize that the assimilation of alien elements takes place unconsciously about the process and that there is no explicit reflection on the process. Moreover, there is no explicit awareness that the assimilated elements are foreign or different. For Hacker, everything that is understood in the West as tolerance in Hinduism is actually inclusivism. The foreign elements are incorporated into the existing theological or philosophical system and declared as their own. An appropriate definition of inclusivism can be found in Halbfass' (1990: 411) paraphrase of Hacker's words (1970: 20; *Kleine Schriften*, p. 599) in which he says that inclusivism is the practice of "...claiming for, and thus including in, one's own religion or world view what belongs in reality to another, foreign or competing system." Halbfass' addition to Hacker's original expression in which he distinguishes the "other" from the "foreign" is not accidental because inclusivism can mean the assimilation of a concept that belongs to another Hindu sect or earlier stage of religious development and therefore does not have to be "foreign" as elements of a religion that does not belong to the Hindu religious horizon. Hacker (1983: 15–17) cites the example of *Bhagavadgītā* (9, 23), where Kṛṣṇa claims that those who worship other deities serve him in fact. The example of *Bhagavadgītā* is actually even more productive as an example of inclusiveness in the light of Mislav Ježić's^{2–5} studies of *Gītā*'s layered structure. Analysis

of historical text layers, namely, reveals different historical teachings. The epic layer, then the first *Sāṃkhya* layer, the hymn in *triṣṭubhs*, the first Yoga layer, and the Upaniṣad layers are all united in the final Bhakti redaction. These different layers contain the teachings of warrior ethics, the teachings of the philosophical systems of *Sāṃkhya*, Yoga, and Vedānta, which are hierarchically arranged and subordinated to the synthesis of Bhakti, devotional service to the Lord. All these teachings that belong to the Hindu religious horizon are incorporated into the *Gītā* system with the devotional Bhakti and theistic Vedānta philosophy at the top. This example also shows Hacker's idea that the assimilation of a foreign element creates a hierarchy of concepts in which the foreign assimilated element is pushed to a lower position in the hierarchy. Hacker's (1957: 178)⁶ example of Tulsidās, a 16th century poet, shows how this "inclusivism" and hierarchization works among Hindu sects; in his *magnum opus*, *Rāmcāritmānas*, Tulsidās portrayed the Hindu god Śiva, the highest deity of Śaiva cults, as a worshiper of Rāma, whose cult Tulsidās promotes. By including Śiva in his own system, Tulsidās, in fact, claimed the Śaiva religion in its entirety for his own.

Hacker's concept of inclusivism developed gradually. The term *inkluisivismus* and its related forms (*inkluisivistisch*) appear for the first time in Hacker's 1957 paper, which deals with the concept of "tolerance." Already in that paper, Hacker put forward a thesis that he would later develop to its ultimate consequences, that fitting and assimilating foreign elements without explicit reflection on the process is not "tolerance."

On the soil of the Indian subcontinent, however, one can find an abundance of obvious examples of peaceful mutual coexistence and respect between different religions. It would not be valid to conclude that Hindu inclusivism must be intolerant because it does not correspond to the idea of tolerance. Hacker must have been aware of this difficulty, so he introduced a distinction between doctrinal and practical tolerance. Hinduism cannot be doctrinally tolerant because it includes foreign elements unconsciously, without reflection on the process, and therefore does not develop a doctrine of tolerance. On the contrary, Hinduism is for Hacker capable of practical tolerance on two levels: on the one hand, on the level of state and legal order. Hacker cites a well-known example of the king Aśoka (3rd BCE), but we can add, as an example, Gupta and Vākātaka kings (4th–5th centuries) and their patronage of the different religious institutions as analyzed by Bakker.⁷ On the contrary, practical tolerance is visible on the private level practiced by the individual. Although Hacker shows some examples of intolerance, such as the treatment of "Mlecchas" (non-Hindus) in the Hindu law books, he concludes that inclusivism is what characterizes Hinduism and that the notions of "tolerance" and "intolerance" are inappropriate to describe Hinduism. At the end of the article, Hacker makes the important claim that the concept of tolerance is of European origin and that it has its origins in 18th-century European Deism.

In his posthumously published article, Hacker (1983) sharpens his 1957 ideas and draws ultimate consequences from them. He abandons the idea that Hinduism can be "practically" tolerant in favour of claiming that everything we consider tolerant in Hinduism is almost always inclusivism. Why? The idea of the sameness of all religions precludes the possibility of tolerance because it is not possible to postulate the "other"; tolerance is possible only in conscious and self-reflexive dialogue with the "other." It is obvious that Hacker believes that, for example, Tulsīdās' Vaiṣṇavism cannot be included in the dialogue with Śaivism because Tulsīdās appropriates Śaivism, it makes it one with Vaiṣṇavism. Similarly, in the Bhagavadgītā, karma yoga (yoga of action without desire for the fruit of action) is included in the system, but it is still suggested that the action dedicated to God, that is, letting God act through devotee, is a more effective form of nullifying the effect of karmic retribution.

Therefore, the conclusion that Hacker must draw is that the necessary prerequisite for tolerance is exclusivism in the sense of full awareness of the diversity and separation of one's own religion or thought system from another with whom one is in contact. In this sense, it is clear that exclusivist religions like Christianity or Islam carry within themselves a necessary precondition or potential for the development of tolerance. And this leads Hacker to the controversial conclusion that Christianity is a tolerant religion, unlike Hinduism, which is not. Hacker, however, warns clearly that this does not mean that Hinduism is intolerant, but only that the concept of tolerance is inapplicable to Hinduism.⁸⁻¹⁰

It could be said that Hacker's concept of inclusivism was accepted in the circles of experts on Eastern religions. Numerous studies have been devoted to various aspects of inclusivism, for example, Kristin Beise Kiblinger¹¹ on Buddhist inclusivism, Törzsök¹² and Sanderson on Tantric Śaiva inclusivism or Peter Bisschop¹³ on lay Śaivism.

On the contrary, Hacker's ideas of inclusivism and tolerance were not so much discussed in the secondary literature; an exception appears to be Adluri and Bagchee, who criticize Hacker, albeit more in the context of his affiliation and adherence to Catholicism and his theological writings.

Here I would like to approach some of Hacker's ideas from a slightly different point of view. First, Hacker's idea of inclusivism implies a hierarchical assimilation of foreign concepts. However, what to do with examples where we do not have hierarchization? A good example of a structural difference between both approaches, hierarchical and nonhierarchical inclusivism, can be seen in the example of the modern Hindu religious mystic Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekānanda. Vivekānanda, known as the first great Hindu teacher in the West, became a kind of blueprint for many later Hindu gurus in the 20th and 21st centuries. His hierarchical inclusivism is evident in numerous texts. Vivekānanda certainly tolerates and deeply respects all religions and philosophies but still considers the mystical experience of the nonduality in the spirit of monistic Advaita Vedānta to

be the pinnacle of spirituality. As a characteristic example of inclusivism, Hacker mentions him often.

However, Vivekānanda's spiritual master, Ramakrishna, is structurally different. In "The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna," conversations of Ramakrishna recorded by Mahendranath Gupta, Ramakrishna describes his views, his spiritual path and mystical experiences. Ramakrishna, who often speaks in parables, cites in several places in the "Gospel" the example of a substance called jal by the Hindus, pānī by Muslims and water by Englishmen. On the same page (p. 135), Ramakrishna emphatically exclaims that the same reality is called Āllāh by some, God, Brahman, Kālī, Rāma, Jesus, etc., by others. Such claims, common to Ramakrishna's discourse, testify to a nonhierarchical approach that is not easy to label as inclusivism if hierarchization is the main constitutive element in the concept. A very similar idea is seen when William Jones¹⁴ explains why Christian missions will not succeed in converting Hindus:

"...the deity, they say, has appeared innumerable times, in many parts of this world and of all worlds, ... and though we adore him in one appearance, and they in others, yet we adore, they say, the same God, to whom our several worships, though different in form, are equally acceptable if they be sincere in substance."

As far as religious practice is concerned, it is known that Ramakrishna has tried his hand at various types of Hindu religious (devotion to Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, and the Goddess) and philosophical traditions. In 1864, he was initiated by the itinerant monk Tota Puri to the nondualistic Advaita Vedānta in the tradition of Śaṅkara. Later Ramakrishna also tried his hand at Islam and Christianity and came to the conclusion that all paths lead toward the same goal. But for Ramakrishna, Advaita Vedānta was only one of the paths to the ultimate goal, while for Vivekānanda, Advaita Vedānta is the highest goal, thus creating a hierarchy that is, at least to me, unnoticeable in Ramakrishna. Moreover, despite a mystical experience on the path of nondualistic Vedānta, Ramakrishna, as is evident from "The Gospel of Ramakrishna" and biographical work about him, continued to worship the goddess Kālī. Stories of Tota Puri's disappointment with Ramakrishna's adherence to Kālī worship, even after the realization of nondual absolute, vividly show the point of Ramakrishna's teaching. In the inclusivism of Advaita Vedānta, devotion to a personal deity is a valid path, but only as a preparatory to the ultimate realization of the nondualistic absolute. In Ramakrishna, there is an obvious awareness of the "otherness" of different paths he has tried, although Advaita terminology and concepts are clearly visible.

Hacker sets three conditions for the development of tolerance: a clear awareness of other's "otherness," a conscious decision about the validity of the "other," and awareness of and reflection on the process itself. In Ramakrishna, who is neither a scholar nor a theologian, the third condition is not present, and from Advaita terminology, the elements of inclusivism can also be seen. In Ramakrishna, it is more



of a mystical, spiritual experience than a self-reflective engagement.

Nevertheless, the first two conditions are still met. Inclusivism in Ramakrishna is questionable because he did not fit and assimilate other concepts (with the exception of Advaita terminology); according to what Mahendranath Gupta describes, Ramakrishna seems deeply committed to the śāktistic tradition of devotional service to the Goddess. The question is whether we can talk about exclusivism, although there are elements for that as well, because he obviously personally adheres to the worship of the Goddess, although he often uses the concept and imagination of other religions.

Ramakrishna's approach to religious experience is obviously inclusive, but his inclusivism does not imply hierarchization. It seems to me that he is not alone in such a view.

On the contrary, on the Indian subcontinent, we also find examples of non-Hindu religious phenomena that correspond more closely to Hacker's notion of tolerance. Such an example is the Mughal Prince Dārā Śukūh, the eldest son of the Great Mughal emperor Śāh Jahān. Dārā Śukūh has been attracted to Sūfi teachings since an early age when Śāh Jahān took him to the Sūfi teacher and Sheikh of the Qādirīya order Mīān Mīr. In 1653, Śukūh turned from Sūfism to dialogue with Hinduism. His first such work was *Majma' al-bahrayn* (Meeting of Two Oceans) from 1655. The title was taken from the Quran (18:60) and was intended to suggest that the "two oceans," Islam and Hinduism, according to their monistic principles, are directed towards dialogue and merging with each other. In the introduction, Śukūh programmatically points out that there is no difference between the teachings of the Sūfis and the Indian "monotheists" except in linguistic expression. In this work, Śukūh wants to show how both traditions, Sūfi and Hindu, speak of the same ultimate goal and how both teach the path of knowing the same supreme truth. The work in which Śukūh's religious tolerance is even more pronounced is *Sirr-i Akbar* (1657), a translation (and paraphrase) of 50 Upaniṣads from Sanskrit into Persian. According to Śukūh, the Upaniṣads are the source of belief in the oneness of God (tauḥīd) and are in accordance with the Quran, which they can even serve as a commentary (tafsīr). Śukūh started translating the Upaniṣads because he recognized in them a monistic doctrine close to Islamic monotheism, formulated in the Quran as a transcendent unity of truth, in the Sūfi interpretation as "unity of being/existence" (waḥdat al-wuḡūd). Śukūh's understanding of Upaniṣadic doctrine is therefore marked and reinterpreted by Sūfi ideas of the oneness of God (tauḥīd), its cognition (ma'refat), and the attainment of salvation (rastgāri). He showed creativity in his attempts to establish analogies between certain ideas and thought concepts in Sūfism and Hinduism. Śukūh had a deep respect for Hindu saints and often visited and discussed with them. He met the yogin Bābā Lāl Dās in Lahore in 1653; seven of their conversations, in which Dārā's interest in the

problem of common mystical language is evident, were first recorded in colloquial Hindustani, and later Chandar Bhān Brahman translated a text into Persian under the title *Su'āl va Javāb* (Question and Answer).¹⁵

Śukūh was eventually executed by his brother Aurangzeb, who would become the last of the Great Mughals. The two brothers represent two tendencies in the Islam of the Indian subcontinent; Aurangzeb, prone to pietism, Šarī'a and conservative orthopraxis, and Dārā Śukūh, a poet and mystic, open to dialogue with Hindu mysticism, at least in its monistic expression of his which Dārā was fond. Dārā fulfills Hacker's two main conditions for tolerance; first is exclusivism, that is, full awareness of the distinction between Islam and Hinduism (although he did not call it that way); second is a dynamic and self-reflexive dialogue with Hinduism. In addition to the direct dialogue with Hinduism seen in the conversation between Dārā and Hindu saint Bābā Lāl Dās, the dynamic relationship between Sūfism and Hinduism is seen in the Dārā's Sūfi reinterpretation of the Upaniṣadic Vedānta concepts. Dārā never appropriates them as Ramakrishna does but reinterprets them and seeks to understand them through his own spiritual tradition, Sūfism from which he does not deviate, at least in my understanding, not an inch. Therefore, Aurangzeb's accusations of heresy (molhed) also seem to have missed the point, and Dārā Śukūh lost his life primarily for political reasons, that is because he was Aurangzeb's main contender for the throne.

Tolerance and Inclusivism

As already mentioned, tolerance was considered by Hacker as early as 1957 to be a Western concept. According to Hacker, it came from Deism and arose in the context of the emergence of the reformation and attempts to define attitudes towards it.

The literature on religious tolerance in Europe is indeed rich; we can summarize here briefly, on the basis of Perez Zagorin's¹⁶ work, a trajectory that began with intense religious persecution in the aftermath of the reformation. Violent mutual intolerance is based on the intellectual tradition of the time, from which pluralistic tendencies will slowly and gradually develop. Reading the works of earlier thinkers from the 16th to the 18th century, Erasmus, Thomas More, John Milton, John Locke, and others, Zagorin concludes that caring for the welfare of one's own religion contributed more to the development of tolerance than secular and pragmatic reasons.

In the introduction to the book "Religious Tolerance in the Atlantic World: Early Modern and Contemporary Perspectives," Elaine Glaser (p. 1ff)¹⁷ criticizes traditional accounts according to which thinkers such as Locke, Milton, and then Sebastian Castellio and Hugo Grotius fought for tolerance and religious pluralism in a fierce conflict with the reactionary conservatism. Progressive forces reportedly triumphed over the conservative with the Toleration Act of 1689 when religious toleration became a legal concept.

Glaser goes on to point out the latest research that shows that the relationship between tolerance and intolerance is much more complex in these early debates. Zagorin (2003: 289) makes this clear: "...idea of toleration was itself very largely inspired by religious values and was fundamentally religious in character."

John Locke and Pierre Bayle stood at the turn of the age of faith and the enlightenment, and reflections on tolerance tended toward secularization only during the enlightenment, and Christian religious inspiration for tolerance was significantly lost in the 18th century. Voltaire is most credited for the development of the concept of tolerance in the 18th century. In modern times, tolerance has become an extremely complex concept given the great historical events of the 19th and 20th centuries, the development of the idea of human rights, totalitarian movements, the development of science, technology and utilitarianism, and the weakening of religious institutions.

In terms of contemporary research, Hacker's claim that tolerance evolved in Deist circles is somewhat simplified, if not outdated, although Deism is considered a link in the chain of 18th century phenomena in which the notion of tolerance evolved by losing sight of its theological roots. In any case, here we are dealing with an originally Christian religious concept where its religious roots are today obscured by secularization. It is, therefore, not surprising that Hacker, himself unaware of the Christian theological roots of the modern concept of tolerance, sees Christianity as the only one capable of tolerance.

However, even the concept of tolerance is not without its problems. Habermas¹⁸ points to an apparent paradox that the act of tolerance limits acceptable behaviors, thus drawing the line for what cannot be tolerated. For example, in extreme cases like totalitarian ideologies, intolerance toward them is what makes tolerance possible. The problem with intolerance of intolerance, as Habermas sees it, is that delimitation of unacceptable behavior, "drawing the line," is highly arbitrary. On the contrary, the relationship between the one who tolerates and the one who is tolerated implies a paternalistic relationship that undermines the full realization of toleration. Habermas believes that the solution to the paradox of tolerance lies in the rationality of setting a threshold by universally accepted rational consensual delimitation, while the relationship between the one who tolerates and the tolerated must be based on symmetrical dialogical relations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The question here is, can it be considered that by denying tolerance in Hinduism, which is actually a Western concept coming from the Christian theological sphere and a rather modern construct, Hacker is doing Hinduism any harm? I think the answer is both yes and no, provided we distinguish the concept of tolerance from the realization of toleration in the daily religious experience. Also, the concept of tolerance, no matter how much it is considered a construct, cannot be

emptied of its value content and pragmatic value. In this sense, Hacker's construction could act as an apology for Christianity. But, on the contrary, Hacker is clear when he does not consider Hinduism intolerant and when he considers tolerance a Western concept by actually relativizing its value content. Also, despite inclusivism, the historical experience of the subcontinent testifies to the peaceful coexistence of different religions and social groups. Mutual toleration of different forms of religious life is present on the soil of the Indian subcontinent until modern and contemporary times when, from the 20th century onwards, we witness violent communal riots between Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus, although the context of these tensions is again politically colored. Historical and everyday experience shows that Indian inclusivism (in both its appearances: with or without hierarchization) has a strong potential for the development of peaceful coexistence and mutual tolerance of different communities and religions. Inclusive religions, unlike exclusivist ones, have not developed violent proselytism; on the contrary, in Europe, from the violent experience of religious conflicts of the 16th and 17th centuries, in the theological circles of the exclusivist Christian religion, the prevailing concept of religious toleration, "tolerance," has developed. Despite the conceptual constructs, we will conclude that both inclusive and exclusive religions carry the potential to create peaceful coexistence and friendly relations between communities "at the ground," and that's what matters.

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