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Secularization and Cosmopolitan Gurus

This article presents a case study centered on religious reforms of Hindu gurus teaching in the West. Discursive traditions of India and liberation therapeutics in America provide the referential basis for discourse processing of emergent concepts widely distributed with spiritual representations of the Upanishads. Confronted with a lack of counterparts in different cultural repertoires, it is argued that traditional categories of Vedanta are significantly decontextualized in neocolonial narratives of Hinduism. The dichotomy of tradition and secular modernity, however, is replaced with transcultural modes of religious contact and transfer. A set of hypotheses is deduced for future research towards distinguishing variant discourses of Indian spirituality based on empirical observation of contemporary forms of Hindu nationalism.

KEYWORDS: social anthropology—comparative semiotics—Hindu gurus—Advaita Vedanta—transnational discourse—religion in America

Terms such as "Neo-Hinduism," "Neo-Vedanta," and "modern Vedanta" have been used by Indologists in different ways and with increasing frequency from the mid-twentieth century onwards to signify religious leaders and reform movements that clearly display the impact of colonial and diasporic conditions. This is true particularly in the diversification of Hindu traditions and the formation of novel religious concepts. In a passing description of modern Indian thought, Louis Renou observed that Neo-Hinduism "came to birth" in the life of Rammohun Roy and reaches its "consummation and its end in the work of Aurobindo Ghose, whose work is beginning to make itself felt in the West" (1964, 135). For Paul Hacker, Neo-Hinduism begins in the 1870s and is represented by prominent figures such as Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Gandhi, and Radhakrishnan, whereas Roy is described as a forerunner (1995a, 230–31). What distinguishes Roy and his contemporaries from Neo-Hinduism is the fact that Indian nationalism had not yet developed. Due to the importance attributed to the Upanishads in nationalist discourse, the term "Neo-Vedanta" is sometimes used interchangeably with "Neo-Hinduism," and Roy's seminal work aimed at preaching the Upanishads among the Indian masses was indeed taken over by subsequent Hindu nationalists.

For case studies of gurus like Vivekananda, Hacker believes Indologists should describe the swami's "fatal deviation" from tradition and show how he modified "ancient doctrines," or "ideas of the old school," taught by the "ancient masters" of Advaita Vedanta (1995a, 240). The idea of a distinct school of Advaita Vedanta, however, is an abstraction that can hardly represent discursive reality (Krishna 1991, 12–15; Todorov 1990, 19). Rather, as I will argue, the laicization of Vedanta and export of Indian spirituality is better understood in the context of secular modernity. To appreciate constructions of nationalism in Hindu religious terms by gurus such as Vivekananda and Aurobindo, "it is necessary to situate the political uses of spirituality in specific historical contexts" (McKean 1996, 29). Reification of Indian spirituality by Hindu nationalists, moreover, should not distract attention from sociopolitical contexts and transcultural interactions that will almost certainly provide insight into the mystification of Vedanta.

This article offers no analysis of the globalization of traditional Vedanta, nor does it suggest that in transnational discourse of Indian spirituality the Upanishads are transmitted by the teaching tradition (*sampradāya*) of Advaita. Rather, it

claims that Indian spirituality can be theorized as a globalized network that reflects Hindu interest in the Upanishads under diasporic conditions and in mutual inter-action with diverse secularizations of Western modernity. Moreover, this article proposes the theoretical construct of "cosmopolitan gurus" as an alternative to the "clash of civilizations" and "great divide" discourses on Hinduism, modernity, and Westernization. For cosmopolitan gurus, human development and global society depend on the West finally merging with unifying features of the Indian tradition. Indian spirituality is then codified with the particular universalism of Vivekananda and Aurobindo—that is, the divinization of humanity.

Theories of secularization have been problematized by José CASANOVA, who frames the Protestant basis for institutionalized differentiation of public and private spheres as a "second axial shift" in the historical relations of religion and world (1994, 49–51).[1] More recently, taking a global comparative perspective, CASANOVA (2008) reconsidered the effects of transnational migrations on the deprivatization of religion. Whereas religion is often viewed as in decline, invisible, or reactive to a globally expanded Western modernity, with the emerging global denomination-alism comes the "proliferation of deterritorialized transnational global imagined communities, encompassing the so-called old world religions as well as many new forms of hybrid globalized religions" (CASANOVA 2008, 118). In contrast to secular cosmopolitan theories of globalization, the fusion of multiple modernities and diverse patterns of differentiation reveals "loosely organized" networks of Hindu renewal "linking the civilizational home, 'Mother India,' with the old diasporic colonial Hindu communities across the former British Empire" (CASANOVA 2008, 118). While precolonial discursive traditions do still inspire ongoing revivals among Hindu gurus, and it is true that many claim to "espouse variants of nondualism (*advaita vedānta*)" or otherwise "present themselves as promoters of universal religion and true spirituality" (MCKEAN 1996, 12), the actual role of Upanishads (that is, Vedanta) and their use in globalized Hinduism is a lot less certain.

Communicative events surrounding the Upanishads provide the experiential basis for discourse processing and comprehension of traditional Vedanta (WEB-STER 2015). In contrast to networks of distributed and social causal cognition in indigenous exegetical traditions, and as the interface between modern gurus and knowledge of Vedic pedagogy, spiritual representations of the Upanishads reiterate socially relevant roles formed under novel conditions of globalization. The cognitive basis for discourse production of Indian spirituality can be clarified in light of Maurice BLOCH's (2008) concept of the transcendental social, which adds a transactional dimension to the social anthropological notion of social structure. At the same time, the transcendental social goes beyond the transactional form of sociality shared with other primates to include the uniquely human capacity for imagination. For Bloch, the transcendental social includes imagined communities, essentialized roles, and role-like statuses activated in a transcendental network, which very often encompasses roles played in the empirically based transactional social.[2] Simply put, "what the transcendental social requires is the ability to live very largely in the imagination" (BLOCH 2008, 2060). For this reason, neuro-

logical evidence that might explain the nature of human sociability in terms of the selective advantage of imagination has the incidental benefit of explaining religion, which is nothing special. Still, I want to offer a more precise typology of the globalized organizational form of Vedanta adapted to the differentiated structure of modernity.

In the Vedic context of the term "guru" narrated in the *Mundaka Upanishad*, a student should approach a teacher versed in the Vedas (*śrotriyam*) and established in knowledge of *brahman* (*brahmaniṣṭham*) for knowledge of nondual reality (*brahman*).[3] Communicative and contextual constraints for the acquisition of traditional categories of Vedanta are territorially embedded in teaching lineages (*guru-śiṣya-paramparā*s) constituting a complex system of social relations. In the transcendental network of Indian spirituality the role of a guru is in direct contrast to episodes of traditional interaction. In fact, members of a transcendental group may never even meet face-to-face in the transactional field of human sociality. Spiritual gurus have an essentialized status not at all defined in relation to knowledge of *brahman* nor Vedic pedagogy. Irrespective of whether a particular individual is a knower of *brahman* (*brahmavit*), one occupying the essentialized role of a guru should act as a guru. Through ongoing processes of abstraction, generalization, and decontextualization, moreover, the semantic range of traditional categories of the Upanishads, such as the self (*ātman*), is expanded far beyond teaching lineages of Vedanta.

Whereas "spiritual religion," or individual mysticism, has become one of the more common forms of private religiosity, Casanova (1992) explains that the American invention of denominationalism is the corollary for individualistic, voluntary religious association. Organized denominationally, moreover, by the middle of the nineteenth century, evangelical pietism had transformed the dynamics of religious affiliation in America.[4] Initially posing a historically open question whether the case of religion in America is an instance of exceptionalism or the modern norm, Casanova more confidently suggests that all religions imported to America are constrained to function as denominations. Relevant forms of religious individualism in terms of modern structural differentiation can be underscored by noting two distinct characteristics of the already-emerging global denominationalism. First, as explained in the historical context of evangelical pietism, "once the denominations become particular vehicles for individual religious experience, the external organizational form and the doctrinal content become ever more secondary" (Casanova 1992, 30). Also to be considered is the tension of religious freedom for pluralistic associational religion under novel conditions of globalization, which can be emphasized with a brief overview of recent changes in the organization of Hindu nationalist movements.

Leading figures of the so-called Hindu Renaissance, motivated by the high esteem that both Indologists and Orientalists held for Vedanta, sought to nationalize the masses with public sermons eulogizing the Upanishads in India. Regional translations, of course, effectively loosened Brahmanical control of the Vedas, and Hindu missionaries enthusiastically embraced by Western students of Vedanta

went on to inspire religious revivals among pious middle-class Indians. During the twentieth century, organizations such as the Vishva Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) tried to initiate social reforms by appealing to Brahmanical institutions and promoting a popular agenda aimed at preserving Hindu dharma (KATJU 2003). As critics have long observed, however, neither the highly rarefied Upanishads nor the established Brahmanical order have been able to mobilize the vast majority of Hindus, most of whom are devotees of various gods found in classical Indian epics and now at the center of ceremonial temple worship (BHARATI 1970). More recently, itinerant ministers, charismatic preachers, and television evangelists have drawn crowds of worshippers numbering in the tens of thousands to events sponsored by Hindu nationalist organizations.

While the "failure" of the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) may be partly explained by its struggle for organizational control, it has been noted that the future success of Hindu nationalism depends on strategically connecting the mass congregations of what is now being called evangelical Hinduism to the all-India Hindu Acharya Sabha, a loose network of widely divergent spiritual groups established by Swami Dayananda (1930–2015 [DASGUPTA 2005]). The Hindu Acharya Sabha accommodates the different organizational forms and the diverse range of doctrinal content preached by modern India's spiritual leaders but what unites the entire community is their primary concern with protecting Hindu dharma, which in all cases is identified with the Vedic heritage. As an outspoken and highly revered leader of the group, in recent years Dayananda called for closer scrutiny of the controversial Forty-second Amendment of the Indian Constitution defining India as a secular nation. In particular regard to religious freedom, Dayananda perceives an urgent need to better clarify the relationship between the secular state and religion. DAYANANDA (2014) writes that "it is the state's responsibility to ensure no individual or group, including the state, interferes in religious expression of another group, by conversion or otherwise."[5] Secularism, therefore, is envisioned as a noble aspiration embodying universal values and ethical principles.

At the center of global denominationalism lies an increasing recognition of the reciprocal rights of all peoples to "protect and preserve their traditions and their cultures from colonial, imperialist, and predatory practices," but it is the corresponding transnational migrations which move Hinduism beyond its civilizational territory, thereby becoming global and deterritorialized, that must stand as our main concern (CASANOVA 2008, 116–17). Even while globalization theorists deny the relevance of the nation-state as a category of analysis for global society despite the ongoing importance of national borders, I want to suggest that globalized imagined communities are still "structured and determined by the territorial imagination of the nation-state" (BALACHANDRAN and SUBRAHMANYAM 2006, 21). It should nevertheless be emphasized that transcendental networks are also formed in mutual interaction with other deterritorialized transnational imagined communities.[6] Transformations of Hindu nationalism in the current millennium cannot be further discussed here, but an underlying assumption of this study is that mutual interactions of cosmopolitan gurus from the late nineteenth to the end of

the twentieth century can provide insight into these changes. Although conceptions of Hinduism are not problematized in this analysis, it should be clear that the distinction between religion and spirituality is an analytical one adopted for heuristic purposes. Indeed, arguments about the decline of religion stem from an erroneous separation of religion from the transcendental social (Bloch 2008), a superficial division based on a cosmopolitan view of secular differentiation. Faced with the particular "cosmopolitan homogenization" offered by spiritual gurus, what is now needed is "recognition of the irremediable plurality of universalisms"; as Casanova (2008, 119) suggests, it is the insistence on a global cosmopolitan modernity which could inevitably lead to the impending "clash of civilizations."

Spiritual diffusion of "yoga-vedanta"

Although it is widely maintained that the origins of modern spirituality are connected to secularization, both of which provided alternatives to institutionalized religion during the nineteenth century in the West, Peter van der Veer further observes that the rise of spirituality as a universal concept distinguished from the religious and the secular is in fact contradicted by its deployment in variant nationalist discourses. While the distinctly modern concept of spirituality travels globally, "its trajectory differs from place to place as it is inserted into different historical developments" (van der Veer 2014, 36). Analyzed within the orbit of imperial expansion and the "universalization of ideas," van der Veer suggests spirituality differs in different societies and that peculiarities of imperial universalization should be understood as part of the interactional history of Euro-American modernity with Asian modernity. This insight can be applied towards understanding trajectories of interaction between spiritual nationalism and Indian modernity, but with so much focus on universalization, further attention should be drawn to the domestication of Indian spirituality and its integration alongside religious formations in America.

There had been discussions about Indian religion since early conversion narratives of New England Puritans, but perceptions of Hinduism at the end of the eighteenth century in America were similar to those abroad: "the attitude of the great mass of Europeans who came into contact with it was always either ridicule or disgust" (Marshall 1970, 20). In line with Romantics and philosophical idealists, however, America soon developed its own camp of sympathetic observers with simplistic conceptions of India. While searching for interest in Indian spirituality before Emerson, Rayapati (1973) hazards comparisons with Jonathan Edwards and Quakers before applauding Emerson, along with Henry Thoreau, and Walt Whitman, for contemplating transcendental-Vedantic ideas. Although Emerson is widely cited as one of the first Americans to express fascination with the Vedic tradition, his personal journals from the early 1820s onwards express great disapproval of the goddery and vulgar ritual of Hinduism. Rather, "it was the deeply speculative wisdom literature of the Upanishads and Vedanta philosophy that caught and carried the imagination of Emerson toward the 'unity of spirit'" (Eck 2001, 95).

While there is evidence to support the "Easting" of old New England during the late nineteenth century, transcendental renderings of Vedantic ideas seem just as problematic as the work of America's first Hindu.

Offering a novel opportunity to hear native informants preach in America, the World's Parliament of Religions organized in Chicago was a testament to nineteenth century ideals of universalism. One particularly gifted orator was the Indian nationalist Swami Vivekananda. During sermons at the Parliament in 1893 Vivekananda proudly refused to call Americans sinners. The swami was also highly optimistic about the future of the human race, predicting a universal religion entirely centered on "aiding humanity to realize its own true, divine, nature" (VIVEKANANDA 1915, 17).

According to ECK (1990, 123), Hindu teachings on the divinization of humanity are derived from the Vedic truth-statement (*mahāvākya*) "you are that" (*tat tvam asi*). In the sixth chapter of the *Chandogya Upanishad*, Uddalaka Aruṇi teaches Shvetaketu, uttering *tat tvam asi* in repetitive episodes that validate the transmission of knowledge when the Upanishad repeats the following: "He indeed understood that from him."[7] The pronoun "you" (*tvam*) denotes Shvetaketu and the word "that" (*tat*) refers back to the beginning portion (*upakrama* [6.2.1]) when Uddalaka agrees to teach the young student (*śiṣya*). Both terms, each having their own meaning and linked by the copula (*asi*), are in the same grammatical case and hence co-referential (*sāmānādhikaraṇya*). Nonsynonymous words with distinct meanings (*śabdārtha*) and yet a single referent raise issues about congruity (*yogyatā*), as well as communicative intention (*tātparya*) of the *mahāvākya*, and deserve further enquiry into the Vedas and causal criteria for the acquisition of verbal knowledge. For Vivekananda, Aurobindo, and similar cosmopolitan gurus, however, self-realization inevitably requires some transcendental intuition, super-consciousness, or personal flashes of insight.

In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Ushasta requests instruction from Yājnavalkya about the self (*ātman*) and nondual reality (*brahman*). He asks, "explain to me the *brahman* that is immediately evident, the self that is within all."[8] In reference to the first person singular "I" (*aham*) the word *ātman* indicates oneself in the third person, and again since the self of Ushasta is no different than that of Yajnavalkya, who knows himself as *brahman*, the idea is that knowledge of the self can also be imparted to Ushasta. The Upanishads are not simply amodal propositions codified in pedagogical dialogues, salient truth-statements (*mahāvākyas*) similarly function as a verbal means of knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*) in the teaching tradition (*sampradāya*) of Advaita Vedanta. As Upanishads are not taught in reference to any transcendental self totally unknown or remote (*parokṣa*) from the listener, immediate knowledge (*aparokṣa-jñāna*) is acquired while listening (*śravaṇa*).

Less concerned with the reality of ordinary consciousness distinguished from cognition (that is, the *ātman*), on the other hand, cosmopolitan gurus conceptualize Upanishads as esoteric doctrines to be experienced in non-ordinary states of consciousness, and they urge spiritual seekers to transcend the mind in an effort to

intuit some higher faculty (for example, supermind or super-conscious). This theory-practice binary contrasts with the traditional role of the Vedas in generating direct knowledge and the crucially important need for utterances of Upanishads to be correctly understood. Highly arousing spiritual experiences and episodes of personal revelation are, moreover, of little importance for verbal comprehension and the acquisition of non-linguistic knowledge transmitted in teaching lineages (*guru-śiṣya-paramparā*) of the Advaita *sampradāya*.

Following the Vedic description of a guru, Rambachan (1991, 67) argues that the role of a traditional teacher in Advaita Vedanta is directly related to employing Upanishads as a verbal means of knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*), which involves a distinctive method of word manipulation as a mode of instruction. The traditional teaching method described by Rambachan is actually linked to Shankara's (ca. 750 CE) concept of superimposition (*adhyāsa*) whereby attributes of the subject and object are mutually superimposed, as in associating the ego with the self (*ātman*), so that one's bondage is entirely notional and a product of ignorance that is therefore negated by liberating knowledge. Similarly, Comans (2000, 467–69) explains the situation of qualified students hearing Upanishads taught by a guru as central to the teacher-student relationship of Advaita Vedanta and the role of a traditional teacher (*sampradāyavit*). Moreover, Comans emphasizes the importance of *śabda-pramāṇa* for Shankara's immediate disciples. Despite Shankara's status as a cultural icon in modern India, the role of a guru is not widely understood in this sense, as evident in spiritual representations of Advaita Vedanta and the universalization of ideas (for example, divinization of humanity). While it would be dogmatic to suggest there is only one way to understand the Upanishads, or even Shankara's commentaries thereon, the more important contributions of cosmopolitan gurus are not limited to reconceptualizing the Advaita tradition.

Overlooking Vivekananda's overwhelming interest in nondual (*advaita*) Vedanta, closer observation actually reveals a more rewarding career in the dualistic tradition of Yoga. In contrast to early Hindu immigrants in America who were likely to perceive connections between Indian spirituality and "stress management," in major Indian cities Hindus "probably never thought much of Yoga … and certainly meditation was considered to be the province of specially chosen holy people" (Narayanan 1992, 172). Vivekananda's enduring influence on contemporary Hindu self-understanding is therefore exemplified in his "Indian science of supra-consciousness," which effectively encouraged modern Indians to adopt "yogic practices" as a supplement to their urban religious lifestyle centered on ceremonial temple worship, but as van der Veer explains, "Yoga was now made into the unifying sign of the Indian nation and that not only for national consumption, but for the entire world to consume. This was a new doctrine, although Vivekananda emphasized that it was ancient 'wisdom.'"[9] In his attempt to market Yoga as India's spiritual gift to the world Vivekananda rides roughshod over a range of discursive traditions.

It is important to understand the different sources and contexts for Vivekananda's spiritual nationalism. There can be little doubt that "closer examina-

tion of Vivekananda's Universal Religion demonstrates that other religions tend to function as 'supplementary' truths to the higher-order truth of Advaita Vedanta" (KING 1999, 140). Deserving closer scrutiny from a subaltern perspective is Vivekananda's representation of Advaita Vedanta, especially since he viewed Yoga as a practical means for attaining the goal of Vedanta and despite the fact that his sermons were simultaneously promoted as either Yoga or Vedanta (KILLINGLEY 2014, 25–26). As Killingley observes, Vivekananda's mission to the West was likely intended to raise funds for humanitarian aid in India, and while he did not set out to be a teacher of Yoga nor Vedanta, by April 1895, he was indeed teaching classes on Yoga in New York to an audience eager to learn about Indian spirituality (KILLINGLEY 2014 23–29). Based on an analysis of Vivekananda's speeches and letters written during his first stay in America (1893–1895), Killingley finds that although he had no previous training in Yoga, much of what Vivekananda taught was developed from reading Patanjali's Yoga sutras (ca. fifth century CE), which he understands and presents as a work of psychology and mysticism containing a melioristic view of human evolution.

The translation of indigenous concepts into "spiritual nationalism" involves a significant transformation of Indian traditions (VAN DER VEER 2014, 172–74). In a transnational context, moreover, it is exceedingly important to consider the rhetoric of Vivekananda's teachings in reference to the opportunities secular modernity offers to a Universal Religion inspired by Yoga and an eclectic understanding of Advaita Vedanta. While relying upon the familiarity of his audience with certain aspects of secular thought (for example, human potential psychology and evolution), as KILLINGLEY suggests, Vivekananda "not only sets forth the ideas that are in his mind but also manipulates ideas that are already in the minds of his audience" (2014, 21). Going further, with emphasis on the mutual interaction of discursive traditions and diverse secularizations underlying Vivekananda's use of Advaita Vedanta, I want to argue that the swami builds upon different contexts for the diffusion of spiritual discourse in India and America.

One of the more consequential appropriations of the Advaita tradition occurred during the medieval period, when a number of Brahmanical theologians sought to merge trends of thought inspired by Patanjali's Yoga sutras and Advaita Vedanta. Forming in contrast to the teaching tradition of Vedanta, from at least the eleventh century onwards yogic practices centered on control of mental states and destroying the mind were systematically incorporated into schools of Advaita. In an attempt to attain liberation while living (*jīvanmukti*), advocates of what Andrew FORT describes as "yogic Advaita" sought to eliminate latent mental impressions (*vāsanās*) thought to be the cause of bondage (1998, 102–104). Extinguishing the mind (*mano-nāśa*) and destroying latent mental impressions (*vāsanā-kṣaya*) as purported means to liberation (*mokṣa*) both mark important steps away from the Advaita tradition of Shankara in precolonial India. Elsewhere, FORT notes that modern Indian writers replace the more restricted sense of Sanskrit terms for yogic concepts with English translations (for example, "superconscience") which have a much broader semantic range (1990, 105). While the contrasts must certainly outnumber any comparisons, an

older network of Brahmanical inclusivism may facilitate Vivekananda's mission and its domineering presence may also help explain how he was able to promote Yoga as Advaita Vedanta.

Therapeutic culture

Routes to highly arousing states of superconscience and so on lie at the intersection of Western interest in Yoga and Hindu yogins interested in Western sciences of the mind. At this point, it is not any School of Advaita Vedanta that is somehow psychologized but rather Hindu formations of the syntagm "Yoga-Vedanta" are syncretized with other cosmopolitan fabrications.[10] For Vivekananda, there is no Western science higher than psychology, but he regretted that higher psychology had been retarded by superficial interest in "mere alleged psychic phenomena" and mystery-mongering of so-called Hindu fakirs.[11] As any real mystic would agree, Vivekananda maintains, all facts obtained about the mind are universally everywhere the same. Stored deep within the mind, in the subconscious, are latent mental impressions which must be controlled in order to go even deeper within to the very "essential man," the *ātman*. Upon controlling the subconscious mind one can actually unite with the *ātman* by turning the mind inward towards the center from which, according to Vivekananda, one then gains universal facts about the mind (1985, 32). Vivekananda's influence on modern Indians is such that the psychologization of Hinduism and quests for symbolic meanings are now integral to the generic Hindu outlook of young urban professional Hindus in India and abroad (Narayanan 1992, 172–73). Meanwhile, the study of higher psychology has also become so refined that the resemblance of cosmopolitan gurus and psychotherapists now reflects mutually attractive roles for liberation therapeutics.

Announcing an unprecedented Great Awakening due to the encounter between Eastern and Western spirituality during the twentieth century, Eugene Taylor (1999) regards transpersonal psychotherapists as well as scientific and spiritual experts of the human psyche as the vanguard of an East-West psycho-spiritual revolution. Employing the terms "folk psychology" and "shadow culture" to describe an ecstatic psycho-spiritual tradition extending from American colonies to the field of transpersonal psychology, Taylor pinpoints its origins: "the essence of the First Great Awakening was that it elevated emotional experience and mystical revelation to the level of public consciousness" (Taylor 1999, 18).[12] The shadow culture has been invigorated over and again throughout history as spiritual seekers turn inward and then tout themselves in public, as "the true aristocracy of the spirit from which the letter of the law was derived" (Taylor 1999, 7). Since the shadow culture includes such doctrinally diverse preachers as Jonathan Edwards and Vivekananda, liberation therapeutics simply normalize episodes of personal revelation for the gain of revelatory authority.

Transcultural movements described as self-spirituality now use what are known as psychotechnologies and sessions of inner listening to somehow move beyond the mind and, since wholeness or limitless human potential lies within the individ-

ual, "perfection can be found only by moving beyond the socialized self—widely known as the 'ego' but also as the 'lower self,' 'intellect,' or the 'mind'—thereby encountering a new realm of being. It is what we are *by nature*" (HEELAS 1996, 19–25). Experience of the higher self is equated with experiencing God, Christ consciousness, the inner child, and other creative expressions. With his novel concept of involution, Vivekananda builds a similar doctrine of "inherent though obstructed perfection" (KILLINGLEY 2014, 31–32). Perfection lies within every individual and by practicing Yoga one can uproot latent mental impressions (*vāsanā*s) and then enjoy some altered states of consciousness, which in turn hasten the spiritual process of evolution. Never mind the fact that Vivekananda thought his superconscious experiences provided direct knowledge of the self (*ātman*); he has about as much in common with human potential movements.

The underlying premise of human potential psychology, also known as liberation psychotherapy, is that humans are benevolent by nature, and the cause of all psychological sickness stems from repression of the self (RICE 2004, 113–15). Moreover, humans have the potential for self-realization when liberated from social constraints and traditional authority. Under non-repressive conditions, RICE observes, it is important to let the real person do what feels right, and in their journey towards authenticity "individuals can gradually cultivate innate potentials" (2004, 116). Providing a synopsis of "therapeutic hegemony," Alan Woolfolk explains that because the ideal of psychological manhood is often unattainable, anti-institutional impulses and emotional excesses of therapeutic culture must be mitigated by committing individuals to any number of sub-institutional groups or mediating institutions (for example, self-help groups, workshops, and so on), thus providing alternatives to the inhibiting mechanisms of interdictory control (WOOLFOLK 2004, 80–82). Liberation therapeutics could not leave patients with psychological ills (for example, repression of the self), for it is their sickening condition that creates a role for psychotherapists, but the maintenance of codependency requires that one not be counseled too authoritatively.

The origins of psychological laboratories are built on Protestant practices of self-observation, but during the mid-twentieth century countless therapy sects emerged with various degrees of emphasis on their secular or spiritual aspects. Against the background of American pietism, humanistic psychology, and the New Age movement, transpersonal psychology arrived to blend liberation therapeutics with Vivekananda's teachings, along with teachings of other Eastern mystics. In one of the earliest handbooks of transpersonal psychology, Charles TART defines the field as spiritual psychology in direct contrast to religion, which he claims is an "institutionalized version of spirituality" that actually inhibits "direct spiritual experience" (1975, 4). Noting the lack of spiritual insight in the West, Tart finds the starting point for spiritual therapy in the rich mystical traditions of Eastern spiritual psychologies. It is therefore important to understand how mutual interaction with cosmopolitan gurus serve to authorize scientific claims about Indian spirituality.

Believing all ancient Indian philosophers began with the data of Yogic experiences, transpersonal psychologist Roger WALSH (1992) posits spiritual intuition

as essential to understanding Advaita Vedanta. Walsh's characterization of Indian mysticism amounts to little more than Orientalist exoticism. Experimenting with psychedelic drugs, continuous meditation, and reading the works of New Age gurus is, for Walsh, crucial to understanding "Asian mystical philosophies." In Walsh's transcendental social, even Indologists are dependent on psychotherapists who cultivate "intuitive insight" as a "distinct epistemological mode" (WALSH 1992, 295–97). While Orientalists used to view Asian mystical philosophies as "nonsensical products of primitive thinking," Western philosophers soon realized earlier "philologists' lack of philosophical sophistication had left them vulnerable to missing and misunderstanding certain philosophical subtleties," but even more insidious is when "highly intelligent and well intended philosophers approach Asian philosophies without the requisite yogic-contemplative training" (295). Just as philologists are incapable of understanding Asian spiritual texts, rational philosophers fail to comprehend the spiritual experiences on which Eastern mystical traditions are based. Walsh concludes by referring to his own phenomenological reports validating meditative experiences to support Asian claims for transcendental wisdom obtained in altered states of consciousness.

The questions postcolonial critics prefer to ask about the meaning of ancient Indian texts, however, are concerned just as much with presuppositions of the interpreter. One step beyond the objectivity of the text and philologists are "immediately thrown back into wider cultural questions and into questions about the motivation behind particular research programs that post-colonial theory has criticized" (FLOOD 1999, 233). As a transpersonal psychologist, Walsh is undoubtedly thrown back into the cycle of codependency. In support of Tart's call for "disciplines in which participant experimenters or yogi-scientists would learn techniques for inducing altered states," Walsh relies on gurus of Vivekananda's Ramakrishna Order to substantiate his claim that "Asian philosophers have sought, described, argued and trained for, and have spoken from, altered states of consciousness induced by the techniques they employ" (WALSH 1992, 292). Characterizing Vedanta as a great Asian mystical philosophy, in more general terms, is problematic in itself but it is similarly contentious to put forth Swami Nikhilananda's commentary on the fifteenth century text *Vedantasara* as the essence of Advaita. More than any similarities between Sadananda, author of the *Vedantasara*, and cosmopolitan gurus of the Ramakrishna Order founded by Vivekananda in 1897, WALSH's (1992, 282) dependence on Nikhilananda does make sense of his belief that continuous concentration generates ecstatic experiences that let spiritual seekers realize the truth.

Upon arriving in America, Nikhilananda soon founded the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Vedanta Center of New York in 1933 as a place for universal worship, where he ministered until his death in 1973. Like Vivekananda, Nikhilananda was successful in America and attracted a number of distinguished disciples. Translating the *Vedantasara*, NIKHILANANDA defines the Sanskrit term *samādhi* as "the super-conscious state of realization of Brahman, the target of spiritual discipline" (1974, 127). The blessed soul is ignorant of his identity with brahman, described as both the inward bliss and his own self, but this ignorance is somehow destroyed

in an experience of superconsciousness (NIKHILANANDA 1974, 117). Naturally, yogi-scientists following similar techniques can then better understand Asian philosophy. Walsh's suggestion that states-of-consciousness research allows psychologists to gain transcendental insight about Indian mysticism, however, loses ground when he points to Eliot Deutsch's reconstruction of Advaita Vedanta for proof that rational philosophers fail to appreciate nonverbal intuitions.[13]

DETERRITORIALIZING NETWORKS

In his popular study of Advaita Vedanta, DEUTSCH defines *brahman* as joy of experience (*anubhava*) but he then says that "*brahman*, as transcendental being given in spiritual experience, defies all description and characterization" (1969, 10). After reconstructing Advaita Vedanta as a philosophy of experience, Deutsch concludes with a final footnote stating that two different schools of interpretation arise in post-Shankara Advaita. Deutsch suggests that while the Vivarana School holds to the view that it is through listening (*śravaṇa*) that "the self may be apprehended," for his purposes it is better to follow Brahmanical theologians such as Mandana Mishra (ca. 660–720 CE) and the Bhamati School in viewing meditation as a way of gaining spiritual insight into transcendental being (110, note 5). For Mandana (MAṆḌANAMIŚRA 1984, 134), verbal knowledge (*śabda-jñāna*) obtained from the Upanishads is indirect (*parokṣa*). Verbal knowledge depends on an understanding of individual word meanings along with syntactic relations and is thus conceptual and relational (*samsṛṣṭa-viṣaya*). After hearing the Upanishads, therefore, to produce the requisite nonverbal knowledge listening (*śravaṇa*) had to be supplemented with mental actions (*mānasī-kriyā*) focused on repetition (*abhyāsa*) of the Vedic truth-statements (*mahāvākyas*).

Shankara's understanding that immediate knowledge (*aparokṣa-jñāna*) directly arises from listening (*śravaṇa*), that is, from hearing the *mahāvākyas*, represents a tradition that stands in contrast to eclectic theologians and *yogins* who embraced a doctrine of repeated meditation (*prasaṅkhyānavāda*). As COMANS (1996, 53) points out, however, even for Maṇḍana repeated meditation (*prasaṅkhyāna*) involves repetition of indirect knowledge obtained from Upanishads and not any yogic disciplines of mind control or meditation apart from the Vedic truth-statements. In contrast to Mandana and subsequent proponents of the Bhamati School, Shankara maintained enquiry and explication of the Veda for conveying the non-relational sense (*akhaṇḍārtha*) of the *mahāvākyas*.[14] As his disciple Sureshvara suggests, moreover, the nonverbal import (*avākyārtha*) of the *mahāvākyas* is not expressed in the propositional form of any sentence.[15] The teaching tradition of Advaita Vedanta, handling Upanishads as *śabda-pramāṇa*, has long been overshadowed by popular, imagistic imitations on the subcontinent. Grasping this point does not lessen the burden of historicizing modern reconstructions that appeal to the Bhamati School.

The Vivarana (exposition) School is traced to Padmapada, the only disciple of Shankara who produced a commentary on the *Brahmasutrabhashya* (that is, a commentary which provides the yardstick for authenticating the work of Shankara). As

Hacker suggests, moreover, Prakashatman's (ca. twelfth or thirteenth century CE) commentaries on Padmapada subsequently provided an "imposing and fully articulated construction and further development of the system of the School of Shankara" (HACKER 1995b, 30). The Advaita tradition would thus seem to be divided between Shankara and his disciples, on the one hand, and on the other adherents of causal criteria expounded by Mandana but subsequently adopted by Vacaspati (ca. 850–970 CE), a theologian whose commentary on Shankara's *Brahmasutrabhashya* subsequently formed the Bhamati School. According to BHATTACHARYYA, the Vivarana School of Padmapada had fallen into near oblivion and might have vanished entirely if the Indian *paṇḍits* and Sanskrit *pāṭhaśālās* did not make every effort to revive this forgotten school (1948, vii–viii). Transnational discourse of Vedanta has no doubt contributed to silencing major figures in the Advaita tradition of Shankara.

Analyzing the concept of territory and religious peregrinations involving Hindu nationalist movements, van der Veer explains that nationalist discourse builds upon and transforms precolonial networks that transcend the boundaries of local communities. Relating the development of pilgrimage routes in India to the centralization of religious authority, he further argues for striking parallels "between the expansion of religious organizations and state formation, and between the formation of religious communities and nation building."[16] Admitting that "every guru has his own followers and is not, in principle, subject to a higher authority," van der Veer nevertheless associates ascetic organization with the centralized authority of four different religious institutions (*maṭha*) spread throughout India (VAN DER VEER 1994, 48). According to medieval hagiographies, Shankara established the four centers and at each one installed his own disciple as the head abbot (see BADER 2000). Religious leaders of the institutions are now generally referred to as the Shankaracharyas and each strives to trace their lineage back to Shankara. Moreover, they believe Shankara created an ascetic network consisting of ten names (*daśanāmi*) and renunciates (*sannyāsins*) from each monastic order that enjoy sponsorship by one of the centers.

In tracing the territorial roots of Advaita Vedanta to Shankara and his disciples, subsequent peregrinations in India make explicit that the "process of dissociation of territory, religion, and civilizational culture is by no means uniform or homogenous" (CASANOVA 2008, 117). Without the benefit of a monolithic civilization or homogenous culture, let alone a Eurocentric nation-state model or centralized authority, the process of deterritorialization appears considerably more complex than the territorial expansion of pilgrimage routes. To begin with, all the stories about Shankara's travels throughout India are based on specious hagiographies. Moreover, considering the dates of monastic leaders and the lack of epigraphic evidence, HACKER (1995b, 28–30) suggests none of the institutions supposedly founded by Shankara were even in existence prior to the fourteenth century. While the Shankara cloisters (*maṭha*) cannot serve as a territorial center for the Advaita tradition, institutional support for the ascetic network of *daśanāmin*s can be linked to processes of deterritorialization. Perhaps around the beginning of the sixteenth century the Puri monastic order was adopted by the *maṭha* in Karnataka and, due

to some fortuitous circumstances during the late nineteenth century, we now find that "the Rāmakrishna monks trace their affiliation to the Sringerī *maṭha*" (BADER 2000, 275–79). In turn, this affiliation "provides the necessary legitimacy for the Rāmakrishna order" (BADER 2000, 275–79). Ramakrishna, of course, is not associated with the Advaita tradition but he did receive ritual initiation by a *yogin* named Totapuri.

It is true that Ramakrishna, a renowned mystic and practitioner of Tantra, only spent a brief period of time with Totapuri, but for our purposes it matters little that "the information available on Totapuri is very meager, so it is difficult to be sure whether he was actually an Advaitin rather than a follower of yoga" (COMANS 1993, 33 note 3). Similarly inconsequential is the fact that the monastic initiation concocted by Vivekananda, the actual founder of the Ramakrishna Order, would very probably not be recognized by the Sringeri *maṭha* (BADER 2000, 279). Not to put too fine a point on it, just as pilgrimage routes and the formation of religious communities lend themselves to nation building, essentialized roles and role-like statuses are integral to the globalization of transnational deterritorialized imagined communities. The Puri order, at least, is deterritorialized from Karnataka, a Dravidian territory, by being transplanted in the globalized transcendental network of cosmopolitan gurus. Most monks of the Ramakrishna Order do emphasize their affiliation with Vivekananda's new monastic movement rather than maintain any connections with the Sringer *maṭha*, but further analysis of deterritorialization can curb Indological reliance on nativist conceptions and provide a more accurate model of Brahmanical contacts and transfers. Without undermining commentarial and scholastic works produced prior to the totalizing representations of modern Hindus which seem to make a conscious effort to follow Vivarana doctrines, such as the *Ratnaprabha* (ca. sixteenth or seventeenth century), my desire to move beyond scholastic formations is motivated by important differences within the Advaita tradition, which philological analysis demonstrates are concealed by later inclusivism of the schools.

Sadananda, for his part, is thought to have been affiliated with one of the ten monastic orders (*daśanāmi sannyāsin*s) reputedly founded by Shankara, but even prior to his work there was divergence from the Advaita *sampradāya* by splinter groups focused on the yogic goal of *samādhi* (enstasis), which is the final stage for practitioners in the tradition of Patanjali's eight-limbed (*aṣṭāṅga*) Yoga. It should therefore serve as a reminder that "Shankara relegates Yoga to the sphere of ignorance (*avidyā*) because the Yogins are … in Shankara's eyes, not yet knowers of the truth."[17] Nevertheless, within the first few centuries following Shankara's death there were valiant attempts to "harmonize" Yoga with Advaita Vedanta. By the time of Sadananda the *Vedantasara* is able to put forth *aṣṭāṅga-yoga* as the eight-limbs for attaining *samādhi*, which is then equated with nondual reality and syncretized with Vedanta (SADĀNANDA 1911, 102–104). Largely unaware of medieval debates within the Advaita tradition, much less traditional discourse of Vedanta, ideology of experience (*anubhava*) and theory-practice binaries for Yoga-Vedanta easily accommodate therapeutic individuals devoted to gurus of Indian spirituality. With none too authoritative spiritual instruction (*upadeśa*) and little interest

in understanding the immediacy (*aparokṣatva*) of everyday consciousness directly experienced as the self (*anubhavātman*), spiritual seekers are poised for ever more profound temporary experiences (for example, *samādhi*). In this context, turns of phrase like spiritual gluttony contribute little towards explaining the American "gluttony of experience" (Cox 1977). As long as only unusual or non-ordinary experiences are understood to have some spiritual value, then mind-altering practices will always be much more important than any interpretation of human experience. The imperial universalization of Vedanta signifies a failure to consider the tradition of Yoga in relation to dualism and the philosophy of ontology, as suggested by the fact that so much unresolved tension between religion and world can still be deployed for integrating cosmopolitan gurus in the Hindu diaspora. Consequently, there is a sense in which nonduality (*advaita*) remains just as foreign to global denominationalism as Vivekananda appeared to nineteenth century Americans.

Neocolonialism and indian spirituality

Western knowledge of Indian religion increased significantly during the latter decades of the eighteenth century when the corporate institution of Orientalism commenced viewing the East through Europe's expanded scope, thus "making the Orient deliver up its secrets under the learned authority of a philologist whose power derives from the ability to unlock secret, esoteric languages" (Said 1994, 138). Attempts to reconfigure Edward Said's construal of Orientalism have centered on colonial subject formation and anti-colonial resistance. The disciplinary power and hegemony attributed to Orientalist discourse has also been called into question. Rejecting Said's view of imperialist expansion, Clarke argues that allures of the Orient led to colonized ideas being elevated above those of the colonizer and then being used to "challenge and disrupt the master narratives of the colonizing powers … to subvert rather than to confirm the discursive structures of power" (Clarke 1997, 9). For Clarke, Orientalism cannot simply be identified with discourses of domination or ruling imperialist ideology. Nevertheless, universalization of colonized ideas appears to reinforce master narratives of spiritual nationalism.

English translations of the Upanishads had generated some interest in Vedanta prior to Vivekananda's arrival in America, but for this audience the swami went on to preach a message of Universal Religion, which was identified with Hinduism. Moreover, strategic use of Advaita Vedanta preceded Vivekananda and goes all the way back to Rammohun Roy, the so-called father of modern India. Responding to both colonial narratives condemning "superstitious" Hindu practices and Orientalist interest in the Upanishads, Roy hoped appeals to Vedanta and Indian reverence for Shankara could somehow reform the masses on the subcontinent.[18] Already in 1816 Roy intended to distribute regional translations of Vedanta as widely as possible. In an attempt to prove to his European friends that "the superstitious practices which deform the Hindoo religion have nothing to do with the pure spirit of its dictates," Roy likewise resented the fact that orthodox Hindus

thought he had "forsaken idolatry for the worship of the true and eternal God" (1901, 3–4). It is therefore no surprise that Roy's monotheistic interpretations have been widely identified as the origins of modern Vedanta. Regardless of Roy's apologetics, the true novelty of his work lies in his attempt to preach urban sermons of Vedanta among the Hindu laity.

Throughout the nineteenth century, increasing interest in Vedanta and the Advaita tradition of Shankara coalesced with the adamant construction of Hinduism (some prefer the anachronism Neo-Hinduism), the rise of the Indian middle class, and transnational migration of Hindu missionaries. Whereas Roy's monotheistic theology was put forth to persuade Hindus in India away from polytheism, Vivekananda made different use of Vedanta in America, where the idea of monotheism was hardly subversive. Moving away from mere apologetics, Vivekananda took pride in the idea of nonduality (*advaita*) as a Hindu contribution to spirituality. At the same time, unable to question the swami's characterization of Indian traditions, liberal Christians and secular humanists found Vivekananda's notion of universal religion highly amenable to ideologies of tolerance and liberation. The American response to Hinduism displays a range of conflicting images.

Hindus had entered several major American cities during the first decade of the twentieth century, but their plight reached its climax with the Immigration Act of 1917, when South Asians were barred from entering the United States. The series of legislation passed during this time culminated in 1924 with an extension of the national origins quota system. An attempt to cite Aryan descent for racially identifying with Caucasians was denied by the Supreme Court's decision that Indians were in fact not "white people," and by 1926 many naturalized Indian citizens had been deported (RICHARDSON 1985, 17–19). Those remaining in the country faced frequent trials of discrimination and injustice. Following the Luce-Cellar Bill in 1946, Indians began to seek citizenship in America, but the allotted origins quota severely restricted the number of South Asians to be naturalized annually. Significant change would not come until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 eliminated the national quota system, when ECK (2001, 112) suggests the term "guru" entered American vocabulary with the steady stream of Hindus seeking prosperity abroad.

To be sure, cosmopolitan gurus take their share from the global influence of nonresident Indians (NRIs). As FULLER and HARRISS note, since the 1970s there has emerged a new globalized upper-middle class consisting of NRIs who have become one of the most prosperous and "best-educated of all ethnic minorities" and, moreover, these bourgeois Hindus wield decisive financial and ideological impact over Indians on the subcontinent (2006, 212). The rise of NRIs and the role of diaspora Indians have been most consequential for the self-understanding of pious Hindus in major Indian cities. Although influence is often extended from abroad, Fuller and Harriss explain that many NRIs return to India after several years of profitable living in America or elsewhere. Most importantly, modes of religious transmission are now merging to reflect the mutual influence of global imagined communities of the Hindu diaspora and spiritual diffusions of modern India.

One of the best examples of nonresident Indians preceding the development of a globalized class of NRIs is undoubtedly Aurobindo Ghose. Unlike Vivekananda, "Aurobindo does not go 'missionizing' into the West; instead, he returns to India from Europe and discovers his own tradition as a kind of foreigner. English is the language through which he is introduced to the great works of the Sanskrit tradition" (HALBFASS 1988, 248–49). Sent to England as a child, Aurobindo then attended Cambridge before returning to Calcutta, where he became embroiled in extremist politics, causing him to flee British India and set up a spiritual haven in French-owned Pondicherry in 1910.[19] Aurobindo is foundational to the New Age in India, or the "Westernized East," but he has also influenced spiritual representations of Vedanta in America so it is important to understand the context for his integral approach.[20] The argument that early Indologists were led to believe that Hinduism is world-negating and that Hindus view creation as an illusion is central to Ronald INDEN's (2000, 101–108) critique of Orientalism. The view of these early Indologists was based on their understanding of the Upanishads, Advaita Vedanta, and especially Shankara's doctrine of *māyā*. Aurobindo was well aware of this Orientalist depiction as he described its influence in the journal *Arya* in 1918:

> European writers, struck by the general metaphysical bent of the Indian mind, by its strong religious instincts and religious idealism, by its other-worldliness, are inclined to write as if this were all the Indian spirit. An abstract, metaphysical, religious mind overpowered by the sense of the infinite, not apt for life, dreamy, unpractical, turning away from life and action as Maya, this, they said, is India; and for a time Indians in this, as in other matters, submissively echoed their new Western teachers and masters. (AUROBINDO 1966, 5)

The overriding theme of Aurobindo's theology concerns an attempt to portray the world in terms of spiritual evolution and thereby suggest that Indian spirituality does not deny the reality of the world but is rather world-affirming. Although Aurobindo discusses both *māyā* and Shankara in Orientalist terms of illusion and world-negation he never really addresses the doctrine of *māyā* as understood by Shankara.[21] Instead, embracing Vivekananda's doctrine of involution, he puts forth a highly imaginative account of spiritual intuition described as the supermind. In Aurobindo's view, the divinization of humanity is the "inevitable outcome and consummation of Nature's evolutionary endeavor" (AUROBINDO 1951, 264). Living the divine Life involves opening ourselves more widely to altered states of consciousness and expanding our intuitive capacity for penetrating lightning flashes of truth, so that when receiving the "messages of these higher ranges of consciousness, by growing into them, we can become ourselves intuitive and overmental beings" (AUROBINDO 1951, 264). Although the supermind cannot manifest itself as the creative power in the universe from the beginning, throughout the course of evolution it is nevertheless "secretly present, occult actively with flashes of intuitive emergence in the cosmic activity of Mind, Life, and Matter" (AUROBINDO 1951, 264). Just as "Life and Mind have been released in Matter, so too must in their

time these greater powers of the concealed Godhead emerge from the involution and their supreme Light descend into us from above" (AUROBINDO 1951, 264). For Aurobindo, the divinization of humanity is therefore not only possible but is in fact ordained as the spiritual destiny of humankind.

India plays an important role in Aurobindo's divinatory scheme but he finds no Indian equivalent to the word religion, which is foreign and "smacks too much of things external such as creeds, rites, an external piety" (AUROBINDO 1966, 52), so it is necessary to give to religion a spiritual impulse and "define spirituality as the attempt to know and live in the highest self, the divine, the all-embracing unity and to raise life in all its parts to the divinest possible values" (AUROBINDO 1966, 52). Following India's lead, Europe can also come to realize that from the "spiritual view-point truth of existence is to be found by intuition and inner experience" (AUROBINDO 1966, 47). Aurobindo believed the human race is evolving spiritually since "Europe itself is laboring to outgrow the limitations of its own conceptions and precisely by a rapid infusion of the ideas of the East" (AUROBINDO 1966, 48) but the divine life will first be implemented in India once renaissance Hindus understand that a "spiritualized culture will make room for new fields of research, for new and old psychical sciences and results which start from spirit as the first truth and from the power of mind" (AUROBINDO 1966, 49). In other words, cultural independence cannot be attained by returning to ancient ideals of "world-shunning asceticism which drew away the best minds" (AUROBINDO 1966, 52). Less than a year after Aurobindo's death, however, it was actually in America that an institution was founded with the hopes of combining spiritual intuition of the East and Western psychical sciences of the mind.

After arriving in America, Haridas Chaudhuri established the Cultural Integration Fellowship (CIF) in San Francisco in 1951 and he was also instrumental in forming the California Institute of Asian Studies, later renamed California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS).[22] For Chaudhuri, Aurobindo is a "prophet of supermanhood and an architect of life divine on earth," but he is also a God who descended to earth "as an Avatār who came to fulfill the divine purpose in the world by preparing the ground for fuller manifestation of the transforming power of the Divine in the sphere of evolution" (CHAUDHURI 1960, 1). The supermind which Aurobindo was bringing down to earth before his death is considered the highest means of knowledge available to the modern world. Aurobindo dedicated the last twenty years of his life to silently mobilizing the spiritual resources of India to fulfill her destiny as the spiritual powerhouse of the world:

> In the midst of absolute silence he was engaged with sustained concentration in bringing down into the flux of human evolution the creative light and transmutive power of the higher divine consciousness,—the Supermind. He was also in close contact with the major cultural and ideological movements of the world, working upon them from higher planes of consciousness, in order to prepare the ground for an increasing transformation of the collective consciousness of mankind.   (CHAUDHURI 1960, 16)

It is while waiting for the evolution of consciousness that one fails to recognize consciousness in the everyday, but for spiritual seekers it is precisely the "omnipresence of the imaginary in the everyday" that lifts the supermind up into the flux of the transcendental social (BLOCH 2008, 2060). Chaudhuri's mission in life was to tirelessly relay Aurobindo's essential role in preparing the world for an impending spiritual revolution, in the course of which India's entire spiritual history is rewritten in light of the supermind. It was the supermind, described by CHAUDHURI (1974, 170) as the intuitive grasp of "exalted supersensous mystic experience," that led Aurobindo to believe such apparent opposites as spirit and matter, or God and world, are really "two inseparable poles of the same indivisible and all-comprehensive reality" (CHAUDHURI 1960, 204). Despite maintaining that ultimate reality is one indivisible ineffable spirit, on the other hand, he maintains that Aurobindo's integral Vedanta presents to the modern world an integral nondualism that preserves the "individual Divine and its universal source" as "equally real poises of being" (CHAUDHURI 1960, 198). Integral Vedanta restores the "original teaching of the Upanishads" in such a way that "traditional interpretations of Vedanta are harmoniously blended in an integrated Truth-vision" (CHAUDHURI 1960, 198). Aurobindo's supermind provides true understanding of all the Upanishads and, moreover, is the means to truth-consciousness and successfully living the life divine.

Rendered even more occult, "the supermind is not only the highest kind of knowledge available to man … it also has metaphysical, mystical, and cosmological implications" (CHAUDHURI 1974, 179). In its highest manifestation, finally, the supermind is the fourth (*turīya*) "characteristic of the Supreme," which Chaudhuri defines as the "creative medium" for manifesting spirit in the real, material world (CHAUDHURI 1974, 180). Usage of the Sanskrit word *turīya* to describe the supermind points toward innovative handling of an Upanishad technique (*prakriyā*) employed for understanding the invariable awareness in all three states of experience (*avasthā-traya*): waking, dream, and sleep. In Gaudapada's commentary on the *Mandukya Upanishad*, where the self (*ātman*) is understood as the fourth in relation to the three states, *turīya* is held as the nondual reality of all things.[23] As the changeless self could not undergo any transformation to manifest as the world, Gauḍapāda explains that the self creates *(kalpayati)* itself (*ātmānam*), that is, the worlds experienced in the waking and dream states, through itself (*ātmanā*) due to the inherent power of *māyā*.[24] In causal relation to an apparent effect (for example, the creation), *māyā* seems as real as one's usual perception of the material world, the invariable substrate of which is the awareness present in all states of experience.[25] Neither the Mandukya nor Gaudapada's commentaries thereon suggest any supreme supermind beyond the ordinary, sublatable states of waking, dreaming, and sleeping.

Nevertheless, given the role of Upanishads in colonial discourse, it would be hard to deny India's "most precious gem," and thus it is in some ways understandable that Chaudhuri believed "Swami Vivekananda did therefore the right thing in preaching to the West the message of Vedanta as India's most precious gift to

the world" (CHAUDHURI 1960, 196). Following the work of Roy, Vivekananda, and other modern Bengalis, the "spiritual renaissance of India reaches its consummation in Sri Aurobindo, the great reconciler" (237). When bowing to the world-historical significance of Aurobindo's supermind, however, Chaudhuri frequently refers to traditional Vedanta by way of erroneous depictions of Shankara and medieval interpretations of Vedanta. He goes so far as dismissing Shankara and his followers for promoting a world-negating belief system.[26] Chaudhuri criticized traditional Vedanta's lack of truth-vision since, "in medieval interpretations of the Vedanta, the supermind was ignored" (CHAUDHURI 1974, 180). More significantly, by ignoring the supermind, one fails to notice repressed tension between religion and world.

Praising India's spiritual psychology as the psychological approach of the Upanishads, in Tart's anthology CHAUDHURI suggests one must know all the altered states of consciousness. He writes that "it is a welcome sign of the present day that Western psychologists have come to realize this important truth" (1975, 235–36). Chaudhuri further explained that many childish gurus in India trap disciples under their hypnotic spell, but mature gurus transmit transcendental love and awaken latent psycho-nuclear energy through nonverbal communication felt as a high-voltage electrical charge (CHAUDHURI 1975, 254). Congratulating the science of peak experiences, Chaudhuri also maintains that "the rise of transpersonal psychology in our present day amounts to the discovery of a new frontier in our psychological knowledge" and psychotherapists reveal "unsuspected powers of light—those of profound intuitive wisdom" (CHAUDHURI 1974, 183). It is with the emergence of an "authentic transpersonal Self" that "man's search for truth reaches the multi-splendored glory of total self-realization" (CHAUDHURI 1974, 192). Codependent, yogi-scientists can then help integrate neocolonial Hindus in America.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have argued that transnational discourse of Indian spirituality has its cognitive basis in a transcendental network of cosmopolitan gurus. It can now be explained how peregrinations away from traditional Vedanta correspond with BLOCH's definition of religion as a "transcendental incomplete residue" (2008, 2058–60). Emphasizing the inseparability of the religious and the political, Bloch notes that in most all human societies local descent group rituals have been appropriated for a transcendental construction of the emerging kingdoms and centralized city-states throughout history. In this process, the diminution of the transcendental social of ancestor lineages allows for its completion in the royal transcendental of the kingdom. With the subsequent collapse of political systems in the wake of imperial expansion, as happened in the case of the Merina kingdom in Madagascar, colonial subjects are left with religion, that is, an incomplete transcendental social: "when the state, having confiscated a large part of the transcendental social so as to create its own ordered pseudo totality of cosmic order, then collapsed, a totalizing transcendental representation without its political foundation remained, floating in

mid-air, so to speak" (Bloch 2008, 2059). Of course, previously the transcendental social confiscated by the state had as its corollary the transactional social of local descent groups and Malagasy village elders.

I have theorized Indian spirituality in contrast to previous attempts at comparing modern Hinduism with precolonial formations of Advaita, and not simply because Vivekananda's founding of the new Ramakrishna Order effectively ignores traditional teaching lineages of Vedanta. Whatever confiscations may have occurred with the expansion of religious communities, deterritorializing ascetic networks, and Yogic borrowings from commentarial traditions surrounding the Upanishads, to emphasize the mutual interaction of autonomous individuals, Hindu nationalists, and diverse secularizations, I have found it useful to characterize the incomplete transcendental social of cosmopolitan gurus as spirituality. One consequence, for spiritual seekers, is that their totalizing image of *advaita* (nonduality) remains without any epistemic basis. Vivekananda's spiritual nationalism should be viewed alongside the fact that "it is the philosophical texts of the Vedanta that inspired him in his search to realize the divine" (van der Veer 2014, 175), but the inspiration for his quest culminates with situation models for seeking superconscious experiences.

Citing William James's reliance upon Vivekananda for describing the heights of mystical insight in Vedanta, King observes that uncritical acceptance of the swami's beliefs about Hinduism demonstrates the extent to which he was "able to exploit the relative ignorance of Westerners about the traditions of the East" (1999, 157; see also James 1902, 400). Considering the legacy of Vivekananda, I can only conclude that the situation hardly improved by the end of the twentieth century. At the same time, it is still largely true that "modern Hindus derive their knowledge of Hinduism from Vivekananda, directly or indirectly" (Bharati 1970, 278). As Narayanan suggests, when diasporic Hindus are called upon to explain their religion most will inevitably spout perceived symbolic connections between Hinduism and western psychology (1992, 172–73). Vivekananda's "psychological way to union" and the "realization of God" is offered as a "form of Hindu thought and practice that would be, he thought, both appealing and useful in the American context," but it is naïve to suggest the swami was "fluent in the distinctive idiom necessary to translate Vedanta for the West" (Eck 2001, 98–100). Noting that "there are all kinds of gurus, some more fully in possession of the insights of the tradition than others," Eck (2001, 112) means "the Hindu tradition" and some gurus can "teach it with authenticity."

Avoiding debates about authenticity or traditional Hinduism, shifting the focus to secular modernity has the added benefit of describing an all too prevalent kind of guru. As Swami Sivananda explains, "Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa touched Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda had super conscious experience" (1998, 18). During a period of solitary confinement at Alipore Jail in Calcutta, six years after Vivekananda's death, Aurobindo also underwent a miraculous transformation, as he later recalled: "Vivekananda came and gave me the knowledge of the intuitive mentality. I had not the least idea about it at that time. He too did not

have it when he was in the body. He gave me detailed knowledge illustrating each point. The contact lasted about three weeks and then he withdrew" (PURANI 1960, 209). Now, Aurobindo's disciples appear scarcely different than spiritual counselors, and their "main job is to help the disciple to discover the divine guru within the disciples' own unconscious psyche" (CHAUDHURI 1975, 254). RENOU (1964) does not tell us why Aurobindo should represent the end of Neo-Hinduism, but if we consider the roles of discourse participants extending the work of Vivekananda from Aurobindo onwards there is certainly a greater alliance with New Age human potential movements.

At least two phases of Hindu nationalism may be distinguished: one represented with creative reforms initiated towards the end of the nineteenth century, and another focused on more recent appeals to "tradition," each of which display distinct variants of neocolonialism. On the basis that both groups embrace the universality of Hinduism and the idea of Hindu-ness (*hindutva*) for Indian national identity, although admitting the hypothesis deserves further testing, SMITH (1996) suggests agents of the Hindu Renaissance foreshadow the late twentieth century Hindutva movement led by Sangh Parivar activists. Linking Hinduism to Indian identity in both variants of nationalist discourse, moreover, was made easy by "Western scholarship that insisted upon India's 'spiritual' essence" (SMITH 1996, 121). Although about two decades have passed since Smith's observation, and despite the fact that during this time there has been much research on the second wave of Hindu nationalism, his original contention that the *Hindutva* movement is a modern reincarnation of the Hindu Renaissance still holds true: "the comparison is debatable, however, and deserves more attention" (126, note 15). Described by Smith as the originators of Neo-Hinduism and the first wave of Hindu nationalism, nineteenth century leaders are well known in India and abroad, with the most influential spokesman being Vivekananda. The Sangh Parivar has also proved to be influential beyond the subcontinent through the activities of Swami Chinmayananda.

Specifiable criteria deduced from mutual interactions of cosmopolitan gurus lead to the following hypotheses about the diffusion of Indian spirituality in the new millennium, in contrast to modes of religious contact and cultural transfers throughout the twentieth century. Three features in particular need to be considered in any future search for variant discourses of Hindu nationalism:

(1) *Śabda-pramāṇa*. The paradigmatic role of the Vedas as a verbal means of knowledge (*śabda-pramāṇa*) is the single most glaring omission in Hindu nationalism. To remain salient, Hindu nationalists need to at least make less rhetorical use of the Upanishads or else digress further towards all-India populism. Differences between the Hindu Renaissance and *Hindutva* will still become less evident in the event of rhetorical usage of *śabda-pramāṇa*, particularly by entextualizing surface properties of Vedic pedagogy in nationalist discourses of Hinduism.

(2) *Inclusivism vs. Soteriology*. As with all religious traditions, syncretism is at the core of Indian spirituality. Variant diffusions of spiritual nationalism can

be addressed by analyzing divergent modes of contact between deterritorializing networks proceeding away from localized epistemic communities and transnational discourses centered on the Upanishads. Empirical observation should focus on deployments of Yoga-Vedanta, including metalanguage which seeks polysemies for traditional categories, and semiotic exegesis of means (*sādhana*) and ends (*sādhya*).

(3) *Experience and Knowledge*. Cosmopolitan gurus are adamant that a highly arousing and salvific "experience" can be brought about through sustained mental actions. Internally induced pluralism will probably need to prove itself in relocating spiritual discourse towards knowledge of the one who is said to be having such ecstatic experiences.

The above hypotheses obviously take for granted that eulogization of Advaita Vedanta will remain at the center of Indian spirituality. As early as Rammohun Roy, traditional scholars (*paṇḍita*s) have denounced the innovations of modern Vedanta (Halbfass 1988, 210–12). Following the work of Debendranath Tagore, the authority of the Vedas is replaced with the intuition of divine command (Rambachan 1994). For Keshub Chandra Sen, who was a major influence on Vivekananda (Killingley 2014), direct perception of God is even put forth as the essence of Vedanta. The remarkable thing about contemporary forms of Hindu nationalism, indeed if given a "direct link between the teaching of Vivekananda and those of Chinmayananda," is the extent to which "this kind of teaching has moved from the margin to the center of 'monastic' Hinduism" (van der Veer 1994, 137). Just as it is misleading to suggest that traditional monastic orders have not wielded mutual influence on modern gurus, it is important not to reify monastic Hinduism.

Benefiting from Indological emphasis on the indefinable nature of Hinduism, Hindu nationalists of all persuasions believe "India's national identity is closely linked with its intrinsic 'spirituality'" (Smith 1996, 121). Defining the first batch of renaissance Hindus, therefore, are pioneering scripts for routinized ritualization of highly arousing episodes in spiritual discourse and explicitly anti-traditional narratives informed by human potential psychotherapy and New Age spirituality. On the other hand, examining the work of Chinmayananda's disciple and one of the more active patrons of the Vishva Hindu Parishad, a prominent religious organization of the Sangh Parivar, Fuller and Harriss note that even though the traditional guru Swami Dayananda "has many white American devotees, his style of teaching is obviously antipathetic to New Age fantasies" (2006, 234, note 33). The swami's teachings on successful living attracted wealthy businessmen and young urban professionals of both sexes to major Indian cities, and during the first decade of the twenty-first century, Fuller and Harriss heard spiritual seekers attending classes in Chennai refer to a so-called Vedanta movement. Dayananda (2004, 3) also readily admits that "they [the Bharatiya Janata Party] were not really doing the propaganda of Hindutva perhaps properly … the emphasis has to be recast and redone properly." Perhaps a study of cosmopolitan gurus and modes

of religious contact formed under early conditions of globalization can shed light on spiritual propaganda and populist diffusions of traditional Vedanta.

Notes

1. Taking a philosophical approach to the differentiation of religion and world, Karl Jaspers discovered the "spiritual foundations" of humanity established "simultaneously and independently" in India, China, and the West, and the "spiritual process" that occurred between 800 and 200 BCE constitutes the "axial age" toward which "the spiritual life of men is still oriented" (JASPERS 1954, 98–103). Spiritual manifestations during the axial period are further revealed with Upanishads transmitted "in villages and forests, apart from the world, by hermits or small groups of teachers and students" (JASPERS 1954, 133). Starting with the Upanishads, and then later philosophers such as the Buddha, Laozi, Confucius, Homer, and Plato, though there have been new spiritual offshoots inspired by ideas acquired during the axial age, Jaspers notes that a subsequent stage of dissolution leads to popularization of the world's redemption religions. Western thought travels from mythos to logos and from revelation to theology.

2. The neurological adaptation for the transcendental social occurred with a development of the imagination distinguishing post-Upper Paleolithic Sapiens from chimpanzees (BLOCH 2008).

3. See SHANKARA (1987, 152): …/ *tadvijñānārthaṁ sa gurumevābhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahmaniṣṭham //* Muṇḍaka Upanishad 1.2.12. The *Muṇḍaka* also refers to brahman as the "imperishable" (*akṣaram*).

4. It is important not to confuse denominational Christianity with the general principle of denominationalism (for example, "direct mystical experience"). Because of his failure to make any distinction between the two, for instance, Robert Elwood frames the decentralization of church authority during the 1960s as part of a "spiritual revolution" heralding a "post-Protestant era" in America (ELWOOD 1994, 70).

5. During a visit to one of Dayananda's teaching institutions in Tamil Nadu in 2002, there was a very noticeable and widespread anticipation for a ban on religious conversions in the south Indian state. Indeed, in October of the same year the government issued an ordinance prohibiting conversions stemming from force, allurement, or fraudulent means but the ordinance was eventually repealed by the legislative assembly in May 2004.

6. Scholars focused on economic liberalization, expanding trade, and the integration of Indian financial markets into the global economy usually discover processes of globalization in India from the 1980s onwards, but as BALACHANDRAN and SUBRAHMANYAM suggest, what economic historians often fail to understand is that "through much of the early modern period, as well as in colonial times, India experienced a relatively high degree of openness, in its commodity markets and for its other factor flows" (2006, 39).

7. See SHANKARA (1987, 538): …*tattvamasi śvetaketo iti taddhāsya vijajñāviti vijajñāviti //* Chāndogya Upanishad 6.16.3.

8. See SHANKARA (1987, 807): …/ *yad eva sākṣād aparokṣād brahma ya ātmā sarvāntaraḥ taṁ me vyācakṣva iti /* Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad 3.4.2.

9. As an example of interactional history, van der Veer suggests Orientalist discourse on Indian spirituality was appropriated by Hindu nationalists in response to Christian critiques of the backwardness and spiritual inferiority of Hinduism. Vivekananda countered that Hinduism is actually modern and spiritually superior in comparison to other religions, but only needed to be reformed. VAN DER VEER describes Vivekananda's efforts as a form of "Indian puritanism" whereby traditional practices of Yoga (for example, attempts to gain supernatural powers and the ritualization of sexual experiments) were purged to accord with Victorian morality (2014, 174–75).

10. It is perhaps more accurate to describe Vivekananda as a "syntagm-maker" (Murphy 2007, 161–64).

11. Vivekananda acknowledged that attempts to universalize spurious opinions about the mind were thwarted by "self-styled mystics" throughout the world, "because such people do not go deep enough," and as a result "every religious and mystical crank has facts, data, and so on, which, he claims, are reliable criteria for investigation, but which are in fact nothing more or less than his own imaginings" (Vivekananda 1985, 31).

12. Trance states, outbursts in unknown languages, joyful visions, and falling down in the Spirit were just some spiritual practices of the First Great Awakening, but Taylor (1999, 18) explains that governing church bodies had previously shunned antisocial displays of emotion in public. From the First Great Awakening onwards, Taylor integrates an array of ecstatic mystics in the shadow of an ill-defined dominant religion.

13. See Walsh (1992, 283). As Halbfass notes, most modern Hindus aim to understand Advaita Vedanta as a "religion of experience" and "Western authors, too, often try to interpret Shankara's Advaita Vedanta as a philosophy of experience, although few go as far as Eliot Deutsch" (1988, 387).

14. For a discussion of similarities between the ways in which Shankara interprets the import of truth-statements, Sureśvara's use of the term *avākyārtha* (nonverbal meaning), and Sarvajñātman's (ca. tenth century) description of the non-relational sense (*akhaṇḍārtha*) of the *mahāvākyas* see Kocmarek (1985, 34–35).

15. Interpreting the *mahāvākya* "tat tvam asi," Sureśvara follows an exegetical method similar to Shankara's: *iyaṁ cāvākyārthapratipattir anvayavyatirekābhijñāsyaiva / Naiṣkarmyasiddhi* 3.28 (Sureśvara 1904, 186).

16. Additional examples support van der Veer's (1994, 33) thesis. "While the tendency of mostly middle-class Hindus to make an all-India pilgrimage in special buses and trains is probably rather recent," well-established pilgrimage routes must have contributed to a precolonial sense of "sacred geography" (122).

17. As Comans (1993, 29) points out, the very word *samādhi* does not even appear in any of the ten major Upanishads upon which Shankara has commented.

18. T. N. Madan (1983, 26) suggests Roy was the first Indian intellectual to scrutinize the social backwardness of India and urge for the eradication of superstitions. Halbfass (1988, 215) further explains that "no matter how slight the actual knowledge of his countrymen may have been, Rammohan was able to appeal to fundamental and widely familiar associations of authority and sanctity which were linked to the Veda, the Vedanta, and the name of Shankara."

19. Masselos (1972, 90) notes that after being released from an earlier arrest Aurobindo then fled to Pondicherry in an attempt to escape another warrant pending against him, thereby marking his "retreat from politics into mysticism."

20. Heelas (1996, 122, 207–208) briefly describes Aurobindo's influence on the New Age. Of course, Aurobindo was also influential for the development of Hindu nationalist movements. Jaffrelot (1996, 33–44) suggests Aurobindo's extremist practices were taken over by K.B. Hegewar, founder of the militant Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).

21. For some of the ways in which Aurobindo "oversimplifies" Shankara see Fort (1990, 102–105). Inconsistencies in Aurobindo's (1951, 105–113) representation of the language of Advaita are evident in his understanding of *māyā*.

22. In narrating these events I have included only the most commonly accepted brief details in order to avoid further discussion of contradictory reports concerning the early history of CIIS, as were made clear to me through personal communications with residents of CIF and administrators of CIIS during the late 1990s.

23. Note in particular the tenth verse of Gauḍapāda's commentary summarizing the seventh mantra of the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* (SHANKARA 1987, 188). Gauḍapāda is traditionally considered to be the guru of Shankara's own teacher.

24. *Kalpayaty ātmanā'tmānam ātmā devaḥ svamāyayā / Gauḍapādakārikā* 2.12 (SHANKARA 1987, 199).

25. As COMANS (2000, 30–31; 469–70) suggests, the *prakriyā* is not intended to set up an imaginary superimposition and, moreover, "requires the correct appreciation of the domains of *vyavahāra* [empirical reality] and *paramārtha* [ultimate reality]." It should also be noted that the *avasthā-traya-prakriyā* does not limit the principle of continuity and discontinuity (*anvaya-vyatireka*) to establishing casual relation (*kārya-kāraṇa-saṁbandha*).

26. Noting "the dialectic of Shankara and his followers in the medieval period suffers from some limitations which must be overcome," CHAUDHURI actually reinforces some common Orientalist truisms: "this ascetic approach contributed in no small measure to the backwardness of India in matters of social reconstruction, economical advancement and political organization" (1965, 65–66).

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