

"*The Limits of Tolerance* is a fascinating and important book—a cautionary tale really—that should be read by anyone interested in the global politics of religious freedom. Insisting on the value of the micro-history of the political work that concepts such as tolerance and religious freedom do in very specific times and places, in this case late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century India, Adcock makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the way such ideas migrate, transform, and serve partisan political ends."

—Winnifred Fallers Sullivan, Professor and Chair, Department of Religious Studies,  
Indiana University

"*The Limits of Tolerance* is an exciting and much-needed contribution to our historical understanding of the origins of specifically Indian ideas of religious freedom as freedom from proselytizing, as well as to contemporary debates over the nature of secularism, the political entanglements of religion, and the competing interests of religious toleration, freedom of expression, and governance."

—Robert A. Yelle, author of *The Language of Disenchantment: Protestant Literalism and Colonial Discourse in British India*

**T**he *Limits of Tolerance* is a critical history of one distinctive formulation of secularism that has shaped Indian public life since the early twentieth century. The emergence of the secularist ideal of Tolerance during the 1920s has generally been seen as a victory of Indian secularism over the intolerant practice of *shuddhi* "proselytizing" pursued by the reform organization, the Arya Samaj. By tracing colonial debates over religious freedom, C. S. Adcock challenges this understanding. Adcock reveals that the designation of Arya Samaj practices of *shuddhi* as religious proselytizing was far from self-evident; instead it was the result of decades of political struggle. Moreover, when the Tolerance ideal framed *shuddhi* decisively as a religious matter during the 1920s, it functioned to disengage Indian secularism from the politics of caste.

Since it was first advanced by Mahatma Gandhi, the Tolerance ideal has measured secularism and civil religiosity in India by contrast with proselytizing religion. Today, it informs debates over how the right to religious freedom should be interpreted on the subcontinent. It is invoked not only by progressives but also by Hindu Nationalists, whose organized violence against minorities has put secularism in India in crisis. This situation calls for a historical perspective that can provide critical leverage on Tolerance as a secularist ideal. Adcock provides this perspective by tracing the conditions for the emergence of the ideal of Tolerance, and the circumstances of its deployment.

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