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# DIVERSITY, SECULARISM AND RELIGIOUS TOLERATION

ASHWANI KUMAR  
PEETUSH

## DEEP DIFFERENCES: NON-LIBERAL, NON-SECULAR SOCIETIES

**A**s an international legal or political principle of justice, I have difficulty with the idea that secularism is the only legitimate manner in which a society or nation may organize itself and that all traditional non-liberal forms of governance are necessarily, a priori, anti-liberal and unjust. I am not entirely convinced that secularism conceived of as, to use Thomas Jefferson's (1802) words, 'a wall of separation' is an absolute requirement for all nations and peoples everywhere, an inevitable legal rung on the ladder of modernity. Although, when I say this, I have in mind the various and sophisticated indigenous forms of governance around the globe, rather than the subcontinent of India. Indeed, I contend that, given the remarkable pluralism of India, some model of secularism, conceived of as an overlapping consensus between comprehensive doctrines and values, as opposed to a merely political consensus, such as that of John Rawls, is absolutely necessary.

To be clear, following a Hegelian intuition, it seems to me that difference does not always entail opposition. Because a community does not organize itself according to legal, liberal principles of justice, such as a wall of separation between church and state, does not mean that it does not have moral and ethical standards against various abuses, such as rape, murder, torture, genocide or slavery. It does not mean that such a society does not have respect for the life, integrity and basic well-being of its members, or positive duties to help those in need or ideals such as compassion, care, trust, loyalty, respect and fairness. How a society articulates, legally institutionalizes and

metaphysically justifies such prohibitions and prescriptions may vary from context to context and it is natural and advantageous that they do so, as Jacques Maritain had once argued in the context of human rights in 1948. Values, norms and legal structures that resonate within cultural traditions are bound to be more successful than those that do not. In a culturally diverse world, I urge that the key is to arrive at an agreement on basic ethical standards, such as freedom from discrimination, and assuring the basic necessities of life, such as food, shelter and clothing, without being overly concerned about what justifies these. As the brilliant Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan once argued (1955), and as Gadamer (Pantham, 1992), and James Tully (1995) follow, the purpose of such an agreement is not uniformity in diversity, but rather, unity in diversity (a phrase that is often heard in India).

The importance of this insight has been recognized by the United Nations as a matter of international justice. According to the 'Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples' (adopted in 1960), formerly colonized peoples have a right to self-determination, which means a legitimate claim to pursue their social, economic and cultural interests. In this regard, in the context of a theory of international law, Rawls makes a very similar argument (1999). I contend that Rawls's theory of international justice provides the best theoretical architecture, for liberals, to not only tolerate and put up with non-liberal non-Euro-Western peoples, but in fact recognize and respect them as decent societies.<sup>1</sup> Rawls contends that a non-liberal peoples, in the sense of a peoples based around substantive or religious doctrines, ought to be considered acceptable and decent as long as such societies protect their members from the grossest infringements, or what he calls urgent human rights. These are:

. . . the right to life (to the means of subsistence and security); to liberty (to freedom from slavery, serfdom, and forced occupation, and to a sufficient measure of liberty of conscience to ensure freedom of religion and thought); to property (personal property); and to formal equality as expressed by the natural rules of justice (that is, that similar cases be treated similarly) (ibid.: 65).

Such a society ought to be respected (not simply tolerated) as an acceptable form of social organization. Now, freedom of conscience

in such a society may not be as extensive as in a liberal society; Rawls goes so far as to assert that religious perspectives may dominate state policy and perhaps governmental positions may only be open to members of the state religion. Such a society remains in good standing for Rawls as long as members of other religions can practise their faith (or non-faith) without any threat or persecution. As an example, Rawls considers a hypothetical religious Islamic state and argues that such a state may be considered an acceptable form of polity that ought to be respected and recognized, as long as this state could protect the right of non-Muslims (whether they be religious or not).

Moreover, Rawls argues that to conflate human rights with the schedule of extensive individual rights in a liberal democracy is a mistake. Human rights, for Rawls, need to be approached as a special or urgent subset of such rights, those without which human beings, arguably, simply cannot flourish. I would argue though, against Rawls, that the exact nature of this subset needs to be open to intercultural dialogue, discussion and argumentation, and not simply drawn from Western consensus.

Others provide similar arguments. Graham Walker (1997) contends that, historically, as well as conceptually, liberalism does not equal constitutionalism, even though most liberals make this conflation. Historically, constitutionalism came first and seeks as its object to fetter political power. Indeed, as long as a society has norms and institutions, constitutionally enshrined, that can protect its members from the arbitrary abuse of political power, there is no reason why such a society should not be treated with respect. Because a society is not liberal or secular does not mean that it is mob-rule, grounded in the arbitrary abuse of political power.

Now, I think the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are a good example of non-liberal societies that ought to be recognized and respected. Although such cultures are certainly not unchanging and monolithic, many Aboriginal spokespersons in Canada argue that their communities revolve around various pervasive constellations of ideas that continue to animate the lives of their communities. Many spokespersons continually emphasize that they demand self-determination because they seek self-definition. And, they emphasize that integral to this demand is being able to promote some of their traditional spiritual self-understandings in their

institutions. It involves being able to, for example, freely teach their children, in their public educational systems, about their distinct spiritual relationship to the land,<sup>2</sup> without fear from the liberal secular majority that Aboriginal nations are somehow planning to violate basic human rights.

### **DIVERSITY, SECULARISM AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE**

Am I enlisting theocracy as a viable political option for India? Certainly not. My point was that I do not see why such nations are in principle (and some in practice) unjust. My intuitions are largely based on indigenous forms of governance in Canada and from what I understand about various episodes in India's history, such as Aśoka's or Akbar's India; my intuitions are certainly not based on current Islamic theocratic states, many of which have little regard for the rule of law, or human rights, or gender equality or the rights of non-Muslims. Of course, there are critical differences between the Aboriginal nations in Canada and the subcontinent of India. The Aboriginal population of Canada is approximately 1.6 million, with various 600 recognized bands. And importantly, they continue to share a cluster of various conceptions of the good and continue to resist forced assimilation into liberal secular society. India, on the other hand, is one of the most heterogeneous nations in the world. It contains more than one-sixth of the world's population (1.24 billion, 17.5 per cent) and is extraordinarily diverse, both religiously and linguistically. At the time of the 2001 Census, India had approximately 800 million Hindus, 140 million Muslims (the third-largest Muslim population in the world), 24 million Christians, 20 million Sikhs, 10 million Buddhists, 4 million Jains, about 6 million of other persuasions (such as Zoroastrians, Jews and Bahai) and 700,000 others for which religion was not stated. This is not to mention linguistic diversity, which includes Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Kanada and even Sanskrit, among others.

In such diverse circumstances people need to find some schema for living together, which is not simply based on the distribution of power, a *modus vivendi*. One of the challenges in an environment where religion seems so pervasive is that religious doctrines and consequent practices tend to be exclusivist. This is not true of religion alone, however. Most comprehensive doctrines

and practices, including political, as well as scientific, are often exclusivist. They claim to have the road to truth – the only road – and provide the adherent with an ethics of the good life that flows from such truth, and the means to achieve enlightenment, salvation and the true meaning of the good. Given that there is more than one such doctrine, and given that these are incompatible, it has the potential for disastrous conflict, especially if difference is coupled with social, economic and legal inequality. This is not a new problem for India, but something that Indian civilization has had to cope with long before the wars within Christianity in Europe and the consequent development of liberal secularism as a political solution.

One route out of this potential conflict is to find resources internal to one's own traditions, texts and doctrines that allow one to deal with, explain and cope with such differences and diversity of perspectives, theologically or philosophically. But liberal secularism purposes a different route. It is the route that Nehru, who thought of religion as a vestige of primitive and savage thinking, had in mind for India. That is, when doctrinal differences exist, we agree to put these aside in our dealings, we agree to disagree on certain core issues and leave it at that. Ashis Nandy (1998, 2004) and T. N. Madan (1998) contend that this version of liberal secularism as a wall of separation is both unfair and unrealistic, and thus unstable, in the context of India. It is unfair because it infringes on the equal rights of religious citizens; it places an unequal burden on the part of the believer to privatize her beliefs, something that is not asked of the non-believer. The religious have to simply be silent about their beliefs and practices and put up with differences in the public domain, while stewing in their personal lives and the lives of their communities. This seems particularly unrealistic in India, given the pervasive and constitutive nature of religious identity in this context.

In this regard, Madan argues that South Asia's major religious traditions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Sikhism are 'totalising' in character. They are, in an important sense, all consuming and encompassing of every aspect of a follower's life. Whereas in Western Christian traditions one may make a conceptual divide between the sacred and the profane, such is not readily an accepted distinction in Indian traditions. Indeed, secularism in Europe arose not simply because of the wars of one religion, but partly because of this

internal conceptual and theological hermeneutic, which allowed one to separate God from the mundane world. Protestant Christianity provided the transcendental conditions without which individualism and the secular state could not have thrived.

But even though traditional Indian self-understandings may not be grounded in such a distinction, it does not mean that religious tolerance, and furthermore, respect, has not been, and is not, an important value in India. On the contrary, Nandy argues that toleration and respect and peaceful cohabitation for ordinary villagers in India are grounded in comprehensive religious doctrines. Although I cannot detail the arguments here,<sup>3</sup> I would suggest we need to explore grounding toleration and respect in doctrines such as *Anekāntavāda* of the Jains, or the Buddhist ideal of *Pratītyasamutpāda*, or the Advaitic conception Self or *Ātman*. That is, rather than attempting to artificially graft the Western idea of secularism as a solution to religious factions, we should rather look to indigenous resources that resonate at a deeper level with the majority of the population, and which have worked for thousands of years. There are good examples of this in Indian history: Aśoka, Akbar, Kabir and Gandhi. Nandy contends that ‘to go to an Indian village to teach tolerance through secularism is a form of obscene arrogance to which I do not want to be party’ (2004). Tolerance and respect in India cannot be predicated upon an abstract legal notion of liberal citizenship, especially when such conceptions of self and agency have little resonance with peoples’ deeply held beliefs, self-understandings, religions and philosophies about the world. Yet there are grassroots versions of tolerance and respect by which people have lived together, side by side, for thousands of years. This is the alternate terrain on which we should attempt to build a stronger foundation for tolerance and seek to broaden inter-religious dialogue.

Let me ask: Is this picture not unrealistically too optimistic? This is especially so in the context of the rise of Hindu nationalism, Islamic fundamentalism and new forms of global terrorism. Let us look more closely.

#### **MODERNITY AND RELIGION AS A POLITICAL TOOL**

One of the interesting claims made by Nandy, Partha Chatterjee (1998) and Amartya Sen (1998) is that religious extremism and

violence in India has increased since post-independence. Nandy interprets this as a consequence of modernity and the product of liberalism itself. Chatterjee offers an interesting analysis of current Hindu nationalist movements. What we might, *prima facie*, think of as theocratic movements appear but the opposite. Unlike the older Hindu national movements such as the Hindu *Mahāsbhā*, the new political conception of the *Hindutva* movement rests on mostly a purely political platform. Apart from a few lone voices, the *Hindutva* campaign does not seek to ground theocratic institutions or conformity to Vedic texts and injunctions, or seek a place for religious institutions in the judiciary, or compulsory religious education, or censorship of science in the name of religion or any such things – usually. On the contrary, it attempts to set itself apart from most current Islamic fundamentalist movements or various such strains in other religions. It distinguishes itself apart from such movements as the voice of reason and progress, often calling its opponents ‘pseudo-secularists’. Indeed, one sometimes wishes that perhaps the *Hindutva* movement was actually ‘religious’, that they took to heart the readily available sources of tolerance and compassion within Hindu traditions.

Nandy interprets this as the instrumentalization of religion for the use of political power, which is made possible by modernity, secularization and the privatization of the religious realm. He makes a distinction between religion as faith, piety and a way of life and religion as a political ideology.

On the face of it, I see something odd about this distinction. It seems to me that most religions are, by their very nature, political in an important sense, or at least, ethical, in that they provide a blueprint of what the good life is and ethical moral standards by which to achieve this. But, perhaps one can defend Nandy’s distinction by arguing that in religion as faith, one’s political outlook flows out from one’s religious values, whereas in religion as ideology, religion is but a mere tool for the use of ends which do not have anything to do with the substantive content of the particular religion.

The really dangerous men, according to Nandy, are those who don the guise of believing in the public realm but are actually non-believers in their private lives. These are the Sāvarkars and the Jinnahs, who used religion as a means to mobilize the masses to achieve various political ends.

What does liberal secularism have to do with this? In one sense, it purportedly creates the conditions by which the religious are disenfranchised from the legal and political process. They become a voiceless entity wrapped in social isolation. The state tells them what is constitutive of their sense of self that has no relevance in public life. Given the dominance of religion and the often poor economic conditions of many in India, we have a powder keg waiting to be lit. The Hindu nationalist now has the means to achieve his political ends. The Muslim and other such minorities are the perfect target, a common enemy upon whom to foist displaced feelings of anger and resentment, linked to an internal sense of inferiority for not being able to match up to the Nehruvian secular ideal. On the other hand, by resting on this wall of separation ideal, the secular state lacks the power to use the rich substantive ethical and moral discourse developed in India, since it is supposed to be neutral with regard to such discourse (the moral, after all, is also a part of the private realm on the liberal picture). Nandy argues that the neutral public realm is anything but neutral; it privileges the discourse of the so-called rationality and science (of course, interpreted philosophically in terms of scientific realism) as the common ground around which to gather reasons and public justifications, however impotent such a discourse may be in the face of ethical terror.

Although I think there is an important point here, I believe that Nandy misses something crucial. I think it is right to notice that liberal critics of religion simply too often point to the Ayatollah Khomeinis and Bin Ladens of the world, as somehow representative of the true essence of where religion will eventually lead us – especially when discussing the non-Euro–Western world – thus providing a false dichotomy between ‘us and them’. And, it is true that the Gandhis and Martin Luther Kings and accounts of the powerful force of various religious doctrines in the service of justice and non-discrimination are conveniently left out. Often missing, too, is the fact that secular regimes can and have been as unjust and murderous, if not more (e.g. Stalin, Hitler, Saddam Hussein, the current Chinese government, various episodes in American history).

I think that one can grant all of this, but still argue that the Nandian position itself suffers from an over-generalized idealism. It is true enough that religion has been, and is, of great good. But it



cannot be denied that it has led to oppression, and importantly, an oppression that cannot be simply pushed under the rug and attributed to religion becoming an ideology and no longer piety, in the Nandian sense. It is with much Brahmanical piety that one may turn to the Ṛgveda to find a justification for the caste system, or perhaps, some other religious doctrine; for example, to deny women alimony after three months on the basis of Islamic law, as was in the case of Shah Bano.

And, this is where the secularist liberal will attempt to push the non-secularist. The argument might go something like this: it is true that perhaps the liberal doctrine has been used as an oppressive instrument by some, but there is nothing inherent in the concept of liberal individual freedom and equality that is unjust. That is, there are only hypocrites who pretend to be liberals (or Marxists) for that matter. But, in the case of religion, the doctrinal content is often simply itself unjust. That is, it is not that Muslims are being hypocrites and not living up to the true spirit of the Koran, but that the Koran itself, at least parts of it, provide unjust guidance, for example, with regard to the treatment of women and non-Muslims. The same kind of objection can be made of the Upaniṣads, or the Bible, with regard to, for example, the treatment of homosexuals, women, atheists and so on.

I do not think that this objection can be taken lightly, and I think that Nandy does not provide an adequate response by pointing to religion as piety and as ideology. This only fuels the fire of suspicion of secularism. I believe one needs to admit that it is true that there are things in such texts that are indeed problematic, unethical and outright unjust. But one can retort, on the other hand, that there are also many aspects of such traditions that are as admirable and even ethically groundbreaking. Indeed, they have provided the groundwork for where we are now. For example, one might argue that the ideal of equality in the Western tradition is in part made possible because of its Judeo-Christian roots, that of equality under the eyes of God. One can argue that the Advaitic unity of the Absolute inherent in each can also potentially provide such an interpretive foundation, one that Gandhi often emphasized in his struggle against caste. The ideal of individual freedom and autonomy, to live one's life according to one's conscience, also has religious roots in the individualism of Protestant Christianity. The

ideal of the earth as intrinsically good is currently being taught to us by various indigenous spiritual traditions around the world.

Let me make a stronger point, though. The objection that, in the case of liberalism, injustice is always simply a matter of hypocrisy, as opposed to the case of religion, where the oppression results from internal doctrinal injustice, is itself problematic. This assumes somehow that concepts such as individual freedom, autonomy, self, property and so on, are a given – that is, they are seen as existing in some pure Platonic and analytic realm, with exact mathematical set-theoretical boundaries and with certitude. Concepts such as these are certainly not axiomatic or a given. A cursory reflection of political history in the West alone should free one from such a delusion. For example, even now, many liberals argue among themselves about various interpretations of ‘individual freedom’, and what exactly this idea means. Left liberals staunchly argue that the libertarian conception of freedom is empty and serves to justify the severest of economic inequalities and injustice. Here, it is the manner in which we define the concept of freedom itself that leads to oppression and social injustice. So, it is not that somehow we are not living up to intrinsically just principles (being hypocrites) but that the principles themselves are abstract enough that various formulations can lead to oppressive practices.

Nor would I argue that somehow the discourse of ‘science and rationality’, the neutral and unquestionable modern-day trump card, is somehow free from ethical scrutiny, as Hiroshima and Nagasaki certainly showed us.

The point is that I do not believe that religion alone provides a unique breeding ground for extremism and violence. I think the Nandian thesis is right in an important sense, although it is not adequately defended by Nandy. Most doctrines, religious or otherwise, with enough ingenuity, can be used in the service of oppression and injustice.

I would urge that we need to remember that religious traditions speak with a multiplicity of voices, with an internal plurality of contest and critique, often composed through historical struggles and battles between the powerful and the disenfranchized, embedded in iniquitous hegemonic relationships between the dominant and vulnerable. This leaves one in the position of having to interpret and argue, in an attempt to provide a coherent story,

to put text and tradition in their best possible ethical light. There is no raw text, so to speak, no uninterpreted pure raw datum that we can call the Bible, the Koran or the Gītā. Interpretation is part and parcel of the very enterprise of religion and spirituality. Ideas and concepts have histories. While ideas may be perennial in an important sense, we always make them our own, we see them uniquely through our eyes, in the worlds in which we find ourselves. Sometimes, we may simply have to abandon parts of our traditions that we can no longer defend to ourselves or to others. I do not see this as something necessarily to lament. Cultures and religions and philosophies are dynamic processes that change from the inside, from internal protest, and, often from the outside as well, through debate, dialogue and mutual understanding. In fact, as Sonia Sikka has argued in this volume, such change is ironically stultified by the liberal privatization of religion, where it can no longer be debated or critically examined in the public sphere, thereby leaving it vulnerable in the hands of extremists.

### **SECULARISM AS OVERLAPPING CONSENSUS: COMPREHENSIVE NOT POLITICAL**

As such, I think secularism in India should be seen as an overlapping consensus, although my version is different from that of Rawls. The Rawlsian liberal secularist doctrine arises as a purely political ideal with its associated notion of public reason, but, on the Indian model, I would urge, overlapping consensus emerges as essentially comprehensive in nature and does not deny the importance of religious or philosophical justification in public reason. As such, I think that there is a critical difference between the Indian overlapping consensus and the political version defended by Rawls. I think that the best formulation of Indian secularism that I have come across is from Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, a philosopher and former president of the Union of India:

When India is said to be a secular state, it does not mean we reject the reality of an unseen spirit of the relevance of religion to life or that we exalt irreligion. It does not mean that secularism itself becomes a positive religion or that the state assumes divine prerogatives. Though faith in the Supreme is the basic principle of the Indian tradition, the Indian State will not identify itself

with or be controlled by any particular religion. We hold that no one religion should be accorded special privileges in national life or international relations for that would be a violation of the basic principles of democracy and contrary to the best interests of religion and government . . . . No group of citizens shall arrogate to itself rights and privileges which it denies to others. No person should suffer any from of disability or discrimination because of his religion but all alike should be free to share the fullest degree in the common life. This is the basic principle involved in the separation of Church and State. The religious impartiality of the Indian state is not to be confused with secularism or atheism. Secularism as here defined is in accordance with the ancient religious traditions of India. It tries to build up a fellowship of believers, not by subordinating individual qualities to the group mind but by bringing them into harmony with each other. The dynamic fellowship is based on the principle of diversity in unity which alone has the quality of creativeness (1955: 202).

On the Indian model then, state neutrality is interpreted as equal or an even-handed treatment of religions – the state does not favour one over the other and recognizes the importance of religion in the life of each citizen. Rajeev Bhargava has explored these ideas in detail in many of his works (see, for example, Bhargava 2010). This view of secularism is unlike the case of France, where secularism has been interpreted on a complete wall of separation model, where religion ought to play no part in the political or the public sphere of life (thus forbidding the *hijab* in public school on such a basis). On the Indian approach then, religious identity is something that is accepted as a part of the constitutive identity of citizens, and the manifestation of such an identity is accepted as an integral part of the public sphere, rooted in the historical and political self-understandings of the subcontinent.

As Radhakrishnan argued, such a model of secularism is more rooted in the historical and political self-understandings of the subcontinent. Indeed, Amartya Sen, in defending the idea that individual freedom and human rights are particularly Western, often brings up tolerance and diversity in the case of Aśoka and Akbar (1999). But, he consistently fails to mention that tolerance for both Aśoka and Akbar were hardly liberal secular values, justified on

the basis of individual freedom. Their justifications were entirely dependent on religious perspectives. Aśoka's view was an instantiation of Buddhist principles and values, whereas Akbar's tolerance was derived from Islam. As well, of course, Gandhi's political resistance to British colonialism was deeply rooted in Hinduism and Jainism, as well as other religious influences from Christianity.

In one sense, I want to say that such various movements in India were an overlapping consensus of sorts. I qualify this with 'of sorts' because I believe that there are key differences from Rawls's. Overlapping consensus on the Rawlsian model is limited to the realm of the political conception of justice, as opposed to a comprehensive notion. We attempt to agree on a range of principles that have limited application to the 'economic, social and political institutions of a society', without any recourse to discussing any substantive comprehensive reasons for why we are agreeing on such principles.<sup>4</sup> In fact, for Rawls, offering substantive doctrines in the political domain is a violation of public reason itself. I believe that there are a number of problems with this model of public reason.

Indeed, I am arguing that the very notion of what one considers limited and hence political or extensive and comprehensive is itself intricately related to one's viewpoint, contrary to what Rawls thinks. For example, according to Rawls, the 'political' and 'normative' conception of a person is conceived of as having two moral powers: the capacity for a sense of justice and the capacity for a conception of the good (1993: 18–19). This excludes not only the severely disabled and the elderly but also other sentient beings. But how is this not a 'comprehensive' view? From whose perspective does it, as Rawls says, 'involve no particular metaphysical doctrine about the nature of persons' (ibid.: 29). This is certainly not so from various Buddhist, Hindu or Jain perspectives, where the basic unit of moral and political consideration includes other sentient beings. From such perspectives a restriction of this notion to include only human beings itself constitutes a comprehensive and hence deeply metaphysical doctrine, something which Rawls thinks he avoids. As such, it seems to me that the Rawlsian insistence on the distinction between the political and comprehensive and the idea of barring the former from the public is problematic. Ultimately, it is grounded in a search for a view from nowhere, some form of universal neutrality that cannot be attained in principle or in practice. Metaphysical

doctrines always sneak in through the back door, whether one likes it or not. In this case, to insist on such a distinction is to unwittingly privilege and legitimate dominant forms of discourse while silencing others.

I think that the distinction between the political and comprehensive does not foster or further intercultural understanding. It is true that various communities may differ in their justifications for the ways in which they ground various political concepts, and differ in such a way that makes a Rawlsian political agreement necessary (as opposed to comprehensive agreement), but I see this as a fall-back position. Why assume it as the ideal? Why not hope for more? The discussion of substantial reasons in the public domain, apart from furthering understanding among communities as to why they do what they do, has the hope of transformation of one's own self-understanding, which can ultimately lead to a fusion of horizons. In such a fusion, our standards change and grow, to encompass the views of the other, and ultimately offer a stronger agreement from which to tackle various mutual challenges. I know that such a fusion is not always possible or even likely, but, at least, even when it is not forthcoming and even if we could never share justifications, we can at least attempt to truly understand the other. This makes such a dialogue more than worthwhile; indeed, in a world where extremists feed off of misunderstandings and caricatures of the other, such a dialogue is indispensable.



## NOTES

1. See Rawls (1999). He remarks that 'if liberal peoples require that all societies be liberal and subject those that are not to politically enforced sanctions, then decent non-liberal peoples . . . will be denied a due measure of respect by liberal peoples' and that this 'argues for preserving significant room for the idea of a people's self-determination' (p. 61). On the other hand, Rawls's respect for non-liberal societies is muted by some of his other comments, e.g., 'when offered due respect by liberal peoples, a non-liberal society may be more likely, over time, to recognize the advantages of liberal institutions and take steps toward becoming liberal on its own' (p. 62).
2. See Gunn Allen (1979: 191). 'We are the land. To the best of my understanding, that is the fundamental idea embodied in Native American life and cultures. . . . More than remembered, the earth is the mind of the people as we are the mind of the earth. The land is not really the place (separate from ourselves) where

we act out the drama of our isolate destinies. It is not a means of survival, a setting for our affairs, a resource on which we draw in order to keep our own act functioning. It is not the ever-present “Other” which supplies us with a sense of “I”. It is rather a part of our being, dynamic, significant, real. It is ourselves, in as real a sense as such notion as “ego”, “libido” or social network, in a sense more real than any conceptualisation or abstraction about the nature of human being can ever be. The land is not an image in our eyes but rather it is as truly an integral aspect of our being as we are of its being. . . . Nor is this relationship one of mere “affinity” for the earth. It is not a matter of being “close to nature”. The relation is more one of identity, in the mathematical sense, than of affinity. The Earth is, in a very real sense, the same as ourself (or selves)’.

3. See Peetush (2015) and Peetush (forthcoming) for detailed arguments regarding the project of grounding human rights and toleration in various Indian traditions.
4. See Rawls (1993: 13). The supposed distinction between a political and comprehensive conception of justice rests on the idea that the former is more limited in terms of scope and applies only to the basic economic, social and political structure of a society. In contrast, a comprehensive doctrine applies to and includes wider reaching subjects that deal with, for instance, ‘what is of value in human life, and ideals of personal character’.

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