

DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

Yves Mühlematter

ACCELERATING HUMAN EVOLUTION BY THEOSOPHICAL INITIATION

ANNIE BESANT'S PEDAGOGY AND THE CREATION
OF BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY



OKKULTE
MODERNE

OKKULTE MODERNE

DE
|
G

Yves Mühlematter

Accelerating Human Evolution by Theosophical Initiation

Okkulte Moderne



Beiträge zur Nichthegeemonialen Innovation

Herausgegeben von
Christian Kassung,
Sylvia Paletschek,
Erhard Schüttpelz und
Helmut Zander

Band 6

Yves Mühlematter

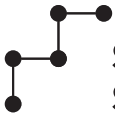
Accelerating Human Evolution by Theosophical Initiation



Annie Besant's Pedagogy and the Creation
of Benares Hindu University

DE GRUYTER
OLDENBOURG

The open access publication of this book has been published with the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation.



**Swiss National
Science Foundation**



**O K K U L T E
M O D E R N E**

ISBN 978-3-11-079456-4

e-ISBN (PDF) 978-3-11-079469-4

e-ISBN (EPUB) 978-3-11-079479-3

ISSN 2366-9179

DOI <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110794694>



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License. For details go to <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022917152

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available on the internet at <http://dnb.dnb.de>.

© 2023 the author(s), published by Walter de Gruyter GmbH, Berlin/Boston

This book is published open access at www.degruyter.com.

Cover image: Besant at the Vasantha Pathashala, Karachi, 1919 or 1920. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai.

Typesetting: Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd.

Printing and binding: CPI books GmbH, Leck

www.degruyter.com

Acknowledgments

The present book is a revision of my dissertation *Accelerating Evolution in Annie Besant's Theosophy*, which I submitted in February 2021.

First, I would like to thank my wife for her patience and her support. I would also like to thank my children, both of whom were born during the writing process of my dissertation, for the enduring inspiration and insistent, but welcome, distractions.

Secondly, I am grateful to Helmut Zander, who supported me, challenged me with critical questions, had me revise and reread passages and whole chapters and, above all, had the confidence that I could finish my dissertation. Without doubt, his support is one of the main reasons why the dissertation has reached completion and is now published.

Thirdly, my thanks go to Jens Schlieter who agreed to review my dissertation as second supervisor. His valuable advice led to significant improvements to the structure of the text and to the strengthening of the overall argument.

I also thank the many other friends and colleagues who supported me in writing my dissertation, including those from the Forschungsverbund „Gesellschaftliche Innovation durch ‚nichthegemoniale‘ Wissensproduktion. ‚Okkulte‘ Phänomene zwischen Mediengeschichte, Kulturtransfer und Wissenschaft, 1770 bis 1970“; the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE); and people from and around the Lehrstuhl der Abteilung Religionswissenschaft und Interkulturelle Theologie, Heidelberg, among whom Michael Bergunder in particular stands out. My thanks also go to Annemarie Mertens, my very patient Sanskrit teacher, Frederike Grenner, my very supportive Hindi teacher, and Angelika Malinar, the head of the Indian Studies department at the University of Zürich.

Last but not least, I also thank Jaishree Kannan, the archivist of the Theosophical Society's international headquarters, the Adyar Library and Research Centre, and Tim Boyd, the international president of the Adyar Theosophical Society, for providing a wealth of information and images for publication in this book.

For the publication of the present book, I would like to thank the Swiss National Science Foundation, which supported the publication with generous funding. I would also like to thank the kind staff of De Gruyter Oldenbourg.

Contents

Acknowledgments — V

1 Introduction — 1

- 1.1 The Theosophical Society — 3
- 1.2 Chapter Overview — 4
- 1.3 A Note on Citations, Diacritics, and the Use of Proper Names — 5
- 1.4 For Reasons of Readability — 7

2 The Problem of the “Western” in “Western Esotericism” and in Research on the Theosophical Society — 8

- 2.1 The Problem of “Western Esotericism” — 9
- 2.2 The History of the Theosophical Society: A History without Indian Theosophists? — 16
- 2.3 Conclusion — 33

I Encounters in the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum: A Theoretical Framework

3 Postcolonial Studies, Hybridization, and the Global History Approach — 39

- 3.1 Why Hybridity? — 43
- 3.2 The Idea of “Beyond” and “In-Between” — 46
- 3.3 Inherited Instability — 48
- 3.4 Mimicry as a Strategy of Resistance — 49
- 3.5 “Hybridity” and “Hybridization” — 51
- 3.6 A First Summary — 53
- 3.7 Overlaps and Common Claims of “Global History” and “Postcolonial Studies:” Global Connections, Relations, and Encounters — 54

4 Towards the Conceptualization of an Analytical Tool — 59

- 4.1 What are the Pitfalls? A Proposal for Operationalizing “Hybridization” — 59
- 4.2 A Proposal for the Operationalization of a Neighboring Term — 61

- 4.3 “Hybridity” and “Hybridization” in Bhabha’s Theory: A Reevaluation and Augmentation — 64
- 4.4 A Proposal for Operationalizing “Global History:” Wenzlhuemer’s *Globalgeschichte Schreiben* — 69
- 4.5 The Notion of the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum — 75
- 4.6 Proposal for a Systematization of “Hybridity” — 76

II The Theosophical Society in the “Indian Middle Class,” (Theosophical) Evolutionism, and the Narrative of the Theosophical Masters: Three Essential Contexts

- 5 The Indian Middle Class as a Field of Colonial Encounters — 83**
 - 5.1 Why a “Field of Colonial Encounters”? — 94
 - 5.2 The Emergence of the Indian Middle Class: Historical Background — 95
 - 5.3 Encounters Between Individuals: Texts as Manifestations of Encounters and Established Relations — 97
 - 5.4 Writing the Public Sphere: Journals, Magazines, and Public Speeches as Media for Encounters — 99
 - 5.5 The Indian Middle Class in the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum — 100
 - 5.6 Preliminary Conclusion: Encounters in the Indian Middle Class — 101

- 6 Theosophical Evolutionism, or the Narrative of Progress — 103**
 - 6.1 Historicism, Evolution, and the Idea of Progression in-between Darwin and Theosophy — 103
 - 6.2 Herbert Spencer’s Progressive Evolution — 106
 - 6.3 Darwin, Orthogenesis, and Lamarckism — 107
 - 6.4 Evolutionist Ideas of Race — 108
 - 6.5 Ideas of Progressive Development — 109
 - 6.6 Science, the Colonial Setting, Learned Societies, and Popular Reception — 110
 - 6.7 The Problem of Human Intelligence and Morality: The Uptake of Evolutionism in Annie Besant’s Theosophy — 112
 - 6.8 Evolution, a Universal Principle?: The Problem of Translation and Hybridization — 115
 - 6.9 The Reception of Evolutionist Concepts in India — 117

- 7 Masters and Disciples, or: How to Transfer Knowledge — 121**
- 7.1 The Master Narrative in the Theosophical Society: From Exclusiveness to the “Quickening of Evolution” — **123**
 - 7.2 Masters and Disciples Between Freemasonry, “Hinduism,” and Theosophy — **127**
 - 7.3 Succession, Charisma, and Office — **131**
 - 7.4 Preliminary Conclusion: Transfer of Knowledge, Forms of Succession, and Claims of Charismatic Leadership — **134**
- III The “Quickening of Evolution” 1: The Stages of Initiation in Annie Besant’s Early Theosophy and *The Voice of the Silence***
- 8 The “Quickening of Evolution”: The Stages of Initiation as the Cornerstone of Besant’s Early Theosophy — 141**
- 8.1 The Problem of Describing Annie Besant’s Life: State of the Research — **144**
 - 8.2 The Importance of the “Quickening of Evolution” in Besant’s Early Theosophical Writings — **146**
 - 8.3 Preliminary Conclusion: Exponential Evolution, Self-Development, and the Bridging of the Master Paradox — **166**
 - 8.4 Hybridization and Encounters in Besant’s Early Theosophy: The Textual Level and the Level of the Discourse — **169**
- 9 Following the Traces of Hybridization: The Stages of Initiation in Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence* — 171**
- 9.1 The Gurvi and her Disciple: Annie Besant’s Initiation and *The Voice of The Silence* — **171**
 - 9.2 The “Already Hybrids” of the Stages of Initiation in *The Voice of the Silence* — **174**
 - 9.3 Why Do I Speak of “Already Hybrids”? — **176**
 - 9.4 A Close Reading of *The Voice of the Silence*: Following the Traces of New and Altered Relations — **179**
 - 9.5 Part Three: The Seven Portals, or: The Stages of Initiation — **188**
 - 9.6 Preliminary Conclusion: The Hybrid Voice of the Silence; A Book of Initiation Based on “Already Hybrids” — **193**
 - 9.7 Results and Traces of Hybridization, “Already Hybrids,” and Tradition Through Repetition — **197**

IV The Stages of Initiation In-between “Hinduism” and Theosophical Evolutionism

- 10 The Reception of “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society: Encounters in the Indian Middle Class — 203**
 - 10.1 “Buddhism” versus “Hinduism”: Early Encounters with “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society — **205**
 - 10.2 Mapping Out a Field of Encounters: The Already Hybrid *Upaniṣads* — **206**
 - 10.3 The Already Hybrid *Upaniṣads* in Annie Besant’s Work — **213**
 - 10.4 Translations of the *Upaniṣads* Found in Besant’s Work — **215**
 - 10.5 The Early Reception of “Hinduism” in *The Theosophist*: Indian Theosophists as “Experts” on South Asian Religions — **218**
 - 10.6 Preliminary Conclusion: Benares, Calcutta, and *The Theosophist* as Spaces of Encounters — **234**
 - 10.7 The Indian Middle Class in the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum — **236**

- 11 Manilal Dvivedi, the Forgotten “Expert” on “Hinduism” — 240**
 - 11.1 A Biography In Between Mesmerism, Theosophy, Sexual Abuse, Academic Success, and Constant Illness — **243**
 - 11.2 Dvivedi’s Translation of the *Vākya Suddhā* — **250**
 - 11.3 The Uptake of Yoga in the Theosophical Society: A Story With(out) Manilal Dvivedi? — **254**
 - 11.4 Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga* — **256**
 - 11.5 Connecting the Discursive Fields: Translating *Cit* as Consciousness — **274**
 - 11.6 Relationalization to European Orientalism — **276**
 - 11.7 Preliminary Conclusion: Translating *Cit* into Theosophy; Advaitism as the Highest Form of Philosophy — **280**
 - 11.8 Dvivedi’s Colonial Agency and the Meshing of Processes of Hybridization — **281**

- 12 T. Subba Row, the “Expert” on “Hinduism” — 282**
 - 12.1 Biographical Sketch — **282**
 - 12.2 State of the Research — **283**
 - 12.3 Divided Spheres of Expertise: Blavatsky’s “Chaldeo-Tibetan Esoteric Doctrine” and Row’s “Ancient Aryan Doctrine” — **287**

- 12.4 Claiming Hegemony on “Hindu” Matters: Relationalization Between Swami Paramahansa and T. Subba Row — **290**
- 12.5 Contesting the Divided Spheres by Equalizing Relationizing: The Letter by H.X. — **294**
- 12.6 Recontextualizing Mill by Translating *Parabrahman* and Relationizing it to (Un)Consciousness — **296**
- 12.7 Translating “Adwaitism” and Relationizing it to Blavatsky’s “Arhat Doctrine” — **298**
- 12.8 Row’s *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita: An Accelerated Way to Mokṣa* — **300**
- 12.9 The Aftermath of Row’s *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita: Relationalization contra Row and his Resignation from the Theosophical Society* — **315**
- 12.10 Epilogue: Death and Obituary — **320**
- 12.11 Preliminary Conclusion: T. Subba Row, Blavatsky and “Ausseralltäglichkeit”; Relationalization, Power Asymmetries, and Claiming Charismatic Authority — **322**

V The “Quickening of Evolution” 2: The Pedagogy of Morality Based on the Stages of Initiation

- 13 The “Quickening of Evolution”: Education for Initiation in the Central Hindu College and the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* — 329**
 - 13.1 The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* and the Central Hindu College in the Research on Theosophy: Sources and Dispositions — **331**
 - 13.2 A Brief History of the Central Hindu College — **332**
 - 13.3 The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books: The Process of Editing and Implementing the Texts in the Central Hindu College* — **339**
 - 13.4 The Ethics of Initiation — **347**
 - 13.5 The Indian Epics and Heroic Ideals — **357**
 - 13.6 Sat, Chit, Ânandam: Thought-Power instead of Consciousness and Love as the Guiding Principle for Universal Happiness — **360**
 - 13.7 Thought-Power and Emotional Power as Means for Helping Others: Cosmic Ideation and Its Repetition in Human Beings — **362**
 - 13.8 Excursus: Hindu Nationalism and British Royalism — **364**
 - 13.9 The Importance of Virtues for the “Quickening of Evolution” — **365**

- 13.10 Preliminary Conclusion: The “Science of Ethics” as the Means of the “Quickening of Evolution” and Preparation for Initiation — **377**
- 13.11 Multiple Relationalization and the Involvement of the Author — **378**

14 Conclusion — 379

- 14.1 The Emergence of the Stages of Initiation and the “Quickening of Evolution” From the Indian Middle Class: Mapping out a Multifaceted Discursive Field — **380**
- 14.2 A View of Theosophy that goes “Beyond” — **383**
- 14.3 An Analytical Tool to Describe Hybridization Processes on the Textual Level — **384**
- 14.4 The Notion of “Already Hybrids”: Conceptualizing Non-Originals and Fields of Encounters as Premises for “Hybridization” — **386**
- 14.5 Future Research — **386**

Bibliography — 389

List of Figures — 409

List of Tables — 411

Historical Persons Index — 413

Person Index — 415

Publications Index — 417

Subjects Index — 419

1 Introduction

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet.

(Rudyard Kipling, *The Ballad of East and West*, 1889)

The first two lines of Kipling's famous poem states the claim that "East" and "West" are mutually exclusive spheres, both as fixed cultures and as clearly distinguishable geographical spaces, unconnected and each in itself monolithic. However, the poem takes a rather different turn as it continues: "*But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth, When two strong men stand face to face, tho' they come from the ends of the earth!*"¹ In the poem, Kamal, a local chieftain in what is today the border region of Pakistan, stands "face to face" with the son of a colonel in the British Army after Kamal steals the colonel's mare. The two figures here embody and illustrate the encounter between "East" and "West." At the end of the poem, the colonel's son regains his father's horse while Kamal, in turn, receives the son's pistol. The British soldier rides back to his fellows accompanied by Kamal's own son, whom Kamal has sent with the British soldier for his protection. The pair swear blood brotherhood to one another and ride off together towards the British fort. When they arrive at their destination, the colonel's son tells the other soldiers that his companion is one of them now. "*Last night ye had struck at a Border thief – tonight 'tis a man of the Guides!*"²

The story of Kamal and the colonel's son provides a vivid image of what will be discussed in this book under the heading of "hybridization." Kamal endangers the British by taking away something that belongs to them. His appropriation of this piece of British identity is so threatening to the British colonel that he sends his own son after Kamal to retrieve what has been stolen. The chase leads deep into Kamal's territory, where he occupies a position of power. In the encounter, both sides are altered: Kamal acquires a British pistol, while the colonel's son rides back with Kamal's own son as a companion. The retrieval of the mare triggers a close interaction in a liminal space in which Kamal occupies a superior position and the life of the colonel's son (the British identity) is potentially endangered. In this liminal space, new relations are established between Kamal, his son, and the son of the colonel. Both sides impart something to the other that has the potential to alter each of them fundamentally. When Kamal's son enters

1 Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West," in *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses*, 3rd ed. (London: Methuen and Co., 1892), 75.

2 Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West," 83.

the British fort at the end of their journey, he becomes “one of them,” marking the end of the process which is now irreversible.

This image – and one should keep in mind that it remains only an image – illustrates how “exchange” processes between “East” and “West” are understood in the present book. The language of “exchange” is misleading when it comes to thinking about the conceptualization of “hybridization” as a metaprocess (Chapter 4.3), as I do in this book. The “metaprocess of hybridization” is understood as a complex of numerous multifaceted and interlocking processes in which “elements” and “structures” are “transferred, translated, repeated, and de- and recontextualized.” In these processes, “original” and “copy” constitute each other³ by establishing new and altered relations. Being dependent on each other in such a way, it is impossible to distinguish an “original” or a “copy” as existing outside that relationship. Nevertheless, the theoretical approach advanced in this book can still be read as a conceptualization of “exchange” processes between “East” and “West.” However, the approach developed here allows for the identification and management of an increased level of complexity and is therefore better suited to the identification of heterogeneity instead of homogeneity. Such an increased level of complexity and heterogeneity is better suited to give a balanced account of the discursive fields analyzed in this book. It is my intention to move away from essentialist and Eurocentric perspectives. This means that notions of “mutually exclusive spheres, both as fixed cultures and as clearly distinguishable geographical spaces, unconnected and each in itself monolithic” become untenable. It is not to be claimed here that the theory used as a framework here, and an analysis such as I am conducting, can explain “everything,” nor can it transcend or even erase power asymmetries. Nevertheless, it adds many new and altered perspectives on a phenomenon that has too long been perceived as purely “Western.”

The primary goal of this book is to investigate the “hybridization processes” that arise from the encounters between Indian and Non-Indian Theosophists and Non-Theosophists, and to consider how these processes are reflected in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, the textbooks of the Central Hindu College (see below). The main subjects of analysis here are the stages of initiation in the grand scheme of Theosophical evolution. These initiatory steps are connected to an idea of evolutionary self-development by means of a set of virtues that are relative to the individual’s position on the path of evolution. The central thesis is that these stages were translated from the “Hindu” tradition to the “Theosophical” tradition through multifaceted “hybridization processes” in which several

3 Tejaswini Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992), 3.

Indian members of the Theosophical Society partook. These processes cannot be understood as following a simple linear genealogy but, rather, need to be seen in terms of metaprocesses of meshing hybridizations in which different positions were negotiated. Starting with Annie Besant's early Theosophy, the stages of initiation will be traced through Blavatsky's work to Manilal Dvivedi and T. Subba Row, both Indian members of the Theosophical Society, and then on to the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*.

1.1 The Theosophical Society

In 1898, the English Theosophist Annie Besant (1847–1933) and the Indian Theosophist Bhagavan Das (1869–1958) together founded the Central Hindu College, Benares, which became the nucleus around which the Benares Hindu University was instituted in 1915. In this context, three textbooks, two story books, and a monthly magazine were published. These were part of a geographically widespread Theosophical educational system that encompassed hundreds, if not thousands, of schools. The Theosophical Society was undeniably the most important institutional structure to emerge from the field of occult currents in the 19th century. It was founded by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907), and others in 1875 in New York.⁴ Annie Besant joined the Theosophical Society fourteen years later, in 1889. The Society's headquarters moved to Adyar, a suburb of Madras, today Chennai, in 1883 where it still remains. The Theosophical Society opened numerous branches around the world, some of which are still active, especially in Britain, the U.S., India, Australia, and the Philippines. The history of the Theosophical Society is complicated, with a number of schisms leading to the creation of numerous branching divisions. In the following, I will mainly be concerned with Adyar Theosophy and it is to this branch that I refer whenever I use the term "Theosophy." However, this distinction only becomes meaningful after 1895, when the American branch, under William Quan Judge (1851–1896), seceded from Adyar Theosophy. These topics have received little scholarly attention, and, in general, the Theosophical Society in both its historical and its contemporary forms remains severely under-researched.

This book contributes to a profound conceptualization of initiation into higher knowledge in the Theosophical Society and its socio-cultural consequences. In

⁴ For a full list of the elected officers, see Bruce F. Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 28.

doing so, it succeeds in making understandable how “esoteric” knowledge was transferred into public institutions and how a wider public could be reached as a result. In contrast to older research that focused on “Western” Theosophists, I contextualize this central finding in such a way that I am able to sketch a broadly spun field of discourse in which Indian Theosophists were significantly involved in the conception of the “stages of initiation.” Thus, the “stages of initiation” cannot simply be described as “Western” or “Eastern,” but are to be understood as the result of diverse, interlocking processes of hybridization.

1.2 Chapter Overview

In Chapter 1 of the book, the main topics are introduced, along with an overview of each of the subsequent chapters. Chapter 2 discusses the current state of research, in which a homogenizing and Eurocentric tendency is identified. In Chapter 3, I elaborate the theoretical foundation for my analytical tool by discussing “postcolonialism,” “hybridity,” and the global history approach. In Chapter 4, the analytical tool itself is developed.

In Chapter 5, a “field of encounters” is presented in which Indian and non-Indian Theosophists and non-Theosophists came into contact with each other. I argue that these encounters initiated numerous “hybridization processes.” In Chapter 6, “evolutionism” is discussed. The stages of initiation in the Theosophical Society were embedded in a scheme of evolution in which several discursive fields were connected, including European evolutionism, the reception of that evolutionism in India, and Indian concepts that had the conceptual vocabulary of “evolutionism” retrospectively applied to them.

Chapter 7 discusses a central motif of the Theosophical narrative, the master/disciple relationships that are a precondition for initiation in the Theosophical Society. These relationships structure the Theosophical dissemination of occult knowledge as well as providing support for claims of authority and securing lines of succession. The “Quickening of Evolution” can be understood as a reaction to the “Master Paradox.” This is a crucial context for an understanding of the discursive dynamics within the Theosophical Society.

Chapter 8 draws on this discussion to elaborate on the idea of the “Quickening of Evolution” and on the stages of initiation that formed the core of this concept in Annie Besant’s early Theosophy. This early phase extends to the beginning of the 20th century, and I take it that its *terminus ante quem* is marked by the publication of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* in 1902 and 1903, to which Besant contributed.

Chapter 9 presents a close reading of Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*. As a book of initiation, it communicates the idea of the acceleration of evolution that is spurred on by the passing of the individual through stages of initiation. In this respect, Blavatsky's work was pivotal for Annie Besant because it served as her own "book of initiation," the reading of which allegedly led to contact with the Theosophical masters. Chapter 10 discusses the uptake of "Hinduism" in the Theosophical Society, mapping out a discursive field in which Indian members and non-members of the Society were the experts on this topic. It describes the reception of Advaita Vedānta in the Theosophical Society and its equation with "occult" wisdom, and the process by which non-Indian Theosophists gradually also came to claim expertise on "Hinduism" just as they presented themselves as the expert on the "occult" wisdom.

Chapters 11 and 12 discuss the writings of two eminent Indian-Theosophists, Manilal Dvivedi and T. Subba Row. Dvivedi's work was crucial for the conceptualization of the stages of initiation in the Theosophical Society, which was based on his understanding of *rājayoga* and Advaita Vedānta. He was not only one of the distinguished experts on "Hinduism" in the Theosophical Society but also a recognized expert within European academia. His work is a paradigmatic example of the connection of numerous discursive fields in the global colonial discursive continuum. Row was *the* expert on "Hinduism," and on the *Bhagavadgītā* in particular, in the Theosophical Society between 1880 and 1890. Chapter 12 documents his ideas on "Hinduism" as theistic *bhakti* Advaita Vedānta. This approach was closely linked to later developments in the Theosophical Society and to the development of ideas of evolution towards divinity.

Finally, Chapter 13 discusses the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* with a special focus on the "Ethical Science"⁵ elaborated therein. It illustrates how the stages of initiation were adopted both in and beyond the educational establishments of the Theosophical Society as the foundations for ethical education.

1.3 A Note on Citations, Diacritics, and the Use of Proper Names

The Chicago Manual of Style Online (CMOS) has served as my guide for all questions concerning citations, the use of numbers, titles, proper names, etc. However, the numerous sources from the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries

⁵ Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book: Of Hindu Religion and Ethics* (Benares: Central Hindu College, 1902), 107.

do not always fit easily into this framework. CMOS acknowledges these difficulties and leaves authors with a degree of freedom in deciding how to handle such cases. I will give some examples in this section of how certain difficult cases will be handled throughout. In some cases, it was not possible to follow the guidelines strictly because dates, authors, publishing houses, or other pieces of information were missing. I have taken a pragmatic approach to such absences. Rather than expend enormous amounts of time carrying out meticulous investigations into trivial points (e.g., the first name for which an initial stands), I have opted instead to cite such works in a manner that is sufficiently clear for the reader to follow the paper trail, so to speak, even if all the normal information cannot be included. As for proper names, I have used those given in the sources except in cases in which these names are variants of well-known persons or key protagonists. For example, I use T. Subba Row throughout the book, including in all citations, footnotes, and the bibliography, rather than adopting variant spellings that might appear in a given text, such as Subba Rao. The same is true for Manilal Dvivedi, given consistently instead of variants such as Manilāla Nabhubhāi Dwivedi, and for Annie Besant, rather than Annie Besant Wood or Dr. Besant. Academic and aristocratic titles have been omitted throughout unless they are included in direct quotations.

Diacritics are included in proper names only in cases in which the person or institution in question is not well-known and it cannot be said with certainty to which historical person or institution the names refer. Exception to this rule are the ancient Indian authors, especially Shankara, who appears throughout as Śaṅkara. Diacritics for other words are usually included following ISO 15919, with the exception that in the case of ऋ ṛ is used instead of ṛ. Other diacritics are used in direct quotations and in some cases when referring to a specific use in the source text. For example, *âtma* or *âtmâ* are written instead of *âtman* when referring to a specific use in Theosophical writings. In some cases, it was not clear how the sources transliterated the Indian languages. In the 19th century and early 20th century, many competing systems of transliteration were used (several different systems are sometimes still in use today).

Throughout the book, “Hinduism” is written in quotation marks to acknowledge the heterogeneity of Hindu religions and the problematics in the formation of the term “Hinduism” for these religions. “Hindu,” on the other hand, is usually written without brackets. The names of other “religions,” such as “Buddhism,” “Jainism,” “Christianity” are usually given without brackets, although their connotations could also be problematized and therefore marking them with brackets would be justifiable. Following the CMOS, names of (major) religions are capitalized, e.g., “Hinduism” and “Theosophy,” and also “Hindu” and “Theosophical,” but “Christian theosophy.”

1.4 For Reasons of Readability

1) DOIs are not included in references to journal articles. 2) In the running text, titles of articles are given in italics instead of within quotation marks, although the normal quotation marks are retained for references in the footnotes and the bibliography. 3) Square brackets indicate changes in direct quotations, although minor changes to e.g. punctuation are not marked. Square brackets are also inserted when deleting parts of the direct quotations or when including words, etc. 4) Theoretical concepts, such as “hybridization,” “already hybrids,” “relationizings” are given in quotation marks where they are elaborated as terms for the analysis, especially in Chapters 3 and 4. In later chapters, once they have been established as analytical categories, they usually appear without quotation marks.

2 The Problem of the “Western” in “Western Esotericism” and in Research on the Theosophical Society

Most of the research that has so far been carried out on the Theosophical Society acknowledges the central position it had within 19th century “esotericism.”⁶ There have been a number of detailed studies on the “Western” influences on Theosophy, the most notable of which is Godwin’s groundbreaking work, *Theosophical Enlightenment*. Up until very recently, scholars have identified Theosophy as a specifically “Western” current and “non-Western” influences have often been marginalized. Hence research on Theosophy has often tended towards the Eurocentric. In addition, “Theosophy” is often equated with Helena Blavatsky’s writings, leading to the heterogeneity of the current frequently being neglected and, thus, to essentializing tendencies in research on this topic. This is not a result of the lack of primary sources but rather of the overwhelmingly large corpuses of primary material that have survived. There were and still are numerous monthly, weekly, and even daily Theosophical journals and newspapers, as well as numerous monographs and anthologies in many different editions and languages. A major problem for scholars working in the area is that there are no critical editions, not even of Blavatsky’s work, no scholarly or complete bibliographies of the primary sources,⁷ and only partial searchable indices of Theosophical journals.⁸ Another major problem is the availability of the sources, especially those published in small

6 For a critique of the term “esotericism” in general and its “Western,” see Chapter 2.1.

7 Although Kurt Leland’s “Annie Besant Shrine” is an important source for scholars working on Annie Besant, including myself, it does not meet scholarly standards. In addition, as is already clear from the title, Leland is a practitioner and an admirer of Annie Besant. This does not diminish his effort in compiling the only comprehensive bibliography of Annie Besant’s oeuvre (cf. Kurt Leland, “Annie Besant Shrine – Kurt Leland’s Spiritual Orienteering,” accessed December 17, 2019, <https://www.kurtleland.com/annie-besant-shrine-m>). There are similar issues with the Blavatsky archives (cf. “Blavatsky Study Center: Website on H.P. Blavatsky & Theosophy Including Blavatsky Archives.” accessed December 17, 2019, <http://www.blavatskyarchives.com>). Similar bibliographies are missing for almost all other Theosophists.

8 The Campbell Theosophical Research Library’s website is the foremost tool for searching for articles within Theosophical journals (cf. “Campbell Theosophical Research Library – Search Index of Theosophical Periodicals,” accessed December 17, 2019, <http://www.austheos.org.au/csearch/ui-search.htm>). Many important Theosophical journals, such as *New India* and *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, are, however, not (yet) included in the search engine.

Theosophical journals or in journals in foreign languages.⁹ Often these are only available, if at all, in India, at the Adyar Library and Research Centre of the headquarters of the Theosophical Society. As a result, scholars have often based their research on one or two major publications, mostly late editions of *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. Although it has not been possible in writing the present book to carry out foundational research concerning editions, publishing houses, or questions of authorship, I have tried to base my accounts on a representative corpus of publications.¹⁰ In the following, I will discuss in more detail a wide range of publications on “Western esotericism” in general and Theosophy in particular. In the field of “the study of the Theosophical Society” – often viewed as a subfield of the study of (“Western”) esotericism – two major approaches exist, although one currently seems to be losing ground to the other. The former, increasingly challenged, approach claims that “modern Theosophy” is a purely, or at least largely, “Western” construct; the latter, increasingly dominant, contests this notion.

2.1 The Problem of “Western Esotericism”

Wouter Hanegraaff is one of the most eminent scholars in the field of “Western esotericism.” His chair in the History of Hermetic Philosophy and Related Currents at the University of Amsterdam is one of the most important positions in the field, while the institute in which he holds his position is the only institution to provide a complete course in “Western Esotericism” from the B.A. level through to the Ph.D.¹¹ Hanegraaff conceptualizes “Western esotericism” as a wide range of currents which belong to what he calls “‘rejected knowledge’ since the age of Enlightenment.”¹² These currents include highly diverse traditions, ranging from Hermetism,

⁹ The most important source for scans of some of the major and smaller Theosophical journals is the website of the International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals (cf. “International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals,” accessed December 17, 2019, <http://www.iapsop.com/>).

¹⁰ This is certainly true for Annie Besant’s writings in her early Theosophical period and also for T. Subba Row’s and Manilal Dvivedi’s oeuvre. I do not refer to a large corpus of Blavatsky’s writings because I am particularly interested in *The Voice of the Silence* as a book of initiation and I do not want to perpetuate the narrative that Theosophy equals Blavatsky.

¹¹ Amsterdamhermetica.nl, “About HHP – Western Esotericism in Amsterdam,” accessed September 30, 2019, <https://www.amsterdamhermetica.nl/esotericism-in-the-academy/esotericism-in-amsterdam>.

¹² Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013), vii.

Neo-Platonism, and classic Christian theosophy,¹³ through to New Age thought, Ufology, and many others. Hanegraaff maintains that “‘Western esotericism’ is not a natural term but an artificial category, applied retrospectively to a range of currents and ideas that were known by other names at least prior to the end of the eighteenth century.”¹⁴ For him, the adjective “Western” is “meant to highlight the *specificity* of esotericism understood as an inherently Western domain of research, in contrast to globalizing or universalizing understandings of the term.”¹⁵ Although Hanegraaff clarifies that he accepts that some “non-Western” influences and several different traditions, such as “Jewish and Islamic ‘mysticism,’” have merged in the field of esotericism, he nevertheless maintains that “Jewish and Islamic forms of ‘esotericism’ have emerged and developed as largely self-contained and relatively autonomous traditions [. . .] The simple reason is, again, that they required fluency in the relevant languages and deep familiarity with their respective holy scriptures.”¹⁶ The “again” here refers back to his broader conviction that the language “barrier” and the cultural “barrier” stand as good reasons for scholars of “Western esotericism” not to engage with these traditions. He is aware of the difficulties of the term and affirms that “it remains true that the very term ‘Western esotericism’ could be seen as reflecting an unfortunate hegemonizing perspective.”¹⁷ In his view, this is however “precisely the point.” Declaring “esotericism” as “Western” shows that it belongs to “Western” culture and that it is “rejected knowledge” that emerged “as a singularizing and hegemonizing construct – directed, however, against ‘paganism’ rather than against Judaism or Islam – in the context of specifically Christian apologetic and polemical debates.”¹⁸ In *Esotericism and the Academy*, Hanegraaff traces existing narratives about “Western esotericism” through scholarly accounts. He explains that these narratives “do not mirror something that is historically given, but construct it.”¹⁹ At the same time, he argues that such narratives refer “to real historical currents and ideas that are grouped under a label such as ‘esotericism’ *not* just arbitrarily, but for specific reasons that have as much to do with their own nature and intellectual content as with the discourse

13 Other than the name, there is only a loose connection between Christian theosophy and the Theosophy of the Theosophical Society. For an overview of Christian Theosophy, see Antoine Faivre, “Christian Theosophy,” in Hanegraaff, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*.

14 Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, 3.

15 Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, 15.

16 Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, 16.

17 Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, 17.

18 Hanegraaff, *Western Esotericism*, 17.

19 Wouter J. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 368–69.

that constructs them as such. There is something ‘out there’ after all.”²⁰ He attempts to salvage the “real” facts from the dust of historiography, claiming that historiography “tries to describe what actually happened in the past” and that what he terms “mnemohistoriography” “tries to describe the genesis and historical development of what a given culture *imagines*” depicts as having happened. He identifies “Western esotericism” as “an imaginative construct in the minds of intellectuals and the wider public”²¹ and a “waste-basket category of rejected knowledge.”²² There are several difficulties in Hanegraaff’s account, but perhaps the most problematic is his setting up of a dichotomy between the “images” and that which “really is.” This not only presupposes a hierarchization into “correct” and “false” understandings but also implies that *he* knows what is “real.” Consequently, he does not consider that he himself “constructs” a narrative about what is “esotericism.” In taking such an approach, he perpetuates typological ideas about esotericism of the kind advanced by Faivre.²³ In addition, he conceptualizes “European culture” as distinctively different from other “cultures” and provides support for the idea of a European *Sonderweg* while at the same time marginalizing other traditions.

Every set of terminology comes with its own inherited baggage, but the designation “Western” seems to be especially problematic. As will be argued in this book, there are no such things as stable “cultures,” and a consequence of this is that the category “Western” becomes untenable. This would imply an idea of some “original” “Western” culture. The idea of the “original” is likewise untenable because it only becomes constituted in fundamental “processes of hybridization” which constantly form and re-form “cultures,” “concepts,” and, hence, “esotericism” (for a thorough elaboration of these notions, see Chapters 3 and 4). These difficulties have long been recognized and there has been a lively discussion in the field of “Western esotericism” about its “Western” component. This discussion is ongoing – and might never be resolved – as the ESSWE (European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism) conference, held in Amsterdam in July 2019, illustrated. Besides panels on Islam, Judaism, South Asian religions, and many other topics, there was one session, featuring some of the most eminent scholars in the field, reserved in particular for the question of whether “Western esotericism” should be labeled as “Western” or

²⁰ Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 369.

²¹ Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 377.

²² Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*, 374.

²³ Antoine Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994).

not.²⁴ Of course, no consensus emerged and ESSWE remains ESSWE despite many voices criticizing the inclusion of “Western” in its name. Yet while no broadly accepted conclusion was reached, the liveliness of the discussion was enough to show the relevance of the question. The session was a direct reaction to a tendency in the pages of *Correspondences*, the online journal for (Western) esotericism, to distance itself from the “Western” in “Western esotericism.” The editors of *Correspondences* announced on April 27 2018 that the journal did indeed intend to drop the term “Western.”²⁵ Roukema and Kilner-Johnson, the editors of *Correspondences*, felt the need to “defend” their decision in more detail so set out their reasoning in the editorial of the second volume of the journal that year.²⁶ Their main point was that the terminology was problematic because it tended to perpetuate ideas of “the West and the Rest” – to borrow Stuart Hall’s notion. The use of the term would thus prevent the field from advancing in a theoretically sophisticated manner, because, they claimed, “we do not think that ‘Western’ traditions, currents, events, figures, and concepts can be separated from whatever is perceived to be the non-Western Other against which the identity of these phenomena is clarified.”²⁷ While acknowledging that the initial intention of scholars such as Faivre and Hanegraaff was to establish “Western esotericism” as a non-essentialist field of study, pointing to its specificity²⁸ in contrast to “esotericism” as a universalist phenomenon, Roukema and Kilner-Johnson were nevertheless convinced that research in this area no longer benefitted from this limiting specification.²⁹ A fundamental difficulty lies at the root of this controversy. To what extent is it possible to apply a term such as “esotericism” to other “cultures,” and would doing so fall into the trap of creating a new form of orientalism?

The discussion at the ESSWE conference and the dropping of “Western” from the subtitle of *Correspondences* are some results in an ongoing discussion that is concerned not only with the meaningfulness of the “Western” in “Western esotericism,” but with that of the concept of “esotericism” as well. One result of this discussion has been a trend in the last decade or so which,

24 Amsterdamhermetica.nl, “Programme – History of Hermetic Philosophy,” accessed September 30, 2019, <https://www.amsterdamhermetica.nl/esswe-2-4-july-2019/programme>.

25 Allan Johnson, “Change Is in the Air!,” accessed September 30, 2019, <http://correspondencesjournal.com/2018/04/27/change-is-in-the-air>.

26 Aren Roukema and Allan Kilner-Johnson, “Editorial: Time to Drop the ‘Western,’” *Correspondences* 6, no. 2 (2018).

27 Roukema and Kilner-Johnson, “Editorial,” 109.

28 See also Egil Asprem, “Beyond the West: Towards a Comparativism in the Study of Esotericism,” *Correspondences* 2.1 (2014): 8.

29 Roukema and Kilner-Johnson, “Editorial,” 111–15.

after gathering pace during the last five or so years, has now finally found its way into active research on Theosophy, as will be discussed below. One may wish to identify other “starting points” for this discussion, such as von Stuckrad, for example, or the Hanegraaff-Bochinger debate on “New Age,” but in my view the turning point that elevated these discussions to a new level was Bergunder’s introduction of poststructuralist and postcolonial considerations into the mix, starting with his *What is Esotericism?*, published in 2010.³⁰ Following Laclau, Bergunder argues that “esotericism” is an “empty signifier.” By this he means that, if the discourse is understood as a process of attributing meaning by establishing differences, in the sense of defining meaning as “not-this”/“not-that,” then a “logic of equality” is established in a system of difference.³¹ This logic of equality is then repeated in “chains of equality” which are “held together by signifiers, which have been emptied of their differentiability, and have been designated by Laclau as ‘empty signifiers.’ ‘Nodal points’ or, in the sense suggested here, identity markings, are thus formed by means of empty signifiers.”³² Against this background, Bergunder suggests that we should analyze “esotericism” by tracing processes of reception backwards in history by radically historicizing and indicating continuities and discontinuities between synchronic and anachronic discursive networks. The notion of the discursive network is of great importance for the discussion of the “Western” in “esotericism.” If we maintain, following Bergunder, that “a synchronous network can only be meaningfully described when it is registered in the totality of social discourses, that is, fields of discourse of its time,”³³ then it becomes impossible to conceptualize “esotericism” as a “Western” phenomenon. This holds true at least for the 19th century, when colonial discourses became increasingly interwoven through an increase of mobility and means of communication.³⁴ This point will be reflected below

30 This article is a translation of Michael Bergunder, “Was ist Esoterik? Religionswissenschaftliche Überlegungen zum Gegenstand der Esoterikforschung,” in *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Rezeption – Integration – Konfrontation*, ed. Monika Neugebauer-Wölk (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2008).

31 Michael Bergunder, “What Is Esotericism? Cultural Studies Approaches and the Problems of Definition in Religious Studies,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010): 23–24.

32 Bergunder, “What is Esotericism?,” 22.

33 Bergunder, “What is Esotericism?,” 27.

34 The establishment of global networks is described in general by Osterhammel. It is not only the case that the means for communication and mobility became increasingly available during the 19th century, but also that this period, especially the years between 1860 and the First World War, experienced an unprecedented wave of intercontinental migration and the expansion of empires which went along with an enormous increase in communication and mobility infrastructure (cf. Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte*

in the idea of the “global colonial discursive continuum.” To give just one example of the many that will be considered in this book, the Theosophical idea of evolution cannot be understood without looking at the discourse about evolutionism in Europe and the reception of this discourse in India (see Chapter 6). The question that remains is to what extent these discursive fields were connected.

I have identified Bergunder as “the starting point” of what I have termed “an ongoing process,” “a major trend,” or the problem of the “Western” in “Western esotericism.” I have then gone on to identify the session at the ESSWE conference and the dropping of the “Western” in the subtitle of *Correspondences* as “symptoms” of this process. I will now draw attention to a 2021 article, again entitled *What is Esotericism?*,³⁵ that may serve as a temporary “end-point” for this process. The article in question evolved as a result of thinking about the discussions held at several recent conferences on “esotericism”: a conference in Fribourg on “the birth of the study of religion from occultism,” another in Venice on “Islam and esotericism,” and the ESSWE conference in Amsterdam that has already been mentioned. Zander’s considerations oscillate between the two poles of “esotericism” as a discursive category, as advanced by Kocku von Stuckrad,³⁶ and the content-based definitions pioneered by Antoine Faivre.³⁷ Zander attempts to mediate between these two poles and advocates “An Open Concept of ‘Esotericism’.”³⁸ He begins by arguing that research on “esotericism” has an inherent problem because there is almost no communication between the field of “Western esotericism” and other fields which are concerned with “esotericism.” He maintains that, as a result of this disconnect, important theoretical and methodological debates are not taken up and applied by scholars working on “Western esotericism.” Secondly, he argues that the discursive approaches have blurred the initial definitions of “esotericism.” This was to the benefit of the field, Zander explains, because it helped to widen the scope of research and led to

des 19. Jahrhunderts, Historische Bibliothek der Gerda Henkel Stiftung (München: C. H. Beck, 2011), 1010–29). Bergunder, in particular, has shown in his analyses of the uptake of the *Bhagavadgītā* that the global discourses became interwoven, especially in the Theosophical Society. See Michael Bergunder, “Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert: Hinduismus, Esoterik und Kolonialismus,” in *Westliche Formen des Hinduismus in Deutschland: Eine Übersicht*, ed. Michael Bergunder (Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2006).

³⁵ Helmut Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’? Does it Exist? How Can it be Understood?,” in Mühlematter; Zander, *Occult Roots of Religious Studies*.

³⁶ Kocku von Stuckrad, *Was ist Esoterik? Kleine Geschichte des geheimen Wissens* (München: Beck, 2004), 20–25.

³⁷ Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*.

³⁸ Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’?,” 34.

the consideration of many different topics. But “one problem is evident: everyone can understand, by means of discursive justification, nearly anything he or she wants about esotericism – including retreats to Faivre’s proposal.” In conclusion, he holds that the content-based definitions are too narrow and the discursive too open.

A major problem Zander identifies in this debate is the lack of the application of theory. Reflecting on post-Said discussions, Zander claims that “methodical questions concerning entanglement, comparatistics and the transferability of terms and concepts” are broadly neglected in the research on “esotericism.” However, Zander’s interest is not in the question of whether “esotericism” “exists” in a given culture or not, but rather in raising awareness of problems of comparison which are at stake when “esotericism” is compared with concepts such as *batin/ghayab*, two terms put forward at the conference in Venice as equivalents for “esotericism” in Islam. The core of Zander’s essay is his proposal of “An Open Concept of ‘Esotericism’.” Zander claims that “such a definition does not lead to an idealistic or fundamental definition, because it depends on the pragmatic use of terms and on discursive decisions made by scholars.”³⁹ This includes the idea that such a “definition” would always be temporary and dependent on its context.⁴⁰ Finally, he argues that this kind of reflection can profit from the insights of comparatistics. As Zander explains, comparatistics show that “commonalities (*genera proxima*) and differences (*differentiae specifica*) with regard to a point of comparison (*tertium comparationis*) [. . . are] not neutral, but the result of normative determinations.”⁴¹ This ultimately means that “scholars involved in this process determine their object from a hegemonic position.”⁴²

Zander concludes that such an open definition would then prove its applicability in the process of its incorporation and its discussion within the scientific community. He thus encourages “an ongoing debate on the possibility of using the term esotericism – keeping in mind that any definition, like any scientific statement, is relative and time bound, and that its meaning changes when it is transferred into another culture, another language or another system of symbolic forms.”⁴³ He claims that this proposal for an open concept of

³⁹ Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’?,” 35.

⁴⁰ Zander explains that “In Sedgwick’s eyes, ‘the main difference’ on the conceptual level is that *batin* refers to ‘realities’ while *ghayb* refers to ‘meanings and ideas’; thus, these two concepts can be related to content objects (*batin*) and to discursive concepts (*ghayb*).” Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’?,” 29.

⁴¹ Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’?,” 36.

⁴² Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’?,” 36.

⁴³ Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’?,” 39.

esotericism, “would allow us to identify and discuss the problems openly, leaving us no longer faced with the aporia of a purely discursive or purely content-related definition of esotericism.”⁴⁴

Zander’s article is paradigmatic of the whole debate because it oscillates between discursive approaches and content-based approaches in attempting to define “esotericism.” His practical approach is most welcome because philosophical and historical arguments should not be separated. The use of philosophical arguments in historical analyses is fruitless unless they can contribute to the provision of plausible explanations for historical events. However, these “events” are always “constructed” and Zander’s plea for a “back and forth game between the field of study and the development of the theory” thus aims in exactly the right direction. For research into Theosophy, I argue that using “esotericism” as a second order term makes no sense, at least insofar as it retains its “Western” connotation. The Theosophical Society is the paradigmatic example of a dynamic of “hybridization” “in-between” “East” and “West.” If “esotericism” is understood as a decisively “Western” phenomenon, then “modern” Theosophy does not fall under its purview, as the current book will show. I will return to this point in the conclusion (see Chapter 14). I do not use the term “esotericism” or any of its derivatives as an “analytic” category, not only on account of its “Western” bias but also because it is often used in my sources as a first order term. In these contexts, it refers to a given writer’s specific understanding of the “religion” and its “esoteric” core, an understanding which belongs to the category of “Ancient Wisdom Religion.”

2.2 The History of the Theosophical Society: A History without Indian Theosophists?

I will start this survey of the current state of the research into this question by considering two general entries on Theosophy in overviews of “Esotericism” and one in an overview of “Hinduism.” I begin with Olav Hammer’s entry in Christopher Patridge’s *The Occult World*, before turning to James Santucci’s entry in the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, and then Gauri Viswanathan’s article in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*.

In his introduction, Olav Hammer writes that the Theosophical Society “functioned as the vehicle for the dissemination of a religio-philosophical message that drew on a vast fund of Western esoteric sources, and was presented as a third option besides dogmatic religion and materialistic science, able to

⁴⁴ Zander, “What is ‘Esotericism’?,” 39.

transcend the differences between the two.”⁴⁵ This statement is symptomatic of research on Theosophy, in that it highlights the influence of “Western esotericism” and downplays the influence of “non-Western” thought. Throughout his very concise and well-written entry, Hammer presents the Theosophical Society as a purely “Western” endeavor. Not a single Indian Theosophist is mentioned and the influence of the Theosophical Society on later currents is restricted to “Western” currents such as Anthroposophy and New Age thought in general. Along these lines, Hammer writes: “If, as Alfred North Whitehead famously claimed, philosophy consists of a series of footnotes to Plato, it is equally fair to say that esoteric cosmologies largely consist of a series of footnotes to Neo-Platonism.”⁴⁶ I do not deny the plausibility of Hammer’s account, and it is common knowledge among scholars of Theosophy that Theosophy was rooted in “Western esotericism,” but the neglect of the Indian influence leads to the drawing of an excessively Eurocentric picture. This has a double-sided effect: On the one hand, this sort of presentation implicitly denies that the Theosophists were capable of learning about “non-Western” concepts and of understanding (at least in part) Indian thought. On the other hand, it denies the agency of all those Indian Theosophists who took part in the colonial-era discourse. The Theosophical Society is presented *in toto* by Hammer as a monolithic entity, but a close look at the sources shows that there were in fact many shifts in the doctrines of the Society, some of them closely linked to the uptake of Indian thought.

Santucci’s account is the most detailed of the three general presentations of the Theosophical Society considered here. He unfolds the history of the Theosophical Society as a history of schisms in an account that focuses more on the exact chronology of the history of the Society than on in-depth theoretical analyses. As in the article mentioned above, the Indian Theosophists are almost entirely absent from Santucci’s outline, with the exception of some short references to Damodar K. Mavalankar and Subba Row (the former is mentioned in connection with the Hodgson report and the latter in connection with challenges to Blavatsky’s doctrine), which are not elaborated upon any further.⁴⁷ Santucci’s entry shows a profound knowledge of the Society’s history and offers a wide-ranging overview that takes in several of the subgroups of Theosophy, as well as briefly discussing its later development. However, it does not do much more than

45 Olav Hammer, “Theosophy,” in *The Occult World*, ed. Christopher Patridge (New York: Routledge, 2015), 250.

46 Hammer, “Theosophy,” 253.

47 James A. Santucci, “Theosophical Society,” in Hanegraaff, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1117–21.

present a chronology. Of course, an entry in a dictionary is not the place to enter into in-depth discussions about theoretical arguments. Nevertheless, the chronological focus perpetuates the narrative of an almost purely “Western” endeavor and fails to show the important role that Indian Theosophists played in Adyar Theosophy, at the very least.

Viswanathan takes a very different approach in her entry in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*. Here we find almost no dates and only a very small number of references to Theosophists other than Helena Blavatsky. Viswanathan shows almost no sensibility for the heterogeneity of either the Theosophical teachings or the members of the various branches. She calls the Theosophical Society a “carnavalesque [rather] than carmelite”⁴⁸ association, and explains that the “colorful founding figures of the Theosophical Society concentrated their energies on securing the blessing and wisdom of elusive masters from the inner Tibetan reaches, in order to help them build an institution consecrated to the preservation of Eastern mysteries.”⁴⁹ However, such an account has no analytical value whatsoever with regard to heterogeneity and the negotiations of orthodoxy and heterodoxy within institutions. Viswanathan stresses the influence of the masters and their binary transmission of occult knowledge through astral projection and bureaucracy. Her analysis of the relationship between Blavatsky and the masters, and of the process of the institutionalization of occult knowledge that led to the “routinizing [of] occultism as professional knowledge”⁵⁰ has considerable depth. This is, as she herself acknowledges with a reference to Max Weber, not an entirely new finding. Her argument transcends these starting points – and this is the real merit of her article – when she explains that, “what signals a new note is that the bureaucratization of occultism is never far from its simultaneous deployment as an anticolonial move.”⁵¹ Viswanathan interprets the approach of the masters to the institutionalization of occultism and the framing of the institution in a legal character as the creation of “a public space of autonomous existence.”⁵² For Viswanathan, the adaption of Indian terminology was a strategy for Blavatsky to use in order to “claim the validity of a monistic conception of life and nature premised in biological claims, while simultaneously locating it in an ontological reality removed from the contingencies of historical and evolutionary development”⁵³ and to “create an

48 Gauri Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society,” in Jacobsen et al., *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.

49 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society.”

50 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society.”

51 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society.”

52 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society.”

53 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society.”

alternative frame of reference.”⁵⁴ Viswanathan holds that this kind of “crisscrossing of ideas” is much closer to “the hybrid nature of early religious formations.”⁵⁵ Indeed, it is hard to understand why this particular article was chosen to represent Theosophy in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*, since it highlights only a very small part of Theosophical history and renarrates the colonial narrative of Indian passivity in colonial knowledge production.

I now turn to a second category of articles and discuss several pieces that appear in the *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*. The handbook is a most welcome tool for acquiring a quick overview of numerous important topics in the research on Theosophy. However, as Zander indicates, it is rather unbalanced by its primary focus on Blavatsky and, besides a small quantity of German sources, it includes almost no non-English literature.⁵⁶

In his article, *Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy*, Godwin writes that the early history of Theosophy is “a complex story, involving many nations and characters, but they all revolve around Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), the prime mover of the Society and one of the most influential women of all time.”⁵⁷ Godwin goes on to present a very detailed but concise account of the early history of the Theosophical Society. He also provides some insight into the American context of spiritism in the years preceding the foundation of the society. He identifies numerous actors and their most important publications, and also discusses some of the problems of authorship connected with Blavatsky’s work and the Mahatma letters. Unfortunately, he does not take the opportunity to discuss any Theosophical concepts in significant detail, but it becomes clear from what he does have to say that Godwin understands the Theosophical Society as almost exclusively rooted in “Western” thought. As a result, he does not credit Indian Theosophists with much agency, mentioning T. Subba Row only briefly. Although he presents Row – as the general narrative goes – as Blavatsky’s only peer, he does not discuss his influence on her beyond this.⁵⁸ Godwin’s article provides a well-written “history” of the early Theo-

54 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society.”

55 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society”.

56 Helmut Zander, “Rezension Zu: Hammer, Olav; Rothstein, Mikael (Hrsg.): Handbook of the Theosophical Current. Leiden 2013.” news release, November 15, 2013, <https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-19893>.

57 Godwin, “Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy,” 15.

58 Godwin, “Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy,” 15–26.

sophical Society, but his account suffers from being for the most part uncritical towards his sources⁵⁹ and the current emic narratives.

Wessinger’s article on the second generation of Theosophists is largely framed by her concept of “progressive millennialism.”⁶⁰ Wessinger explains that “progressive millennialism” is “the expectation of an imminent transition to a collective salvation accomplished by humans working according to the plan of superhuman agents.”⁶¹ This characteristic is, she claims, distinctive of the second generation of Theosophists, namely Besant and Leadbeater, while the first generation believed rather in the “progressive evolution” taught by Blavatsky. Further, she has it that while “Blavatsky had taught that the ‘Root Races’ of humanity took extremely long periods to evolve, Besant’s progressive millennialism accelerated the anticipated evolutionary process.”⁶² Wessinger identifies a complete discontinuity in the concepts of the two generations. However, it will be shown below that, rather than being a new departure, the later view should be seen instead as a logical consequence of Blavatsky’s thinking and its “hybridization” in the process of the uptake of Indian ideas (see Chapters 8–12), which started as early as the 1880s. In addition, Wessinger describes a double-sided process by which authority was claimed in the Theosophical Society. This was rooted, on the one hand, in the claim to have contact with the masters and, on the other, in the institutional office. In Wessinger’s words, drawing here on Max Weber’s concepts of “authority,” this is the difference between “charismatic authority” and “rational-legal authority.” She explains that the second generation of Theosophists shifted their claim to authority from the former to the latter, with “rational-legal authority” consequently becoming the more important source of the two. As will be seen below, this is only partially accurate. Indeed, with reference to the clairvoyant investigations of Besant and Leadbeater in *Occult Chemistry* and *Thought-Forms*, one might well argue the opposite. I will seek to show in this book that the concept of yogic powers, the so-called *siddhis*, played an important role in the negotiation of power within the Theosophical Society.⁶³ Wessinger’s explanations tend to present the uptake of Indian concepts as a deliberate instrumentalization of these ideas, and she also

⁵⁹ He relies to a great extent on Ransom, Gomez, and Greenwalt, who are all Theosophists. At least in the case of Ransom it is for the most part impossible to verify her sources.

⁶⁰ Catherine Wessinger Lowman, “The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar),” in Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 33.

⁶¹ Wessinger Lowman, “The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar),” 33.

⁶² Wessinger Lowman, “The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar),” 39.

⁶³ I have discussed elsewhere other important skills in claiming authority in the Theosophical Society, especially the knowledge of Sanskrit; cf. Yves Mühlmatter, “Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge: Translational Endeavors Within the Theosophical Society,” (forthcoming).

interprets Besant's and Leadbeater's search for the world-teacher in the same light.⁶⁴ However, her approach here will be contested in this book as it seems that Indian concepts were rather received in the Theosophical Society through meshing processes of "hybridization" that involved both Indian and non-Indian agents.

In his well-documented and masterly article, Goodrick-Clarke advances what he takes to be an alternative perspective to the current view that "Modern Theosophy is frequently associated today with Oriental religion."⁶⁵ He convincingly shows the great indebtedness of Blavatsky to the "Western esoteric" traditions, including Hermetism, Mesmerism, Alchemy, Freemasonry, and many others.⁶⁶ When Goodrick-Clarke claims that "modern Theosophy" was simply "Western esotericism" in disguise, he overlooks entirely the influence of Indian actors. For example, he does not discuss the influence of T. Subba Row and his work on *The Secret Doctrine*, and nor does he discuss the importance of Advaita Vedānta concepts for Blavatsky's own ideas on initiation (see Chapter 9.4). As for Besant, he seems to neglect almost every adaption of Hindu concepts in her writings in favor of focusing on her uptake of Christian ideas. This is perhaps unsurprising, since Goodrick-Clarke bases his judgement on just one of Besant's texts, *Esoteric Christianity, or: The Lesser Mysteries*. In addition, he – in common with many other scholars writing on Theosophy – does not differentiate between Leadbeater and Besant, nor between Besant's earlier and later Theosophical thought.

The main argument of Patridge's article, based on his reading of Said's *Orientalism*, is that Blavatsky's interest in "the Orient" – primarily Egypt and Tibet – was colonial in nature.⁶⁷ He explains that her quest for the ancient wisdom of the "East" was very much in line with contemporary orientalist endeavors, especially the romantic orientalism of the German tradition championed by Schlegel and Herder.⁶⁸ Although Patridge's claims are highly plausible and well-documented in the case of Blavatsky, his account, like that of Goodrick-Clarke, remains one dimensional in the sense that he, following Said, conceptualizes a passive "East" which was constructed by an all-powerful "West." This becomes clear, for example, when he writes that "Hindu reformers" "were not

⁶⁴ Wessinger Lowman, "The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar)," 33–40.

⁶⁵ Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, "Western Esoteric Traditions and Theosophy," in Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 261.

⁶⁶ Goodrick-Clarke, "Western Esoteric Traditions and Theosophy," 303.

⁶⁷ Christopher Patridge, "Lost Horizon: H.P. Blavatsky and Theosophical Orientalism," in Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 329.

⁶⁸ Patridge, "Lost Horizon," 326.

immune to Orientalist influence under the British Raj.”⁶⁹ This draws a picture of the “Hindu reformers” as, on the one hand, a homogenous group and, on the other, simply echoing orientalist claims. He further claims that “Theosophy is very much a view *from* the ‘Christian West,’ an Orientalist gaze, critical of the home culture, seeking guidance from the ‘other,’” and that “Blavatsky never managed to remove the Western lens [. . .] it would be naïve to expect anything more of her – even if she was herself sensitive to colonialism and opposed to Christian mission and Western culture.”⁷⁰ Patridge presents “the Theosophical Society” here as a homogeneous body with one single doctrine, which was never challenged from within. If we look at such Theosophists as Subba Row, and especially his conflict with Blavatsky (for more on which, see Chapter 12.9), we see that the Theosophical Society was never a homogeneous body.

Patridge has it that “Blavatsky never managed to remove the Western lens,”⁷¹ but this statement is problematic on a number of levels. First, it is not entirely clear what “Western” signifies in this statement. Is there in fact any such thing as a “Western” culture and, if there is, would Blavatsky indeed have belonged to it? If so, what would be seen through its lens? Oneself? The “Other”? Patridge’s metaphor implies that “something” must be observed through the “lens.” This lens could then be defined as “European culture” in Patridge’s understanding. The problem is that neither of these premises are clear-cut. The “Other” necessarily implies and provides demarcations from “the self,” and in doing so also inscribes itself *in* “the self.” It would thus be “naïve to expect”⁷² that “self” (Blavatsky), “not-other” (“European culture”), and “other” (the “Orient”) could be distinguished in any way from each other. A consequence of this is that, in the case of the Theosophical Society, “East” and “West” could not be sharply distinguished from each other. This line of argument will be more closely conceptualized in the following chapters.

Following Said’s underlying idea that “the Orient” was a mere projection of “Western” scholars, Lubelsky advances the idea of a “celestial India.” In the first two chapters of his *Celestial India*, which deal with the early orientalists (Chapter 1) and Max Müller (Chapter 2), Lubelsky develops the idea of an imaginary space of “dreams about the glorious past [of India] and ‘historical’ echoes arising from her ancient literature.”⁷³ For Lubelsky, there is no room for any

⁶⁹ Patridge, “Lost Horizon,” 328.

⁷⁰ Patridge, “Lost Horizon,” 328–29.

⁷¹ Patridge, “Lost Horizon,” 329.

⁷² Patridge, “Lost Horizon,” 329.

⁷³ Isaac Lubelsky, *Celestial India: Madame Blavatsky and the Birth of Indian Nationalism* (Sheffield, UK, Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2012), 75.

“connection between that imaginary country – which I suggest to refer to as ‘Celestial India’ – and the actual geopolitical entity.”⁷⁴ He concluded that this “celestial India” was the

imaginary concept which animated Max Muller [!] when he urged modern man to change his attitude towards that wretched India which was suddenly shown in glorious raiment as the homeland of the Aryan race. Similarly, the proposed alternative for the future of humanity – the synthesis between East and West with India as the purest marvel and the land in which true knowledge is preserved in its chastest form – arose in his mind in an abstract fashion, almost without any connection to the physical reality of India, which in any event he only knew from secondary sources, certainly not from first-hand experience.⁷⁵

Lubelsky thus denies (“almost”) any agency to either the texts or the people who formed the basis of Müller’s conception of India. I do not intend to claim that Müller represented anything like a “true” picture of India, but I would strongly argue against the notion that such a picture only arose “in his mind in an abstract fashion.”⁷⁶ What Müller wrote about India was a “hybrid” account arising from a long-lasting engagement with sources of Indian provenance. In addition, when Lubelsky writes that “Celestial India [. . .] began to take shape in the collective minds of Indians, English people and Europeans in general, who regarded the earthly India as a place in which the marvel might be re-discovered, here and now, even in the modern age,”⁷⁷ he oversimplifies the discursive dynamics of negotiation and “hybridization” within the global colonial discursive continuum. In doing so, he also denies any sort of agency to Indian actors and overestimates Müller’s role within this discursive continuum. In the same line of argumentation, Lubelsky interprets the aspirations of the Theosophical Society as being shaped by Müller’s idea of “celestial India” because they promoted India’s superiority over “Western” materialism. “Thus,” Lubelsky writes, “the Theosophical Society became the foremost instrument implementing the ideas promoted by Max Müller from 1856, when he published his article ‘Comparative Mythology’, to his dying day.”⁷⁸ In this, Lubelsky perceives little in the way of dynamic development. Discussing the relationship between the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society, and the eventual disagreement which led to their split, he claims that,

⁷⁴ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 76.

⁷⁵ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 76.

⁷⁶ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 76.

⁷⁷ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 76.

⁷⁸ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 94.

the essentially-Western interpretation which Blavatsky put on Dayananda Saraswati’s writing stemmed from her perception of the Hindu scriptures as belonging to the same tradition as Western esoteric writings. Blavatsky and Olcott (and later Besant) viewed the Hindu scriptures as ancient Gnostic writings, which gave rise to the subsequent Hermetic philosophy.⁷⁹

Lubelsky may be correct that some of the ideas of Blavatsky and Olcott resonated badly with those of Saraswati, but this was not just because of the former pair’s “Western” view. Rather, another important contributing factor was that Saraswati proved to be more than a blank canvas on which their ideas could be projected. This is another instance of Lubelsky’s one dimensional conception of the negotiation of concepts which took place within the global colonial discursive continuum.

In Chapter 4, Lubelsky discusses the Theosophical doctrine, although I will not address the details of his account of Blavatsky’s doctrine here. In this account, Blavatsky’s writings are treated as if they are the sum total of Theosophy. However, Lubelsky does discuss the work of Besant and Leadbeater in more detail, on the grounds that Besant developed the Theosophical doctrine and

popularized the Theosophical esoteria by presenting its principal ideas in an ordered and straightforward manner, in contrast to the disorder and excess which characterized Blavatsky’s presentation. Secondly, she helped to further develop the idea of the World Teacher, which from the second decade of the twentieth century became a paramount one for the Theosophists.⁸⁰

Although Lubelsky is surely right to highlight Besant’s significant alteration of the Theosophical doctrine, it seems out of place to suggest that Besant’s “first important book [was] *Esoteric Christianity*.”⁸¹ In making this claim, he neglects a decade of Besant’s earlier Theosophical writings, including a number of particularly important books: *In the Outer Court*, 1895; *The Path of Discipleship*, 1896; *The Ancient Wisdom*, 1897; *Avatâras*, 1900; and several others. Had he considered them, Lubelsky would have found that *The Ancient Wisdom* can be read as strongly supporting his first point, and *Avatâras* his second. *The Path of Discipleship* and *In the Outer Court* – as will be argued in this book – provide the explanations for Besant’s engagement in the promotion of the idea of the world-teacher.

In Chapter 5, Lubelsky discusses “The Sources of the Theosophical Doctrine.” He names “Hermeticism,” “Orders,” “Fraternities,” “Magicians,” “Early

⁷⁹ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 99.

⁸⁰ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 132.

⁸¹ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 132–73.

Theosophy,” “The History of Gnosticism,” “The History of Magic,” “Edward Bulwer-Lytton and the Esoteric Novel,” “A Religious History of India,” “American Transcendentalism,” “Early Attempts at a Synthesis of an Occult Doctrine,” “The Myth of Atlantis,”⁸² as well an incredible number of individuals and single books. I do not want to contest the notion that this list comprises a seemingly exhaustive catalogue of sources for explaining the “whole” Theosophical doctrine, but the picture is rather more complex. First, it must be questioned what exactly is meant by “the theosophical doctrine”; as always, Lubelsky conceptualizes “the theosophical doctrine” as little more than is found in *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*. Although these works surely form the nucleus of the canon⁸³ of this doctrine, they certainly do not exhaust it, and perhaps are not even representative. As will be seen later, Besant, for example, referred to Blavatsky’s writings frequently in her early publications but less often in her later writings, in which they are interpreted much more openly (see Chapter 8).

As pointed out above, if one considers writings such as Besant’s *Esoteric Christianity*, which programmatically deals with Christianity, one finds that the overwhelming majority of external references are to “Western” traditions. As I argue below, if we look at other writings in Besant’s voluminous corpus, references to Indian sources are frequently included. Lubelsky nonetheless draws some important conclusions. He maintains that “the Theosophical interpretation of the Hindu scriptures was cast in a Western light and in fact forced those texts to conform to an esoteric Western doctrine.”⁸⁴ However, this is only half of the story. Although the main trajectory of the Theosophical doctrine followed typical nineteenth-century colonialist-evolutionist master narratives, it was nonetheless more invested in Indian thought – this is certainly true for Besant, but also, to a lesser extent, for Blavatsky and Olcott as well (see Chapter 9 and 10) – than Lubelsky claims. It is, then, necessary to contest, or to nuance, at the

82 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 146–87.

83 I derive the idea of a “canonical nucleus” from Malinar (Angelika Malinar, “Vom „Kanon-Fundus“ zum „variablen“ Kanon: Über den Status religiöser Texte im Hinduismus,” in *Kanonisierung und Kanonbildung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. Max Deeg, Oliver Freiberger and Christoph Kleine, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte 820 (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011)). She discusses the question of whether there is a “canon” in “Hinduism.” She maintains that the question about canonical texts and the uncertainty concerning which texts would belong to that “canon” belong to the orientalist debate of the 19th century, but that “Hinduism” knew (and knows) “canonical” texts. She introduces the ideas of a “Kanon-Fundus” which provides a “variablen Kanon” while maintaining some sort of “canonical nucleus.” I would argue that this idea could also be used to analyze the Theosophical “canon.”

84 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 188.

very least, his conclusion that “the thinking that animated the Society was largely Western, and so it remained for many years, at least until Besant’s death in 1933.”⁸⁵ Lubelsky’s strong views about the Theosophical Society’s endeavors are highly problematic. They stand as, he claims, “another illustration of the Orientalist fantasy which animated many Westerners who came in contact with India and her civilization beginning with Sir William Jones and ending with Max Müller.”⁸⁶ This is not only an oversimplification of a complex matter, but it also renders Indians as passive subjects who have no agency at all. Analyses of this sort reproduce colonial claims and overlook the historical evidence for a much more complex history.

I turn now to consider Baier’s *Theosophical Orientalism* and Bergunder’s *Experiments with Theosophical Truth*. The latter can be understood as the starting point for the current trend in research on Theosophy of reflecting on the agency and the agendas of the Indian members of the organization. The former sets the trend for future work in this area.

Bergunder’s article aims to provide a “proper historical grounding”⁸⁷ for Gandhi’s views on “religion” in general and on “Hinduism” in particular. Bergunder identifies two major strands of explanation in “current” research approaches (his point of reference for being current is 2014, the year his article was published). One strand of explanation sees it as intrinsically “Hindu” to be tolerant and to understand all religions as equal. As such, to adopt such views would simply be to follow a “Hindu instinct,”⁸⁸ as Gandhi himself maintained. The other line of thought notes that Gandhi’s views were indebted to nineteenth-century esoteric currents, namely those centered around the Theosophical Society and the Esoteric Christian Union. It is notable that Gandhi’s interest in the *Bhagavadgītā* and some of his ideas on religion, especially his notion of “Hinduism” as Advaita Vedānta and his conception of Christianity, were mediated through the Theosophical Society and the Esoteric Christian Union respectively. However, what is more important for the current book are the methodological consequences Bergunder draws from his global history approach. Contesting Hanegraaff’s concept of “Western esotericism,” Bergunder maintains that the Theosophical Society “provides an outstanding example of the complex entanglements of the global religious history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.”⁸⁹ He goes

⁸⁵ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 189.

⁸⁶ Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 319–20.

⁸⁷ Michael Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth: Gandhi, Esotericism, and Global Religious History,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 2 (2014): 400.

⁸⁸ Gandhi as cited in Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth,” 399.

⁸⁹ Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth,” 404.

on to explain that Theosophy provided an “entry point into the orientalist discourse on Hinduism. The anticolonial stance of the Theosophical Society also provided a means for an antiwestern resignification of Hinduism.”⁹⁰ This was true for many Indian Theosophists, and certainly for Gandhi, as Bergunder illustrates. However, the Theosophical Society was not alone in providing this sort of entry point. Learned societies such as the Asiatic Society also provided similar pathways into the discourse, as the example of Rajendralal Mitra shows (see Chapter 10.2). One of the strengths of Bergunder’s article is that he manages to draw a more complex, and therefore probably more accurate, picture by discussing influences from the “West” as well as those from the “East.” He concludes that “it needs to be acknowledged that esotericism played an important role in the global religious history of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the current academic paradigm of a purely ‘Western Esotericism’ requires revision.”⁹¹ Despite its strengths, there are also a number of difficulties in Bergunder’s article. 1) To begin with, Bergunder seems to conceptualize “the Theosophical Society” as an almost monolithic organization, effectively equating the Society with Blavatsky and almost completely neglecting any other currents. Although Kingsford and Maitland play important roles in his presentation of the issues, he does not further discuss the “entanglements” between the various Theosophical currents or their wider “entanglements” outside Theosophy. Of course, one can never know enough to describe every aspect of every current in an adequate manner – to paraphrase Osterhammel⁹² – and one would, in any case, never have sufficient time and space to set out such an exhaustive account. Nevertheless, if one were to follow Bergunder’s approach to the fullest, this would be the ultimate consequence. 2) Secondly, there are many other dimensions of Gandhi’s life and education that Bergunder does not discuss. For example, we read nothing about Gandhi’s training as a lawyer, which might be a subject of some importance since much of Indology developed out of an interest in establishing a legal system in colonial India, and most of the pioneers in this area of study were lawyers, as can be seen in the case of individuals such as William Jones. 3) Bergunder seems to repeat himself somewhat as this article

90 Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth,” 408.

91 Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth,” 420.

92 “Niemand verfügt über genügend Kenntnisse, um die Korrektheit jedes Details zu gewährleisten, allen Regionen der Welt die gleiche Gerechtigkeit widerfahren zu lassen und aus jedem von zahllosen Forschungsständen den jeweils bestmöglichen zusammenfassenden Schluss zu ziehen.” Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 15.

is very similar to another that he published in 2005,⁹³ and to which he does not refer anywhere in the 2014 version. Be this as it may – and in my opinion, this last point is not very important when it comes to evaluating Bergunder’s contribution to the subject – Bergunder’s 2014 article sets the tone for a major new trend in research on Theosophy which is only now beginning to gather momentum as more and more publications and discussions take up the point that “esotericism” was (probably) never a purely “Western” endeavor.

Baier takes a rather different approach, applying Gerd Baumann’s theory of Orientalism to reveal some of the dynamics underlying the understanding of the “East” shared by Blavatsky and Olcott with respect to their taking up of the concept of *cakras*. Although this appropriation is another important part of the early Theosophists’ reception of “Hindu” thought, it will not be discussed in detail here. More important for the present study is Baier’s multifaceted description of “theosophical orientalism.” He maintains that the orientalism of the early Theosophists comprised “not only elements that were common within nineteenth-century Orientalism; it was also shaped by their occult worldview.”⁹⁴ Most importantly, he explains that “Theosophy understood itself to be ‘the Easternized Other’ within Western culture. The Theosophical rediscovery of the wisdom religion was seen as the intercultural beginning for a post-materialistic and post-Christian global culture.”⁹⁵ This point is of crucial importance if we are to understand the wider dynamics of the “hybridization processes” in the Theosophical Society. Although “Western” Theosophists might appear to stand in a hegemonic relationship with their Indian counterparts – an appearance that only partially represents the interdependent reality of the situation – they were surely not in any sort of hegemonic position in relation to British academia or government, or to most other parts of global society. Baier further explains that “Theosophy as the ‘orientalized Other’ within Western culture found an ally in the ‘scientific Other’ at the edge of Western science.”⁹⁶ This is another instance of the complex global colonial discursive continuum in which several poles of hegemony were at play. To make the picture even more complex, Baier is one of the rare scholars who acknowledges the agency of the Indian Theosophists and points out the willingness of “Western”

93 Michael Bergunder, “Gandhi, Esoterik und das Christentum,” in *Esoterik und Christentum: Religionsgeschichtliche und theologische Perspektiven*, ed. Michael Bergunder and Daniel Cyranka (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005).

94 Karl Baier, “Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer: Annotations on the Appropriation of the *Cakras* in Early Theosophy,” in Chajes (née Hall); Huss, *Theosophical Appropriations*, 319.

95 Baier, “Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer,” 322.

96 Baier, “Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer,” 323.

Theosophists to learn from them. His article successfully brings out the complex entanglements of the global colonial discursive continuum and is therefore an important contribution to the field. His ideas on cultures, however, are peppered with notions of stable entities in which a “foreign element” can be transferred from one to another. Although he claims that “the welcoming and releasing structures – as well as the transferred assets – are far from being immutable. In its new cultural surroundings, the exchanged item often assumes another shape and meaning,”⁹⁷ cultures as such are conceptualized as relatively stable entities. Despite this quibble, Baier’s work sets the standard for future research.

Some years prior to the works of Bergunder and Baier discussed above, Goodrick-Clarke published an account of the Orientalism of the Theosophical Society, and there is a sense in which this should be taken as the “real” starting point for the trend indicated above, even if only in a nascent form. In this article, Goodrick-Clarke explains that the relocation of the Theosophical Society from New York to India “signaled a major shift in the Society’s self-understanding and its sources of inspiration.”⁹⁸ Mentioning the Mahatmas, the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, *Esoteric Buddhism*, and other such inspirations, Goodrick-Clarke maintains that “all conferred an expressly Oriental aura upon Theosophy in the 1880s.”⁹⁹ He goes on to consider the “the Indian and Buddhist influences on this evident change in the direction of Theosophy and its relationship to the wider context of European culture and scholarship (Orientalism).”¹⁰⁰ In doing so, Goodrick-Clarke outlines many possible linages of reception, including both “Western” sources (Paolos Metamon, Allen Kardec, American spiritualism, Rosicrucianism, Kabbalah, evolutionist theories, Neo-Platonism, and several other currents) and sources from the “East” (Orientalism mediated through nineteenth-century Orientalist sources, the Arya Samaj, several Ceylonese Theravada Buddhists, the early writings in *The Theosophist* from Indian and Ceylonese contributors, as well as Vedānta, Theravada Buddhism, and Mahayana Buddhism in general, including some hints towards particular concrete scriptures). Among the concepts that were important in Blavatsky’s formation of Theosophy, Goodrick-Clarke identifies: Spiritualist conceptions of spirits, mostly as a counter foil to “real” occultism;

97 Baier, “Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer,” 317.

98 Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East’: Western Esotericism and Eastern Religion in Theosophy,” *Theosophical History* XIII, 3–28 (2007): 3.

99 Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East,’” 3.

100 Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East,’” 3.

reincarnation; yogic powers; Vedānta ideas of “a monist, non-theistic, impersonal absolute”;¹⁰¹ and the “notion of the Way and the progression of Bodhisattvas in salvation,”¹⁰² which “provided the evolutionary elements of Theosophy,”¹⁰³ to name just a few. He maps out in his article an incredible wealth of ideas, concepts, and influences in Blavatsky’s (and Olcott’s) oeuvre which provide a mass of possible entry points for future research. However, due to its broad range his accounts inevitably remain rather superficial, and this is intensified by a lack of sophisticated theoretical conceptualization. In this sense, Goodrick-Clarke’s article resembles a map so densely packed with information that at the scale it is presented it becomes hard to decipher.

In her pioneering dissertation, Moritz discusses three Theosophists from India and Ceylon: B. P. Wadia, Dharmapala, and Krishnamurti. She describes the Theosophical Society as “a ‘cosmopolitan thought zone’ – a zone of non-governmental encounter ‘between highly different and politically unequal social communities in order to work towards a perceived good.’”¹⁰⁴ Her dissertation accounts for the diversity of interactions between “Western” and “Eastern” Theosophists, a diversity which might seem obvious but has not yet been properly recognized in research on the Theosophical Society. She concludes that, in the Theosophical Society, the “South Asians [. . .] had lasting effects on all sides,”¹⁰⁵ because they “were neither at the receiving end of theosophical instruction nor did Euro-American theosophists remain untouched by their encounter with South Asian theosophists and spiritual gurus.”¹⁰⁶ Consequently, Moritz maintains, the “theosophical ‘cosmopolitan thought zone’ [. . .] emerged as a product of complex interferences between colonial patterns and local struggles against the backdrop of globalizing forces, between secular paradigms and spiritual visions negotiated on a global scale.”¹⁰⁷ In this respect, Moritz’ dissertation shares several assumptions and findings with the present study (see Conclusion), but her focus lies firmly on the political dimensions of the interactions and she employs a range of sociological concepts in her analyses, leading to a meso view which for the most part neglects the more subtle dynamics of the microlevel. She deduces agency from actual “acts,” such as resignation from the society, rather than from the

101 Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East,’” 18.

102 Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East,’” 22.

103 Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East,’” 22.

104 Maria-Sofia Moritz, “Globalizing ‘sacred Knowledge’: South Asians and the Theosophical Society, 1879–1930” (PhD Dissertation, Jacobs University, April, 2017), 243.

105 Moritz, “Globalizing ‘sacred Knowledge,’” 252.

106 Moritz, “Globalizing ‘sacred Knowledge,’” 252.

107 Moritz, “Globalizing ‘sacred Knowledge,’” 252.

intellectual exchange which I take to be just as important, if not more so for a milieu which defined itself largely by reference to written outputs and related conventions of knowledge transfer (much as the academic milieu continues to do).

Chajes' work on Blavatsky's ideas on "rebirth" shows convincingly that Blavatsky maintained and communicated ideas of rebirth throughout her oeuvre. She also demonstrates that Blavatsky's ideas shifted from an idea of "metempsychosis" in *Isis Unveiled* to "re-incarnation" in *The Secret Doctrine*. Chajes discusses four sources of influence that impacted Blavatsky's ideas – Spiritualism, science, Platonism, and Orientalism – and seeks to show "how Blavatsky's interpretations of each had a formative influence on her rebirth doctrines."¹⁰⁸ The influence in each case is established through a close discussion and contextualization of Blavatsky's ideas. Chajes argues that "Theosophical principles have usually been treated quite briefly in academic studies to date"¹⁰⁹ and that "the ideas themselves must be understood clearly before they can be situated in the intellectual, social, religious, and political concerns of the times."¹¹⁰ While I agree with Chajes on this point and believe that she succeeds in her goal of showing Blavatsky's indebtedness to "Spiritualism, science, [and] Platonism,"¹¹¹ her account of "Orientalism" nevertheless follows in the tracks of the current tendencies in the research into Theosophy. In addition, while she points towards important sources for Blavatsky's uptake of "Hinduism" and "Buddhism," her analysis of these influences remains circumstantial at best. Moreover, detailed theoretical considerations are almost entirely absent in Chajes' book. She refers to studies which go "beyond Edward Said's by now well-known notion of Orientalism as a master-narrative of Western imperialism that constructs and controls its subjugated 'Other',"¹¹² and also briefly mentions Baier's *Theosophical Orientalism* and Bergunder's *Experiments with Theosophical Truth* in maintaining that Indian Theosophists followed their own agendas and influenced the Theosophical uptake of "Hinduism" and "Buddhism." But this is the extent of her theoretical reflection. As a result, her argument lacks any critical engagement with the literature mentioned or, more problematically, with the origin of that literature, the broad field of "postcolonial studies."

108 Julie Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives: A History of Reincarnation in Blavatsky's Theosophy*, Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism, edited by Henrik Bogdan (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 6.

109 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 12.

110 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 13.

111 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 6.

112 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 168.

Chapter 7 of Chajes’ book is concerned with “Hindu and Buddhist Thought.” Here, she discusses at length the well-established problematics of the “invention” of “Hinduism” and “Buddhism.” Discussing Mohini Mohun Chatterji, she explains that a “major source in Blavatsky’s understanding of *Vedanta* seems to have been a serialized translation of Shankara’s *Viveka Chudamani* published in *The Theosophist* between 1885 and 1886 under the title ‘The Crest Jewel of Wisdom’.”¹¹³ Although this is very plausible, Chajes does not move beyond descriptive observations such as “Mohini’s translation referred to the Sanskrit names of the seven human principles used by Blavatsky in *The Secret Doctrine*.”¹¹⁴ This description lacks a detailed examination of the passages in question and there is also no further consideration of the agency of these Indians who supposedly followed their own agendas. In the same vein, Chajes discusses the influence of Subba Row, Herbert Spencer (why under Orientalism?), Wilson’s translation of *The Vishnu Purana*, and the concept of Adi Buddha. She then concludes that “despite the undeniable influence of Western theories of rebirth on Blavatsky’s perspectives, it seems plausible that conversations between Blavatsky, Dayananda, and other Indian and Ceylonese contacts contributed, at least in part, to her shift from metempsychosis to re- incarnation around 1882.”¹¹⁵

This is all highly plausible and will find further support in the arguments presented in this book. However, in Chajes’ book these “findings” are not backed by thorough analyses of the sources. They remain on the level of (plausible) claims but claims that require further unpacking. Another convincing claim is that “Blavatsky’s theories demonstrate that it is impossible to understand any one of her constructions without reference to the others; her definitions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and science, as well as Platonism and Spiritualism, were all interdependent.”¹¹⁶ In her conclusion, Chajes explains Blavatsky’s uptake of Indian thought, and karma in particular, in a functionalist fashion, maintaining that “the one need Blavatsky was compelled to address was the necessity to explain the apparent injustices of life. Karma solved this problem nicely.”¹¹⁷ She further points to a proposed gap in Blavatsky’s doctrine on karma, evolution, and reincarnation: “Was it all about the impersonal ‘tides’ of the cosmos, the great ‘inbreaths’ and ‘outbreaths’ of Brahma to which Blavatsky referred, or was humanity capable of affecting the progress of evolution with its choices? It

113 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 175.

114 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 176.

115 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 183.

116 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 186–87.

117 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 188.

wasn't always clear."¹¹⁸ In my opinion, the answer is very clear. According to Theosophy, Humanity is capable of affecting this evolution, and this view is expressed in *The Voice of the Silence* (see Chapter 9), by occult training and by initiation into the higher knowledge, a point that has thus far been completely overlooked in the research on Theosophy, despite it being a core doctrine of Theosophical thought. As we shall see, this position becomes especially prominent in Annie Besant's writings (see Chapter 8.2).

2.3 Conclusion

This necessarily incomplete survey of the current state of research on Theosophy identifies the front line between two approaches to Theosophy. The first insists that the Theosophical Society was “Western” and remained “Western” even when exposed to Indian thought. By contrast, the second, which is still a minority view, maintains that the Theosophical Society has “Western” roots but that the South Asian Theosophists “Easternized” Theosophy. As a result of the historical predominance of the first approach, “Western” influences on Theosophy have been well researched, although detailed studies of many important actors, such as Mabel Collins and Charles Johnston, among others, are still lacking. With studies of the sort offered by Moritz, Baier, and Bergunder, research into Theosophy has made a great leap forward towards the acknowledgment of the agency of South Asian Theosophists. However, what is still missing are detailed studies of the intellectual exchange and “hybridization process” between “Western” and “Eastern” Theosophists. This book seeks to move the discussion forward in this direction by analyzing Annie Besant's ideas about the “Quickening of Evolution” in the context of the uptake of “Hinduism,” mediated, as this uptake was, by South Asian Theosophists.

¹¹⁸ Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 188.

I Encounters in the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum: A Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3 provides the backgrounds to the theoretical approaches employed in this book. Postcolonialism and the Global History approach share common assumptions which can be brought together fruitfully. Both approaches are primarily theoretical, but they are nevertheless perspectives from which certain methods can be derived. In the following, the focus lies on Homi K. Bhabha's ideas on "hybridity" and "hybridization," to which ideas about global connections and entanglements provide important supplements. These will be combined in Chapter 4 to create an analytical tool for approaching the complex discursive field in which Theosophical ideas were developed about stages of initiation as parts of a greater scheme of evolution.

3 Postcolonial Studies, Hybridization, and the Global History Approach

As early as 1998, Ania Loomba could attest that postcolonial studies had become “fashionable within universities the world over,”¹ and many of the universities in question are in the “West.” That “postcolonial studies” is to a great extent a product of “Western” universities and “Western” theory, above all French poststructuralism, illustrates very well the complexities of this theoretical approach.

“Postcolonial studies” developed from a perspective of the colonized to a mainstream theoretical perspective. This development made its way through the colonial educational system and became hegemonic by the appointment of such well-known exponents of “postcolonial studies” as Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak as professors at the major U.S. universities. This development, along with the roots of “postcolonial studies” in French poststructuralism, illustrates well that the perspective emerged in an environment that was deeply “Western” in its origin. The educational system on which “postcolonial studies” based its assertiveness is in many respects rooted in national states and national narratives which were, in the 19th century, often colonial in their outlook.² The situation in the U.S. is no exception in this regard. In the late 19th century, the U.S. was one of the driving forces of imperialism³ and the Southern states of the U.S. were among the last to actively benefit from the exploitation of slaves whose predecessors had been taken there as a result of colonialism.⁴ One should not forget that the universities were always heterogenous. They could be at once nationalistic and conservative, on the one hand, and international and revolutionary, on the other. From the early 19th century onwards, students were an important political factor in all revolutionary movements (especially anti-colonialist movements) around the globe. Nevertheless, the underlying “Western” idea of the university as a site of power – in the sense of being an institution which organized and managed knowledge, and which, with the rise of the *Forschungsuniversität* model,⁵ also became the main producer of

1 Ania Loomba, *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*, The New Critical Idiom (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), xi.

2 Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 1132–47.

3 Christopher Alan Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*, The Blackwell History of the World (Malden MA, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2004), 229.

4 Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, 405.

5 Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 1134.

knowledge – cannot be overestimated. Postcolonial theorists such as Homi Bhabha (Harvard University) and Gayatri Spivak (Columbia University) are the prototype of scholars who depend on that structure to maintain their hegemonic positions within the academic discourse.

In a sense, this view is similar to Hulme's idea of the use of "postcolonial" as "a badge of merit,"⁶ because the label seeks to demarcate a particular type of scholarly work from "colonial" scholarship. As a consequence, it tends to deny colonial grammars and to neglect neocolonial aspirations. Shohat describes this problem with reference to the example of the tendency towards the homogenization of (post)colonial experiences. If highly diverse areas such as settler colonies (Australia and the Americas) and governmental colonies (British India) are equated, and their populations, e.g. white settlers and native peoples, are categorized together, then "the term 'post-colonial' [. . .] masks the white settlers' colonialist-racist policies toward indigenous peoples not only before independence but also after the official break from the imperial center, while also de-emphasizing neocolonial global positionings of First World settler-states."⁷ However, Shohat does not assume that "post-colonial" studies "did" this on purpose, but rather that "the disorienting space of the 'post-colonial' generates odd couplings of the 'post' and particular geographies, blurring the assignment of perspectives." But "the unified temporality of 'postcoloniality' risks reproducing the colonial discourse of an allochronic other, living in another time, still lagging behind us, the genuine postcolonials."⁸

These critiques of the notion must be taken into account when we talk about "postcolonialism." But even if we avoid using the vocabulary of the "postcolonial," if we are to draw on approaches rooted in postcolonial thought then we must acknowledge its universalizing tendency. This means that we must take care about making claims about the validity of our analyses outside our own subject of research. Only detailed, historicized research can show whether certain theoretical approaches can be used to formulate plausibility in other contexts. I maintain that giving preference to postcolonial studies over other theories can be justified by the oft-repeated claim that "postcolonialism" insists on the agency of the colonized. This claim argues that, even if the orientalist discourse invented "the Orient" (Said), this "Orient" was (and still is) no monolithic entity (Bhabha and others), and that orientalists were largely influenced by local informants, the languages they learned, the texts they read, and by living in foreign

⁶ Peter Hulme, "Including America," *Ariel* 26, no. 1 (1995): 120.

⁷ Ella Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'," *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 102–3.

⁸ Shohat, "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial,'" 104.

countries. Or, to put it in Stuart Hall's words, the "postcolonial" view marks a "transition from a conception of difference to *différance*. This obliges us to re-read binary oppositions as forms of transculturation, of cultural translation, which inevitably lead to permanently questioning the cultural dichotomy."⁹

In my opinion, this transition from a view of "difference" to a consideration of *différance* is the core of "postcolonialism" because it unmasks the colonial discourse as fragile and at risk of crumbling. Derrida's concept of *différance* shows that every performance of a text – understood in the broadest possible way – reshapes and therefore alters it. These small alterations are manifestations of individual agency.¹⁰ As Hall rightly explains, "postcolonial theory" tries to describe discourses which are not determined by dichotomies or teleologies, but are inherently incomplete and therefore ongoing.¹¹ This implies that discourses cannot be closed – although hegemonic actors have repeatedly tried to close them – while simultaneously implying the possible agency of every actor. This observation is borne out at several points in the present book, such as in the controversy about the concept of the human constitution in the Theosophical Society (see Chapter 12.8) or in the case of Vasu and Besant discussed in Chapter 13.3. Local scholars and "Western" scholars simultaneously engaged in the hegemonic discourse in multifaceted ways and reshaped this discourse according to their own agendas, as

9 English relay translation from the author, originally translated into German by Anne Emmer. "Übergang von einer Konzeption der Differenz [. . .] zur *différance*; [. . . Dieser] verpflichtet uns auch, die binäre Form selbst, in der die koloniale Begegnung so lange dargestellt wurde, neu zu lesen. Er verpflichtet uns, die binären Oppositionen als Formen der Transkulturation, der kulturellen Übersetzung neu zu lesen, die unweigerlich dazu führen, die kulturelle Dichotomie von hier und dort permanent infrage zu stellen." Stuart Hall, "Wann gab es »das Postkoloniale«? Denken an der Grenze," in *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*, ed. Sebastian Conrad, Shalini Randeria and Regina Römhild, 2nd ed. enl. (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus, 2013), 204.

10 The (non)concept of *différance* is difficult to reduce to just one sentence, as I do above. However, in this context, referring to Hall's statement, it seems justified to describe it in such a way. Derrida talked about *différance* in at least four different ways: "There are (at least) four ways in which one might approach the concept of difference in the work of Jacques Derrida: difference as a poststructuralist critique of the supposedly post-metaphysical attention to meaning as generated through systems; difference as the post-phenomenological problem of time; sexual difference; and the difference between humans and non-humans" (Claire Colebrook, "Difference," in *A Companion to Derrida*, ed. Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 56 (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 57). For the use in Derrida's oeuvre that is in line with my description of *différance* above, see Jacques Derrida, "Signatur Ereignis Kontext," in *Randgänge der Philosophie*, ed. Peter Engelmann (Wien: Passagen Verl., 1988), 298–99.

11 Hall, "Wann gab es »das Postkoloniale«?," 215.

can be seen in the examples of Manilal Dvivedi, T. Subba Row, and Edmund Hardy. This shows that the repressive colonial discourse was never absolute but was constantly negotiated and renegotiated (Bhabha). This does not, however, mean that it was an egalitarian discourse but rather that the process of the attribution of meaning¹² was part of an entangled power structure in which the territorial occupation by the colonizers and the hegemonic production and management of knowledge were inseparable.¹³

The structures of knowledge production and management are much more of a focus of postcolonial studies – as I understand it – than are the territorial occupation and exploitation of the colonized. In my book, this knowledge production is understood as a process of negotiation (Bhabha) in which both colonizer and colonized partook, although the grand narratives, and especially the narrative of evolution, limited what could be articulated in this process.¹⁴ As will be discussed below (see Chapter 6), the discourse on evolution was also heterogeneous and in no way hegemonic when it emerged at the beginning of the 19th century. These narratives later came to occupy hegemonic positions within the discourse because they were sanctioned by institutionalized hegemonic positions, such as university affiliations or government positions.

So, if it were once again asked what the merit of the “postcolonial” is, one answer might be that it allows us to ask about the grand narratives and to renarrate them, as Hall puts it: “From this view the postcolonial perspective breaks with the conventional metanarrative of history that is essentially framed in terms of Western hegemony.”¹⁵ “Postcolonial” studies thus aim at renarrating “colonialism” by focusing on the agency of the colonized. Against this

12 María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung*, 2nd ed. rev., Cultural Studies 36 (Bielefeld: transcript, 2015), 22.

13 English relay translation from the author, originally translated into German by Anne Emmert. “In dieser Hinsicht markiert die »postkoloniale« Perspektive einen entscheidenden Bruch mit der gesamten historiographischen Meta-Erzählung, [. . .] die im Wesentlichen im Rahmen der europäischen Parameter erzählt werden konnte.” Hall, “Wann gab es »das Postkoloniale«?,” 214.

14 This does not mean that “evolution” was uncritically received as “Darwinist” evolution or that everybody simply “believed” in “evolution” but that the narrative of “development” from simpler to more complex forms became a hegemonic narrative at the end of the 19th century at the latest. For the complex dynamics of the uptake of “evolutionist” theories and their different and often concurring currents, see Eve-Marie Engels, “Biologische Ideen Von Evolution Im 19. Jahrhundert Und Ihre Leitfunktion: Eine Einleitung,” in *Die Rezeption Von Evolutionstheorien Im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. Eve-Marie Engels (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995); Peter J. Bowler, *Evolution: The History of an Idea*, 3. ed., rev. and enl. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). See also Chapter 6.

15 Hall, “Wann gab es »das Postkoloniale«?,” 208.

background, I argue – and will illustrate with several examples – that in the era of British colonialism at the end of the 19th century, colonizers and colonized formed a global colonial discursive continuum in which both could, at least potentially, partake. In this discursive continuum, colonizers and colonized were both influenced through connections between numerous discourses and by new discourses that formed in and emerged from their multifaceted encounters.

3.1 Why Hybridity?

Bhabha's concepts of "hybridity" and "hybridization" have become widely accepted and often uncontested terms for describing processes of cultural exchange. The term "hybridity" is rooted in biology and first became popular during the 18th and 19th centuries in discourses about evolution and race. Robert Young has traced its origins from its application in racial discourses through its use by Bakhtin to its reception in the thought of Bhabha and in postcolonialism in general. He concludes that,

There is an historical stemma between the cultural concepts of our own day and those of the past from which we tend to assume that we have distanced ourselves. We restate and rehearse them covertly in the language and concepts that we use [. . .] Hybridity in particular shows the connections between the racial categories of the past and contemporary cultural discourse.¹⁶

Of course, the racial connotations of "hybridity" and its embeddedness in discourses about whether Africans are humans represent a severe case of academic complicity in colonialist discourses.¹⁷ Against this background, it is necessary to consider honestly whether a term like "hybridity" can be used to describe discursive structures of resistance in the colonial era, because, given its history, it seems to make a mockery of any such attempted description. If the language of "hybridity" is historically tarnished, it must be asked whether there are any other suitable terms available to us. Terms such as "syncretism," "inculturation," "assimilation," "adaptation," "creolization," and so on, might act as substitutes, yet these all have their own connotations and their own heritages. It is not a question of whether terms carry multifaceted meanings – they

¹⁶ Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995), 27.

¹⁷ Young, *Colonial Desire*, 1–28.

all do; there are no innocent terms! – but whether these connotations are discussed and taken into account when applying them in analytical contexts.¹⁸

As Shohat has argued, “hybridity” denies “pre-colonial” identities and is therefore apolitical. She claims that “the anti-essentialist emphasis on hybrid identities comes dangerously close to dismissing all searches for communitarian origins as an archaeological excavation of an idealized, irretrievable past.”¹⁹ In consequence, Shohat maintains that the “reinvention” of identity is the crucial task for “post-colonial” communities because a “celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations, runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the *fait accompli* of colonial violence.”²⁰ Shohat makes a valid point, but she seems to overlook the way in which “new” identities can never be “new” nor “old.” As Bhabha might put it, every “identity” is necessarily “hybrid.” Nevertheless, Shohat is correct that this should not prevent (post)colonized societies from researching their (pre)colonial past and thus “digging up” “their culture,” as she puts it. A central question that she frames in a particularly precise way is this: “Who is mobilizing what in the articulation of the past, deploying what identities, identifications and representations, and in the name of what political vision and goals?”²¹ To what end and in pursuit of what agendas does anyone employ the narratives of stable identities? The way I understand Bhabha’s work, this is the central question to be asked as it directly interrogates the power relations that are at play in hegemonic discourses, claiming that a (national) identity can be understood as a discursive strategy aimed at establishing hegemony.

For the present book, the main problem with the concept of “hybridity” is that it lacks any kind of ability to differentiate and, as such, inherits notions of universalism and essentialism. Hence, as Shohat maintains, the “location” of “hybridity” must be discussed. “As in the term ‘post-colonial,’ the question of location and perspective has to be addressed, i.e. the differences between hybridities, or more specifically, hybridities of Europeans and their off-shoots around the world, and that of (ex)colonized peoples.”²² As Young argues in the context of the British

18 The problem discussed here is also discussed in relation to several other terms that feature frequently in this book: “postcolonialism,” “esotericism,” and “hybridity.” Indeed, the problem applies to all analytical terms, and probably to all other terms as well.

19 Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 109.

20 Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 109.

21 Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 110.

22 Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 109–10.

Empire, “hybridity” is an intrinsic characteristic because of the diasporic concept of “Englishness.”²³ He analyzes and traces this pattern of “Englishness” through different contexts and epochs, showing that it was – much more than “Frenchness,” for example – based on a “hybrid” relationship between “own and foreign” and “center and periphery.”²⁴ He explains that the notion of London as the “navel of world”²⁵ is necessarily ambivalent. In his words, “the moving machinery of London creates a strange economy of alienation and estrangement from the center, repeatedly translating the English around the world to haunt its furthest borders where they become at once other and by the same token, more English, in a distant, uncannily doubling of the origin.”²⁶ Although we have to be careful about simply assuming that “hybridity” is similarly applicable to all colonial settings, “hybridization” seems to be an appropriate concept when talking about British India. When we consider the specific contexts dealt with in this book, the “location” of “hybridity” can be identified in each of our examples. “Hybridity” is used here to describe, in particular, the discursive field within the Theosophical Society, a field that is, however, part of a broader global colonial discursive continuum (see Chapter 4.5). The notion of “hybridity” can be applied meaningfully in this context on several levels: Processes of “hybridization” can be identified in the formation of a specific concept of “Hinduism”²⁷ and in the development

23 Robert J. C. Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity* (Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008), 1–2.

24 Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, 20.

25 Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, 4.

26 Young, *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, 4–5.

27 For instance, “Hinduism,” one of the most prominent terms in the present book, has often been discussed in the literature as ‘constructed’ by “Western” orientalist and the British government. Although many publications have shown that this analysis is accurate to at least some extent, it has also been criticized for downplaying, or even completely neglecting, the agency of Indians. Individuals such as Ram Mohan Roy, Dayananda Sarasvati, Radhakrishnan, Sri Aurobindo, and many others were deeply invested in the process by which “Hinduism” was “constructed,” and this process was considerably more complex and nuanced than the “constructivist” narrative leads us to believe. (For discussions on the “invention” of “Hinduism,” see e.g., Gavin D. Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5–22; Julius J. Lipner, “The Rise of ‘Hinduism’, or: How to Invent a World Religion with Only Moderate Success,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007); Daniel Gold, “Organized Hinduisms: From Vedic Truth to Hindu Nation,” in *Fundamentalisms Observed*, ed. R. S. Appleby and Martin E. Marty, The Fundamentalism Project 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Angelika Malinar, *Hinduismus*, Studium Religionen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 13–26; Axel Michaels, *Der Hinduismus: Geschichte und Gegenwart* (München: C. H. Beck, 1998), 27–48; Heinrich von Stietencron, “Hinduism: On the Proper Use of a Deceptive Term,” in *Hinduism Reconsidered*, ed. Günther D. Sontheimer and Hermann

of a pedagogical program in the Theosophical Society. Both of these emerged from a discourse between “Western” and Indian Theosophists and non-Theosophists that can be located within the broader global colonial discursive continuum. The events and conceptual developments described below take place in the British Empire at the end of the 19th century. In this context, Bhabha’s concept provides a perspective which allows one to perceive heterogeneity instead of presenting a “simple” homogenizing grand narrative.

Nonetheless, it is necessary to ask whether all “hybridities” are the same, or rather to what extent they are “the same” and to what extent they are “different.” We need to ask “what” is “hybrid”? And why is “it” “hybrid”? To describe these dynamics more concretely requires a terminology that allows for the description of “hybridity” and modes of “hybridization” on the textual level. In the next section, I will address Bhabha’s ideas about the “beyond,” “in-between,” “mimicry,” “hybridity,” and “hybridization,” taking the first steps towards the operationalization of his concepts.

3.2 The Idea of “Beyond” and “In-Between”

In his introduction to *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha states that there has been an epistemological shift in academia towards the recognition of heterogeneity and the attempt to theorize and analyze those heterogeneities. He describes this shift in terms of going or thinking “beyond” stable categories. For him the “beyond” or the “in-between” categories are the spaces in which “identity” is negotiated. The “in-between spaces” are spaces in which identities are negotiated and demarcated from others. However, they can only be “signs of identity” because they always refer to “something” outside or “beyond” and thus remain intrinsically connected to this “other.” The articulation of differences is, as Bhabha puts it, a process of normalizing hybridity and therefore an attempt to inscribe it into an identity.²⁸

Kulke (New Delhi: Manohar, 1991) Against this background, the language of “hybridity” seems to best describe the developments in which I am interested in my book, not least because “hybridity” is a concept derived by Bhabha and others mostly through the analysis of power relations and resistance in British India. Nevertheless, “hybridity” and “hybridization” still require further consideration as the language of “hybridity” also imports several other difficulties into any discourse in which it is used.

²⁸ Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction: Locations of Culture,” in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1–3.

Reflecting on Renee Green’s exhibition in the Museum of Contemporary Art in New York City, Bhabha explains that the connection between the polarities (the stairwell) is the location “in-between” which negates the possibility of dichotomies.

The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities.²⁹

The “stairwell” connects two levels. More abstractly put, the stairwell signifies the articulated differences which always connect the “self” and the “not-self.” The connection reaffirms the difference while at the same time making the difference impossible. If this paradox is seen as intrinsic to every attempt at establishing “identity” then it opens up the possibility of thinking “beyond” “primordial polarities,” since every claim of identity remains intrinsically connected to that which it is not, and, thus, remains inherently fragile. As there are no clear-cut boundaries within any given category – such as race, gender, state of evolution, etc. – cultures are understood by Bhabha as fluid and as undergoing an ongoing process of ceaseless shaping and reshaping.³⁰ If scholars are to follow Bhabha, this would mean they can no longer compare “cultures” but, rather, have to zoom in on the constant formative processes of ongoing “shaping” and “reshaping.” Narratives of nationalism and tradition try to freeze the fluid described by Bhabha. He argues in the introduction to *Nation and Narration* that nations are constructed based on narratives which try to fossilize the identity or, better, to fix identity. Bhabha argues that nations are discursively constructed and that the narratives are necessarily unstable. Therefore,

it is the project of *Nation and Narration* to explore the Janus-faced ambivalence of language itself in the construction of the Janus-faced discourse of the nation. This turns the familiar two-faced god into a figure of prodigious doubling that investigates the nation-space in the process of the articulation of elements: where meanings may be partial because they are *in medias res*; and history may be half-made because it is in the process of being made.³¹

It is, in my opinion, precisely this idea of meanings being constantly “*in medias res*” that is fundamental to Bhabha’s theory and is also what elevates the theory over its alternatives because it allows the undermining of any attempt to look for “originals” or pure entities which might be taken as fixed points in history.

²⁹ Bhabha, “Introduction,” 5.

³⁰ Bhabha, “Introduction,” 7.

³¹ Homi K. Bhabha, “Introduction: Narrating the Nation,” in Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 3.

Strictly speaking, this claim resists *any* scholarly attempt to analyze “culture.” If it were to be properly taken into account, what would this mean for scholarly work? To begin with, scholars would have to describe processes instead of entities and, at the same time, they would also have to develop analytical tools to enable them to carry out this new type of analysis. A simple shift from a language of “culture” and “identity” to one of “process” and “negotiation” framed in terms of “hybridity” will not take us very far. Rather, one would need to show these dynamics in concrete examples. If texts are understood as points in an ongoing discourse, then what will be the consequence of this understanding? And what instruments could be used to analyze these discourses “*in medias res*”? In the following, I will describe an analytical tool which aims at describing “hybridization processes” in more detail and that will simultaneously allow for the differentiation of processes of “hybridization.”

3.3 Inherited Instability

Bhabha’s work induces a rethinking of categories because he convincingly argues for their instability. Hence, every “identity” – in the broadest sense in Bhabha’s work, including national identities, textual identities, and so on – is constructed through a demarcation from others. However, this demarcation is necessarily always temporary and can only be formulated and negotiated “in-between” identities. This is because – and think again of the stairwell, here – “self” and “non-self” are always connected by the difference which serves as the only point of reference for identity making. In this sense, “the ‘other’ is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously ‘between ourselves’.”³² In their interpretation of Bhabha’s work, Castro Valera, and Dhawan describe this feature of his theory as an act of self-assurance (Selbstidentifikation)³³ in which the colonial discourse is constantly accompanied by latent fear of loss of power.³⁴ In Bhabha’s interpretation of the colonial discourse, this dependency on the other undermines the dominant discourse³⁵ because it opens up a space for the other’s intervention.

Let us turn back to the questions raised at the end of the preceding section about the consequences Bhabha’s assumption might have for the analysis of

³² Bhabha, “Introduction,” 4.

³³ Castro Varela and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, 255–56.

³⁴ Castro Varela and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, 227.

³⁵ “Es ist gerade diese Abhängigkeit von den Anderen, die die eigene Identität kontinuierlich gleichzeitig stabilisiert und untergräbt,” Castro Varela and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, 225.

(colonial) texts. One possible answer would be that the massive production of texts in the Theosophical Society can be understood as an ongoing attempt to close the discourse and to fix identity. If this possibility is kept in mind, one part of the analysis that follows is the identification of “signifiers of stability” and “signs of instability” in the Theosophical text production. I propose that we should understand the “signifiers of stability” as traces of “hybridization.” In the next chapter, instruments will be developed to identify these traces on the textual level.

3.4 Mimicry as a Strategy of Resistance

In Bhabha’s writings, “mimicry” can be understood as both an unconscious mechanism and a strategy of anti-colonial resistance. Indeed, it could be described as “hybrid” itself because it should be understood neither as a total assimilation into the hegemonic colonial discourse nor as a counter discourse. It is, rather, an (un)conscious strategy of the creative iteration of the colonial discourse.³⁶ Mimicry can thus be understood as both the effect of instability and, at the same time, a strategy, because it constitutes the colonial subject as “*a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite, [. . .] almost the same but not white.*”³⁷

The colonial narrative of supremacy can only be maintained if the “colonial mimicry” is never perfected. The colonial discourse needs another. Therefore, “the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference.”³⁸ Mimicry is described by Bhabha as “the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power.”³⁹ On the one hand, mimicry “produces” a reformed other, one that was civilized through the efforts of the colonizers. On the other hand, as the total adoption of the colonizer’s identity would destroy the colonial legitimation narrative, mimicry must always be flawed and incomplete. This shows that the “colonized” is (still) in need of the colonizer. At the same time,

36 Karen Struve, *Zur Aktualität von Homi K. Bhabha: Einleitung in sein Werk* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013), 143; David Paul Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*, Routledge Critical Thinkers (London, New York: Routledge, 2006), 57.

37 Homi K. Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse,” in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 127.

38 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 122.

39 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 122.

this “slippage”⁴⁰ of the mimicry opens, in Bhabha’s opinion, the locus for the resistance of the colonized: “The ambivalence of mimicry (almost the same, but not quite) does not merely ‘rupture’ the discourse, but becomes transformed into an uncertainty which fixes the colonial subject as a ‘partial’ presence.”⁴¹ This “partial presence” in which the colonial subject is both “wild” and “tamed,” “civilized” and “uncivilized,” is the margin or “in-between” in which the instability of the colonial discourse becomes apparent. The colonized were constructed and became “authorized versions of otherness.”⁴² This “otherness” is understood by Bhabha as undermining the colonial desire to “civilize” the colonial subject, because this project must necessarily remain incomplete. “The repetition of *partial* presence, which is the basis of mimicry, articulates those disturbances of cultural, racial and historical difference that menace the narcissistic demand of colonial authority.”⁴³

In Moore-Gilbert’s adaptation of the notion, the idea of “going native” as a kind of contrary mimicry becomes a co-concept of Bhabha’s mimicry.⁴⁴ Annie Besant is a striking example of this “going native.” The resemblance in both forms of mimicry, which is also present alongside the otherness, is an even larger threat for the colonizers because it reveals that there is no entity that is independent of the “Other,” or, to put it another way, there is no pure original. “Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’ in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no ‘itself.’”⁴⁵ In Bhabha’s concept of mimicry, the “ambivalence” that is inherent in “mimicry” is the crystallization point of colonial power and resistance.

The ambivalence of colonial authority repeatedly turns from mimicry – a difference that is almost nothing but not quite – to menace – a difference that is almost total but not quite. And in that other scene of colonial power, where history turns to farce and presence to ‘a part’ can be seen the twin figures of narcissism and paranoia that repeat furiously, uncontrollably.⁴⁶

40 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 123.

41 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 123.

42 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 126.

43 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 126.

44 Bart Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics* (London, New York: Verso, 2000), 149.

45 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 128–29.

46 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 131.

Mimicry thus disrupts the colonial discourse and the “gaze of otherness”;⁴⁷ the gaze of the colonized constantly disturbs the unstable identity of the colonizers.⁴⁸

The idea of the unstable colonial discourse that is related to Bhabha’s view of the colonial discourse as “hybrid sites of cultural negotiation”⁴⁹ is, I think, a very fruitful avenue of approach. This idea allows us to go beyond binaries such as “good” and “bad,” and helps us instead to conceptualize colonial encounters as encounters between people. As a result, it allows us to think of spaces of mutual agency instead of closed discourses. In these spaces the colonized become subjects with their own agendas and not simply victims. This is not to marginalize the crimes committed in the colonial era of European expansion. Rather, the goal is to “salvage” the colonized subject from the dust of history. This agenda and these “agencies” must, however, be shown in the concrete texts if we are to see how colonized subjects actually took part in this discourse. Agency in this process of negotiation was located by Bhabha in the “liminal moment of identification – eluding resemblance – [it] produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative ‘unpicking’ and incommensurable, insurgent relinking.”⁵⁰ As will be explained in the following paragraph, this agency is manifested in the differences of each “iteration” of the colonial discourse, a repetition in which the (colonial) discourse becomes “hybrid.” As part of the operationalization of the analytical tool below, I will argue that this “repetition” can be identified on the textual level in the primary sources I discuss. However, before discussing this analytical tool in detail it will be necessary to look again at what Bhabha understands by “hybridity” and “hybridization.”

3.5 “Hybridity” and “Hybridization”

“Hybridity” is the key concept in Bhabha’s writings. He conceptualizes “hybridity” as a given fact in all cultures.⁵¹ As Huddart explains, “hybridity” “refers to an original mixedness within every form of identity.”⁵² Indeed, Bhabha even calls it a “historical necessity,”⁵³ because, for him, “hybridity” is the reason why

47 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 126.

48 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 126–31.

49 Homi K. Bhabha, “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency,” in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 255.

50 Bhabha, “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,” 265.

51 Homi K. Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 31.

52 Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*, 6–7.

53 Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 41.

transcultural endeavors are possible in the first place. In this sense, “hybridity [. . .] is an instance of iteration, in the minority discourse, of the time of the arbitrary sign – ‘the minus in the origin’ – through which all forms of cultural meaning are open to translation because their enunciation resists totalization.”⁵⁴ One of the difficulties in Bhabha’s theory is that he repeatedly describes “mimicry” and “hybridity” as entities which are at the same time structurally inherited and yet are also deliberate acts of resistance.⁵⁵ In the same manner, he claims that all cultures are “hybrid” while also talking of “strategies of hybridization.”⁵⁶ This leads to a tension between the two connotations of “hybridity” since the idea of “strategy” seems to imply “pure” identities which can be systematically “hybridized” or that “mimicry” is simply a disguise for some “original” that lies below the surface. It is exactly this tension that the term “hybridity” inherited from its roots in biology, where it describes the process of crossbreeding a “hybrid” from two “pure races.”⁵⁷ In Bhabha’s conception of the term, it describes the inscription of “the other,” which is already “hybrid,” into “the self,” which is also already “hybrid.”⁵⁸ One should, thus, differentiate between the process of “hybridization” and the state of “hybridity.”

Bhabha understands cultures as being constantly shaped and reshaped in an ongoing process which he called “hybridization.”⁵⁹ On his understanding, however, “hybridity” is the natural state of being. “Culture” is only the result of the (ab)use of power to fix the constant negotiations between “the self” and “the other.” His endeavor might be summarized as an attempt to explain how “the other” may inscribe itself into the hegemonic order of meaning⁶⁰ or, perhaps more accurately, an attempt to explain why the other was (and is) always part of the oppressive order of meaning. Bhabha understands this dynamic as both a universal fact of all cultures and a feature of all discourses, and as a strategy for resistance against any attempt at the authoritative fixation of discourses. In the example of Divedi (see Chapter 11), it makes a great deal of sense to speak of hybridity as a strategy. At the same time, the fragility and

54 Homi K. Bhabha, “DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation,” in Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 314.

55 Castro Varela and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, 277.

56 Homi K. Bhabha, “Culture’s in-Between,” in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), 58.

57 Cf. Young, *Colonial Desire*.

58 Bhabha, “DissemiNation,” 314.

59 Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*, 7.

60 Castro Varela and Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie*, 238.

therefore the inherent hybridity is a prerequisite of Bhabha's theory because "hybridity" as a strategy could not otherwise influence the hegemonic discourse. These dynamics are discussed in terms of the argument between Row and Blavatsky (see Chapter 12.8).

3.6 A First Summary

To summarize, Bhabha's main concern is to describe the instability of discourses, especially as it relates to the building of colonial identity and to how the colonized can resist the hegemonic discourse. A number of premises underpin his theory. First, the idea of the inherent instability of discourses, which he explains by reference to the simultaneous inscription of the "other" in the process of identity building. Bhabha claims that identities can only be established through demarcation and that they therefore remain connected to that from which they demarcate themselves. He introduces the image of the "stairwell" to illustrate this idea and calls the space where meaning can be produced the "in-between" demarcation. In his view, this idea allows one to think "beyond" polarities and dichotomies. This leads him to claim that "hybridity" is common to every category and that the process of "hybridization" always leads from "hybridity" to "hybridity." Bhabha uses the idea of "mimicry" to illustrate this process, describing a strategy of resistance in the colonial discourse in which the instability is demonstrated by an assimilation which must be incomplete because there is no original that can be perfectly copied.

Although Bhabha bases his whole theory on the idea of "hybridization," it nevertheless remains a relatively vague concept. I argue that this is intended by Bhabha as a strategy for writing and reading against dichotomies. "Hybridity" in Bhabha's work must in many cases be read as a deconstructive strategy rather than a clear-cut concept. In this, he follows the example of Derrida's deconstructivism.⁶¹ Or as Moor-Gilbert puts it: "At times, indeed, his characteristically teasing, evasive, even quasi-mystical (or mystificatory) mode of expression seems designed to appeal primarily to the reader's intuition."⁶² He follows this by citing a telling passage from Bhabha's work: "If you seek simply the sententious or the

⁶¹ In her article on Derrida's "différance," Colebrook argues that Derrida often uses the term as a strategy and insists that it is not a concept (Colebrook, "Difference"; see also Jason Powell, *Jacques Derrida: A Biography* (London: Continuum, 2006), 80). As Bhabha is strongly influenced by Derrida's way of thinking, one might argue that Bhabha's "hybridity" has a similar purpose.

⁶² Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, 115.

exegetical, you will not grasp the hybrid moment outside the sentence – not quite experience, not yet concept; part dream, part analysis; neither signifier nor signified.”⁶³ This comes very close to a description of a “deconstructivist” strategy which is “not yet a concept.”⁶⁴ Nevertheless, Bhabha does provide several “definitions” of “hybridity” and “hybridization” throughout his work. Hybridity is described by Bhabha as a quality of the colonial discourse (the sign of the productivity of colonial power) but also as a subversive strategy.⁶⁵ “Hybridity” thus describes a fundamental state of uncertainty and instability in (colonial) discourses which includes the possibility of altering the discourse, but this depiction of the concept does not clarify how it is that “hybridization” as a process “works.” While working on the texts discussed in this book, it became clearer and clearer that a terminology describing the *process* of “hybridization” is needed if we are to analyze the “hybridity” that is detected in these texts. For this reason, the next chapter provides an analytical tool that will enable us to describe the process of “hybridization” on the textual level.

3.7 Overlaps and Common Claims of “Global History” and “Postcolonial Studies:” Global Connections, Relations, and Encounters

It is possible to articulate several claims that appear to be common to both “post-colonial studies” and “global history.” These include: a) that they both view their subject matter through the lens of heterogeneity instead of claiming homogeneity; b) they both think beyond national boundaries and Eurocentrism; and c) they both seek to widen the scope of their concerns to take in a global and multidisciplinary perspective. As Conrad puts it, overcoming disciplinary boundaries and national boundaries allows a perspective in which multifaceted global influences can be recognized.⁶⁶ In his recent introduction to “global history,” *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, Wenzlhuemer maintains that such claims are important as strategic

⁶³ Bhabha, “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,” 260; also quoted by Moor-Gilbert Moore-Gilbert, *Postcolonial Theory*, 115.

⁶⁴ With reference to Colebrook (Colebrook, “Difference,” 65), who explains that Derrida’s *différance* was “not a concept,” I describe Bhabha’s “hybridity” as “not yet a concept” because it describes the constant process of terms and concepts in the making.

⁶⁵ Homi K. Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817,” in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 159–60.

⁶⁶ Sebastian Conrad, *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung*, Beck’sche Reihe 6079 (München: C. H. Beck, 2013), 21.

statements that assist in the rethinking of certain categories, such as nation or race, but that they do not provide a research method.⁶⁷ He identifies an operationalization of the “global history” approach as a research desideratum and aims to provide an impetus towards such an operationalization.⁶⁸ This requirement is structurally similar to what was discussed in the previous chapter in connection to “hybridization.” It is argued below that “encounters” are the precondition of “hybridization.” The “global history” approach can provide theoretical considerations regarding the idea of “encounters” that will allow the use of these ideas in a more meaningful way in the operationalization of “hybridization.” As Conrad maintains, bringing “global history” and “postcolonial studies” into dialog with one another combines a macro-historical view that is often based on concepts such as “diffusion” and “integration” with a specific focus on the transfer process involved in encounters.⁶⁹ This is exactly what I aim to do in Chapter 4 by conceptualizing “hybridization.”

One important claim of “global history” is that there are no hermetically sealed spaces within history, only manifold connections, overlaps, and entanglements.⁷⁰ This view is connected to a methodological preference for analyses of transboundary connections and a non-Eurocentric view of history wherein “non-Western” actors are explicitly researched and included as key figures.

Common to the “global history” approach – as well as to “postcolonial studies” – is the attempt to rewrite the master narrative of the European *Sonderweg*. This is the narrative that claims that European hegemony was inevitable and that Europe was more or less the only active region in all of history. The idea of “conjunctures” seeks to contest this view. It tries to describe overlapping developments in the global context, such as the simultaneous colonial aspirations of empires such as the Chinese, Ottoman, Dutch, and Portuguese. According to this view, “colonialism” was not exclusively European and the European hegemony that resulted was not a necessary outcome. Following Chakrabarty, Conrad points out that, when describing “conjunctures,” terms such as “nation,” “empire,” and “colonialism” are used which were developed as parts of the European master narrative. They thus perpetuate that narrative

67 Roland Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben: Eine Einführung in 6 Episoden* (Konstanz, München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2017), 10.

68 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 13.

69 Sebastian Conrad and Andreas Eckert, “Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen: Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt,” in *Globalgeschichte: Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*, ed. Sebastian Conrad, Andreas Eckert and Ulrike Freitag (Frankfurt am Main, New-York: Campus, 2007), 23.

70 Conrad, *Globalgeschichte*, 9.

whenever they are employed.⁷¹ Chakrabarty claims that “one simply cannot think of political modernity without these and other related concepts that found a climactic form in the course of the European Enlightenment and the nineteenth century.”⁷² Hence, whenever scholars write about regions other than Europe, they use a set of terminology which inherits an epistemological blindness. Yet in order to be able to connect to the global discourse, it is necessary to use these terms. This is a scholarly dilemma. The hegemony of European scholarship also inscribed itself in the intelligentsia beyond Europe’s borders, especially in regions such as South Asia where a strong colonial education system was established. As a result, as Chakrabarty points out, a long tradition of scholarship from “Sanskrit or Persian or Arabic”⁷³ was supplanted by a European epistemology. This led to a lack of engagement with traditional thinkers on the part of the new generation of South Asian scholars, who turned instead towards “the European intellectual tradition.”⁷⁴ From Chakrabarty’s perspective, the “non-European” thinkers and their concepts are “dead” and therefore only subject to historical research, whereas “European” concepts are “alive” and accepted as universal explanations of how the world “works.”⁷⁵ Chakrabarty’s aim is not to introduce a new terminology that would be able to reverse the master narrative but rather to understand that,

European thought is at once both indispensable and inadequate in helping us to think through the experiences of political modernity in non-Western nations, and provincializing Europe becomes the task of exploring how this thought – which is now everybody’s heritage and which affect us all – may be renewed from and for the margins.⁷⁶

Chakrabarty’s claim is relevant for my considerations in two ways. 1) He identifies a paradoxical relationship between “European thought” and “non-Western nations,” with the European categories being “indispensable” and “inadequate” at the same time. 2) He claims that “European thought” is “everybody’s heritage” and can be “renewed from the margins.” This claim refers to an entanglement of discourses which enables the agency of the “non-Western” actors. If one is to follow Chakrabarty, attempts to erase colonial influences must be dismissed because of the irreversibility of the effects of colonialism. This

⁷¹ Conrad, *Globalgeschichte*, 22–25, 138–41.

⁷² Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton Studies in Culture / Power / History (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 4.

⁷³ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 5.

⁷⁴ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 6.

⁷⁵ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 108–11.

⁷⁶ Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 16.

insight became exceptionally influential and has since found many scholarly supporters. These have shown that, in the colonial era, European categories often began to be established as important points of reference for “non-Western” actors, especially in the South Asian elites. This is also true for earlier periods, but from the mid-nineteen century onwards, references to “European thought” became a *sine qua non* in “non-Western” scholarship.⁷⁷ One methodological trap would be to read these references as reflecting a total submission to the colonial discourse. Chakrabarty offers an alternative: to read them instead as “renewals from the margins.” These sorts of references to European scholarships can be observed in some of the material discussed below, especially in Dvivedi’s work. The sources discussed below draw a complex picture. Actors such as Dvivedi and Besant at the same time claimed a superiority for non-European writers while also “relationizing” them to – i.e., placing them into a relationship with – European thinkers.

These “relationizings” (see Chapter 4.6) were triggered by encounters which multiplied with the increasing density of global connections. Although far-away regions of the world were connected to each other via trade routes and other channels of exchange long before the 19th century, the density of these connections exploded⁷⁸ with the invention of the railway, steamships, telegraphy, and, eventually, airplanes. If the scope of research is narrowed to South Asia and its exchange with Europe then the connection reaches back at least to the time of Alexander the Great,⁷⁹ and probably beyond. If the focus is instead placed on the Americas or Australia, a much later date must be set for the beginning of the exchange with Europe. The question of periodization is a major issue for “global history.” What are the characteristics of a global history? How dense must the network of connection be to allow us to talk about a global history?

For this book, the question of periodization is less relevant as no one would deny that by the end of the 19th century a global network of multifaceted relations was long established and that there were almost no events after this point which were not connected to the larger context of global history. However, these

⁷⁷ Conrad, *Globalgeschichte*, 143.

⁷⁸ Conrad, *Globalgeschichte*, 150.

⁷⁹ Alexander’s invasion of “India” did not make much of an impact and Indian historians do not seem to have taken much notice of him. It was only later, when the Muslim conquerors imported the legend of Alexander, that his name became known in India (Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund, *Geschichte Indiens: Von der Induskultur bis heute*, 2nd upd. ed. (München: C. H. Beck, 2010), 78). This is an interesting instance of how the perspective can make “facts.” For the self-image of “Europeans,” Alexander’s crusade was and still is a powerful narrative that has even been transported into Hollywood productions. But for most South Asians at the time, it was of almost no significance.

connections were not simply a result of European expansion but of diverse interplays between a huge number of actors with at times very different agendas and methods of exploring and conquering the world. Although this process culminated in the mid-nineteenth century with the development of global markets and the emergence of nationalism, it is important to keep in mind that there was no sudden moment at which every part of the world became connected to every other part. Rather, the chronology and the pace of this process varied significantly from region to region.⁸⁰ Cities like Bombay, Shanghai, London, or New York were “global” long before rural regions both within and beyond Europe. Still today there are differing degrees of being “global.” Guttannen in Switzerland is much less “global” than Mumbai, for instance, despite the one being at the “center” of Europe and the other in a former colony. Nevertheless, from a macro perspective it can be said that around the end of the 19th century, a “global colonial discursive continuum” (my term) was established (see Chapter 4.5). This was no homogeneous or even teleological development towards a global society, but a dynamic process of overlapping continuities and discontinuities. It will be seen that the idea of “hybridization” helps in conceptualizing these processes and allows a view onto continuities and discontinuities as outcomes of meshing processes of “hybridization.”

“Global history” seeks to conceptualize global connections.⁸¹ I argue below that relations which can be identified in the texts discussed in this book are reflections of these global connections. Or to put it another way, “entanglement” and “hybridization” are mutually interdependent. In his *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, Wenzlhuemer develops a methodology for “global history.” His approach allows for the concretization of the idea of “hybridization” which is operationalized in the following chapter. Situating “hybridization” in the field of “global history” will provide an opportunity for each concept to augment the other.

⁸⁰ Conrad, *Globalgeschichte*, 152–56.

⁸¹ Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 16.

4 Towards the Conceptualization of an Analytical Tool

“Hybridity” and “hybridization” are terms which lack the ability to differentiate, because the concept of hybridity does not provide a language that describes division and distinction. As such, the multifaceted modalities of “hybridities” cannot be grasped using the conceptual vocabulary associated with the term itself.⁸² As I argued above, the notions of “hybridity” and “hybridization” are rather figures of thought, non-concepts which aim at triggering a thinking that goes “beyond.” Accordingly, they are not conceptualized as analytical tools. In this chapter, I will propose a systematization of “hybridization” and will develop an analytical tool which allows for the identification of “hybridization” on the textual level. Discussing Berner’s proposal for a systematization of syncretism provides us with a vocabulary that allows “traces of hybridization” to be examined on the textual level. In the following, I will begin by discussing a proposal for the operationalization of “hybridity.” This discussion will illustrate the pitfalls and difficulties involved in such a project, while at the same time helping to concretize the concept of “hybridization.” In this context, Bhabha’s ideas on “translation,” the “third space,” and “mimicry” will also be discussed. As a result, a vocabulary will emerge that will enable us to differentiate between two levels: the textual level, on which “traces of hybridization” can be identified, and the level of “hybridization” itself. The final section considers a proposal to operationalize the global history approach, and in doing so provides the foundation on which “encounters” are conceptualized as preconditions for “hybridization.”

4.1 What are the Pitfalls? A Proposal for Operationalizing “Hybridization”

Steven Yao⁸³ has discussed “hybridization” in connection with Asian American writers and their literary production.⁸⁴ Following Yao’s line of argument will, on the one hand, provide insights into a variety of aspects of “hybridization” and will show one way in which “hybridization” can be operationalized. On the other hand, it will also become apparent that his approach has several disadvantages

⁸² Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial,’” 110.

⁸³ Steven Yao is Edmund A. LeFevre Professor of English at Hamilton College, Clinton, New York.

⁸⁴ Steven Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” *Textual Practice* 17, no. 2 (2003): 361.

which it will be necessary to address if “hybridity” is to be operationalized as a meaningful concept in this book.

In his article, Yao proposes, “a new ‘taxonomy’ of hybridization strategies that at once explicitly acknowledges and, more importantly, builds upon the ineluctably biologicistic foundations of the concept of ‘hybridity’.”⁸⁵ Yao’s proposal has the benefit of describing a field of modes of “hybridization.”⁸⁶ He attempts to identify “different *degrees* of synthesis or interaction between various traditions and expressive resources”⁸⁷ as “modes” or “types” of “hybridization.” This goal is inherently problematic, since the introduction of degrees of “hybridization” implies a hierarchization of different modes of “hybridization.” What Yao’s model demonstrates is that a) “hybridity” and “hybridization” are general terms which b) can – and must be – concretized and adapted to particular cases. It illustrates c) that it is difficult to find a set of terms which would describe “all” modes of “hybridization,” and d) that terms are not suitable for use in connection with “hybridity” if they either deny power-relations or claim that no alterations of the “foreign cultural element”⁸⁸ and the target system take place in the transfer. An immense disadvantage of Yao’s approach is his use of biological and medical terms as categories of “hybridization.” Not only is the biological and racist background of “hybridity” the source of one of the strongest critiques that can be laid against it, but the use of such language also suggests that cultural entanglements can be framed in biological or evolutionist terms.⁸⁹ The biologizing language of “hybridization” makes it difficult to overcome the metaphorical implications of pureness and mixedness. Bhabha claims that his idea of “hybridization” is not rooted in the logic of dialectical evolution as he attempts to avoid the introduction of any teleological elements.⁹⁰ It will be seen below that this is one of the most difficult points to be addressed in the operationalization of “hybridization,” because many terms are inherently teleological in their implications.⁹¹

85 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 363.

86 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 363–74.

87 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 374.

88 Yao, “Taxonomizing Hybridity,” 374.

89 Cf. Young, *Colonial Desire*.

90 Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 162.

91 This was long understood by numerous scholars. Therefore not only in “postcolonial studies” (e.g. Arif Dirlik, “The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism,” *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (1994): 334) but also in “global” or “entangled history” (e.g. Conrad and Eckert, “Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen,” 7) is the overcoming of these “teleologies” demanded.

Yao attempts to provide terms which conceptualize processes of “hybridization” in toto, but his approach has very significant limitations. There is, then, still a need to find a set of terms that can be used to describe the modalities of “hybridization” while also identifying different parts of the processes. As we will see below, Ulrich Berner has proposed just such a conceptual framework for identifying and discussing differentiation in relation to *Synkretismus*. The notion of syncretism has frequently been identified as closely related to “hybridity”⁹² and Berner’s proposal thus provides a very useful starting point for the systematization of “hybridization.”

4.2 A Proposal for the Operationalization of a Neighboring Term

Referring to Luhmann’s work in *Religion und System*, Berner introduces a distinction between between “System” and “Element” on the basis of which he then proposes a systematic terminology for “syncretism.”⁹³ Berner’s systematization of this concept of syncretism provides several important insights that can be adapted for the operationalization of “hybridization.” Berner’s systematization provides a meticulously detailed instrument for the analysis of processes of cross- and intra-religious encounters. The level of detail in his framework helps the reader to conceptualize and make intelligible the dynamics of these encounters. However, an important problematic feature of his approach is that it suggests that these dynamics can be described in a conclusive manner. I argue that, while a detailed description helps to show the heterogeneity of these encounters, and therefore provides a helpful extension of Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, describing these processes of “hybridization” using a detailed terminology does not amount to the provision of a full description of the processes. Rather, we must be satisfied with a model of how these processes *might* work in specific cases.

⁹² Hall already put “syncretism” and “hybridity” in a neighbouring relation together with several other terms. Hall, “Wann gab es »das Postkoloniale«?,” 210–11 Similarly Shohat, “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’,” 108.

⁹³ Ulrich Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, Göttinger Orientforschungen 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982), 83.

4.2.1 Difficulties in and Demarcations from this Proposal

Although Berner claims that his work is not based on value judgements,⁹⁴ his whole systematization is a hierarchization of processes. He postulates that “every researcher has to evaluate the respective phenomena for themselves.”⁹⁵ This claim can be read as setting out a program of Eurocentrism and essentialism. From this perspective, several of Berner’s categories seem to be a) closely linked to a hierarchical and evolutionist value system, and b) often overdetermined and oversimplified. This is especially true when he introduces categories such as “evolution” on the systems level as irreversible process of (divine) creation.⁹⁶ This understanding of evolution indicates both a valuation and a (Hegelian-evolutionary) teleology. This is the background to Berner’s approach and it must be taken into account when drawing on his categorization.

Berner maintains that his terminology is not a “theory of syncretism” but a tool with “heuristic value” and that it therefore has to be useful, rather than being constrained by the demand that it be “theoretically sound” and “correct.”⁹⁷ Although I think such instruments should be both, the idea of *usefulness* is an interesting notion for the purposes of this book because it allows for the readjustment of a tool if it does not prove to be *useful*. The operationalization of “hybridization” should be *useful* and, hopefully, of “heuristic value.” If we understand Berner’s systematization of “syncretism” as such an *Instrumentarium* while at the same time dismissing his claims concerning the universality and the overarching explanatory value of his concept,⁹⁸ then it can be used in

94 “Die Gegenüberstellung von ‚Synkretismus‘, ‚Synthese‘ und ‚Pseudo-Synthese‘ (oder ‚Meta-Synkretismus‘) ist nicht mit Wertungen verbunden.” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 88.

95 “Die Wertung der betreffenden Elemente und damit des ganzen Phänomens dem einzelnen Forscher überlassen [bleibt].” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 88.

96 In his words: “‚Evolution‘ bezeichnet einen systeminternen irreversiblen und schöpferischen Prozeß, in dem neue Elemente entstehen, die dann als Zentrum eines neuen Systems fungieren.” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 98. Two words stand out in this definition: 1) schöpferisch and 2) irreversibel. The first term can be translated as “creative,” with a strong Christian-religious connotation. The second refers to the notion of the total irreversible completeness of the process of alteration.

97 “Muß [es] sich in der Anwendung bewähren – nicht als ‚wahr‘, sondern als brauchbar.” Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 108.

98 Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, XII Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, XII, 88–110.

an eclectic way as a) a blueprint for systematization and b) a resource for *useful* categories that are able to describe parts of the “hybridization” processes.

4.2.2 A Selection of *Useful* Categories

Berner’s category of “Relationierung” is most instructive. I claim that ideas about the relationships between systems (macro-macro, meso-meso, micro-micro, macro-meso, macro-micro, meso-micro) as well as between their elements can be helpful tools in describing the metaprocess of “hybridization.” Thinking of relations as traces of “stairwells” and “in-betweens” will provide interesting insights (see below) which can then fruitfully be combined with the global history approach (see Chapter 4.4).

Berner identifies three broad categories within his notion of “Relationierung”: a) harmonizing relationizing; b) hierarchical relationizing; and c) distancing. For Berner, a) takes the form of approaches that aim to solve the competition between two systems while maintaining the boundaries between them. By contrast, b) captures the relationizing process by which several systems are brought into hierarchical relationships with each other. Berner distinguishes several categories of hierarchization. 1) Evaluating hierarchization, the creation of a hierarchy in which different systems are separated in terms of the values attributed to them. 2) Epistemological hierarchization, which involves a hierarchy based on levels of insight into “truth.” 3) Chronological hierarchization, based on claims about the temporal validity of systems, according to which one system might be valid for an earlier period of time whereas another might be valid for a later period. 4) Genealogical hierarchization involves a hierarchy based on claims of genealogical dependencies. Finally, 5) inclusive hierarchization, which involves a system making an inclusivist claim to encompass other competing systems. Returning now to the three broad categories, the third, c) distancing hierarchization, involves seeing systems as demarcated from one another in such a way that the demarcation of one system denies the validity of other systems.⁹⁹

Relationizing on the level of the elements within systems is described by Berner as a process in which several elements are brought into a relationship with one another without eliminating the boundaries between them. Although his systematization of relationizing at the element level could be useful in describing “hybridization” processes for other examples – e.g. the tecnomorph model with which he describes the well-known metaphor of the potter and the

⁹⁹ Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 98–101.

pot – it cannot be applied to the material analyzed in the present book.¹⁰⁰ Instead, I extend his idea of relationizing, especially in its hierarchizing form, to the element level.

Berner’s work is an insightful attempt to develop an analytical tool for use in textual analyses. What is especially interesting is that he provides a detailed *Instrumentarium* with which different modalities of encounters can be described. For the following, the differentiation between structures and elements will help us to conceptualize “hybridization” because this distinction allows the identification of structurally analogous processes or/and elements of knowledge or narratives which were transferred from one space to another.

The following chart summarizes the distinctions discussed above. “Relationizings” are indications of new and altered relations that were established in hybridization processes. These can be followed on the textual level.

The systematization of “hybridity” will be enriched in what follows by a reevaluation of Bhabha’s definitions of “hybridity” and by the introduction of two further concepts from Bhabha’s work: “third space” and “translation.”

Table 1: Relationizing. By the author.

Relationizing					
Distancing	Hierarchical				Harmonizing
	Evaluating	Epistemological	Chronological	Genealogical	Inclusive

4.3 “Hybridity” and “Hybridization” in Bhabha’s Theory: A Reevaluation and Augmentation

In the treatment of Bhabha’s concepts in the preceding chapter, I discussed the idea of “mimicry” as a “strategy” of “hybridization.” In the present chapter, “translation” will be discussed as another such strategy. Similarly, while the last chapter laid out Bhabha’s views on the “in-between” as the “space” in which meaning can be produced, here we will turn to Bhabha’s famous “third space” as another spatial metaphor he introduces to describe his concept of “hybridity.” These new concepts will sharpen the presentation of Bhabha’s theory and enlarge the terminology available for the operationalization of his concept.

¹⁰⁰ Berner, *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*, 101–8.

4.3.1 Processes of Hybridization: Translation and Mimicry

In *Signs Taken for Wonders*, Bhabha analyzes a scene described in a missionary report by Anund Messeh, one of the first Indian catechists. The report describes a gathering of a group of about five hundred native Indians around a tree outside Delhi. When Messeh arrived at the tree, he asked those present what they were doing. They informed him that they were reading the Bible in a Hindi translation, which they claimed to have received from an angel. Based on an in-depth analysis of the situation and dialogues described by Messeh, Bhabha develops and elaborates his conceptualization of “hybridization.” Central to his argument is the act of “repetition” in the colonial setting, in which the “signifier[s] of authority”¹⁰¹ are appropriated by the colonized. In this act of “repetition” “an image can neither be ‘original’ – by virtue of the act of repetition that constructs it – nor ‘identical’ – by virtue of the difference that defines it.”¹⁰² He argues that the colonial discourse is disrupted by the statement that “these books [. . .] teach the religion of the European Sahibs. It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use.”¹⁰³ He clarifies that “our use” here implies exactly that “repetition” which estranges the “original.” The idea of repetition in Bhabha’s work is based on Derrida’s thought on “iteration.”¹⁰⁴ This split between “original” and its “repetition” is especially instructive in the case of translation, as Bhabha understands it. The possibility of a “repeat” is constitutive of something being the “original” in the first place, and its “originality” is thus dependent on the possibility of that same “repetition” which paradoxically at the same time negates its character of “originality.” This double-sided connection between “original” and “repetition” illustrates well how Bhabha conceptualizes the colonial discourse. In sum, if identity could be totalized, or, to put it another way, if and only if identity could be non-referential, it would resist the possibility of “repetition” because it would be impossible to “make sense” of it. At the same time, in this process of “repetition” the act of “making sense” of any “original identity” becomes altered through to an act of recontextualization.

As explained earlier in connection with “mimicry,” these sites of “hybridization” are the “spaces” in which Bhabha locates the agency of the colonized. In the process of translation, this agency comes to the fore in the appropriation of the language of “the other,” or, to phrase it in another way, in the process of translating elements and structures of one linguistic system into another. These

101 Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 153.

102 Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 153.

103 As quoted in Bhabha, “Signs Taken for Wonders,” 170.

104 Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*, 16; Derrida, “Signatur Ereignis Kontext,” 298.

practices include a transformation of every element (and structure) involved in the process.¹⁰⁵ By translation, “otherness” is imported directly into the center of “culture” and can therefore be read as the paradigmatic example of “hybridization.”¹⁰⁶ Translation is further understood by Bhabha as a site of negotiation which emphasizes the connectedness between the “original” and the “repetition” that is inescapably established in their relation. This connectedness also has an important impact on the possibility of resisting the colonial discourse because it maintains the “historical connectedness between the subject and object of critique.”¹⁰⁷ To sum up, translation is understood by Bhabha as a process in which every element and structure that is involved is repeated with a difference. The “original” and its “translation” constitute each other in the process of translation. This connection is the reason why Bhabha understands translation as a process that directly inscribes otherness into the center of a discourse. And by inscribing otherness in this way, translation simultaneously disturbs the discourse.

4.3.2 In-Between and Third Space

Whereas the “in-between” describes the connection between the “self” and the “other,” it is also discussed by Bhabha as a fundamental relation between the “original” and its “copy” in connection to translation. The “third space” describes the creative space in which the agency of the colonized comes into play. Based on the poststructuralist claim that language separates the speaker from the spoken and from the object spoken of, both temporally and spatially – again one can read Derrida¹⁰⁸ through Bhabha’s work – Bhabha maintains that,

the production of meaning requires that these two places be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space, which represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implication of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious.¹⁰⁹

The “Third Space” is the “space” in which meaning is constituted in the interplay between language, referee, reference, and the addressed. Importantly, this space is connected to the act of speaking, in the sense that it is always performative

105 Struve, *Zur Aktualität von Homi K. Bhabha*, 131.

106 Struve, *Zur Aktualität von Homi K. Bhabha*, 132.

107 Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 38.

108 This separation of “text” and its “producer” is discussed by Derrida as “absence.” Derrida, “Signatur Ereignis Kontext,” 297.

109 Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 53.

and remains unconscious. “Meaning” is therefore always produced in a performative act. From this it follows that “context” and “content” do not have any fixed relation to each other. Bhabha’s “Third Space” can be read as a metaphor for this “production of meaning” in the performative act. The problem with this metaphor is that “space” usually refers to a relatively stable entity, while Bhabha tries to describe a moment of creativity and fluidity which is always *in medias res*. In his words:

It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew.¹¹⁰

It is in this process of performative creativity – described by Bhabha as the “Third Space” because it bridges spatial and temporal discontinuities – that agency takes *place*.¹¹¹ The (non-)concept of the “Third Space” is yet another figure of thought for Bhabha that serves as a strategy for overcoming ideas of enclosed entities which are not in contact with each other.

Read as a metaphor for the complexity of meaning production, “Third Space” is less valuable as an analytical tool because it is “unrepresentable in itself.” Rather, it functions as a canvas on which can be drawn a conceptualization of “hybridity” as an analytical tool that tries to follow the traces of “hybridization” in texts. The “Third Space” points towards a pivotal differentiation. The level of the “Third Space,” the “in-betweens,” and the “relations” must be differentiated from the textual level, the level of the “traces of hybridization.” In the next section, I will summarize those of Bhabha’s ideas that have been discussed in the context of the operationalization of “hybridization.” This provides the foundation on which a systematization of hybridity will be advanced as an analytical tool in Section 4.6.

4.3.3 A Second Summary

Hybridization is the general term for processes in which “hybridity” emerges. A key difficulty in this concept is that that which “becomes” “hybrid” was necessarily already “hybrid.” To say that something is more “hybrid” or less “hybrid” would hierarchize hybridities and thus imply a teleology. To avoid this outcome, hybridities should not be categorized on the basis of degrees of “hybridity.”

¹¹⁰ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 55.

¹¹¹ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 56.

Mimicry and translation are specific processes of “hybridization.” However, as I argue, they are only two possibilities among a huge range of modes of “hybridization.” “Hybridization” takes place in the “Third space,” which I understand as the “moment” of meaning production in the process of “hybridization.” It is the “space” where the “in-betweens” establish “meaning” in the sense of a “stairwell” or a “relation.” In other words, in the performative act of language utterance – whether spoken or written – a multitude of connections are established between the one who utters and the one who interprets the utterance, as well as between every other point of reference, meaning the whole spatial and temporal context of this performative act.

“Hybridity” stands at the beginning and at the end of what I call the “metaprocess of hybridization,” whilst as an outcome of this process both “hybridities” become “hybridized” or “altered” through the establishment of multiple connections “in-between.” The result of this process are “in-betweens” which link “hybridity a” and “hybridity b” and can be understood as relations. Berner’s “relationizing” concept fits well into a terminology that tries to operationalize “hybridization” because, I argue, “hybridization” can be described by analyzing its traces, the relationizings between “hybrid a” and “hybrid b,” on the textual level. The relationizings refer to the “idea of the stairwell”: The very fact that a connection is established alters and transforms, or, to put it in Bhabha’s words, “hybridizes” the “hybrid a” and “hybrid b.” The establishment of a relation is always likewise an alteration.

I propose that we can usefully understand “hybridization” as a metaprocess that can be divided into several parts. The metaprocess comprises the establishment of relations between “hybrid a” and “hybrid b” in a process through which certain elements and structures become related to each other. As a means of differentiating how these relations come about, several verbs can be used to describe the “transfer” of elements and structures into “spaces” in which they reappear as “traces of hybridization.” This is initiated in “some kind of contact.” The term “encounter” is included in this technical vocabulary to specify the idea of “some kind of contact,” and will be concretized in the next chapter. I am aware that by using these terms I necessarily import semantic limitations, underlying biases, and other epistemological difficulties into the language used to describe the metaprocess. The systematization of “hybridization” provided here is an analytical tool and its *usefulness* must be proven in its application in the analyses of my sources. “Encounters” can be identified as the preconditions of the processes of “hybridization” which I seek to describe in this book. “Global history” provides ideas about “global connections” in which encounters happen. These approaches are discussed in the following to enrich and concretize the analytical tool.

4.4 A Proposal for Operationalizing “Global History:” Wenzlhuemer’s *Globalgeschichte Schreiben*

I will now attempt to bring the operationalization of “hybridity” presented above into dialogue with the “global history” approach, with a special regard for Wenzlhuemer’s proposal for the operationalization of “global history.” The aim of this section is to sharpen the conceptualization of “encounters” in my own approach. In addition, Wenzlhuemer’s ideas about the interplay between actors, structures, and what he calls “transit” will be discussed in order to integrate the idea of “connections,” discussed below, into the operationalization of “hybridity.” This establishes the foundation on the basis of which “relations” can be understood as part of the “global colonial discursive continuum (see next chapter).” The final section of this chapter then goes on to pursue the question of how one can talk about encounters and what role “actors” have in these encounters. Ultimately, this aims at an augmentation of the operationalization of “hybridization.”

Wenzlhuemer’s argument is that Conrad conceptualizes global history as both a perspective and an object of research, which in Wenzlhuemer’s view makes it difficult to conceptualize “connections” as an analytical category. He acknowledges the importance of embedding “connections” into contexts but holds that they should also have their own analytical value. His approach is interesting because he claims that global history should examine the interactions between human actors and global contexts and consider how these actors and contexts are interwoven with one another.¹¹² I argue that these interactions are the prerequisites for a process in which connections are established and manifested as relations in texts.

Wenzlhuemer aims to conceptualize “connections” in his approach in a way that goes beyond their start and end points. In order to do so, he puts forward six terms – “connections, space, time, actors, structures, and transit”¹¹³ – to concretize his notion of “global connections.”¹¹⁴ In the following, these concepts will be described as they are presented by Wenzlhuemer. After each paragraph, I discuss the extent to which the terms could be useful for the operationalization of “hybridity” and ask whether they should be included in that operationalization.

¹¹² Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 19–20.

¹¹³ “Verbindungen, Raum, Zeit, Akteure, Strukturen und Transit.” Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 31.

¹¹⁴ “Globale Verbindungen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 16.

Connections

Wenzlhuemer advances the idea that “connections” are not only defined by their start and their end points but that they “are” in their own right. He suggests that they always exist in the plural and interact in many ways with each other. He identifies “bundles of connections”¹¹⁵ as the clusters in which several local and global connections interact. Based on these bundles, anything can be identified as “local” or “global.” “Connections,” for Wenzlhuemer, are supplemented with “non-connections” which allow the opening of spaces for possibilities that are not actually realized. The interplay between these connections and non-connections is central to the approach Wenzlhuemer takes. A connection is never separated but is rather embedded in manifold other connections and references in an interplay with non-connections. This “bundle of connections” opens up spaces of possibilities and connects different temporalities.¹¹⁶ On his view, these connections connect different “spaces” and “times” (see below). As a term for the interplay of discursive fields in the global colonial discourse, “connections” offers an interesting tool for describing how discourses become entangled. The term (and its parallel “non-connections”¹¹⁷) will thus be used in the following to talk about these entanglements. The connections are structurally similar to the “relations” but they differ in that “relations” are situated on the textual level and understood in the present book as being the result of “hybridization processes” while “connections,” by contrast, are conceptualized as being the preconditions for encounters.

Space

Combining his idea of connections with a fluid concept of space allows Wenzlhuemer to argue that each connection has (or creates) its own “space.” As connections change and multiply, so “spaces” change and multiply as well. On this analysis, actors are involved in multiple “spaces” as they are connected to a multitude of other actors and objects. In this respect, not every “space” is similarly connected but different “spaces” change at different speeds and therefore actors are simultaneously involved in more and less rapid changes. Wenzlhuemer uses the idea of “space” as a catch-all term that subsumes such diverse categories as communication, knowledge, media, geography, etc. It can be read as an umbrella term for the idea of the “bundle of connections” that opens a “space” for multiple

115 “Verbindungsbündel”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 40.

116 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 33–78.

117 “Nicht-Verbindungen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 63.

purposes. While it seems to be a useful term for locating “hybridization” processes, it requires further concretization. In the following, “space” will be used in two ways, either to “describe” media in which “hybridization” takes place or to describe “geographical” regions as the loci of several discursive fields. These fields – as will be seen in a number of examples below and as is implied in both Wenzlhuemer’s idea of connections and Bhabha’s conceptualization of the colonial discourse – are always interconnected with several other fields in the global colonial discursive continuum.

Time

Time can only be described, Wenzlhuemer maintains, by reference to its effects.¹¹⁸ Like “space,” “time” is defined socially by the attribution of meaning to it. One can only analyze, for instance, “Zeitwahrnehmung, Zeitdeutung, Zeitmessung,” but not time as such. As in the case of “space,” “time,” on Wenzlhuemer’s account, is always defined by “connections,” and when the “connections” change, time changes.¹¹⁹ “Time” can thus be understood as determined by manifold connections, some of which are “global.” Therefore global history that is concerned with global “connections” is simultaneously concerned with “time” and with changes in the perception of “time.”¹²⁰

One of the weak points in Wenzlhuemer’s approach is that he talks about “Beziehungen” instead of “Verbindungen” when he discusses “time.” “Time” and “space” thus somehow collapse into one another and are determined by “connections,” “relations,” and “correlations” that he does not seek to problematize. The metaphor of the “connection,” which is thought of as a spatial dimension, is substituted by “relation,” which is understood as a temporal dimension. But herein lies a problem, for he maintains the metaphor of a fluid relational “time” and a relatively stable “space” and this distinction does not fit with what he seeks to describe in his use of these terms.

The examples Wenzlhuemer provides in his discussions of both “space” and “time” are nevertheless still instructive. Telegraphic technology, which had achieved a “global” spread by the middle of the 19th century, did indeed connect different “spaces” and “times” and in doing so changed them. But the categories of “space” and “time” as described by Wenzlhuemer are underdetermined and

118 “Erfahrbar wird Zeit, ähnlich wie Raum, erst durch zeitliche Beziehungen, die Menschen, Dinge, Ereignisse usw. zueinander haben.” Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 112.

119 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 81–113.

120 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 114.

too vague to prove useful as analytical tools. I agree with Wenzlhuemer that the technologies he describes increased the density of connections and therefore the pace of changes in both “time” and “space.” I also agree that these changes and interconnections connected several “spaces” and “times” in “new” and “altered” ways, which influenced how they were perceived. However, it is problematic for the category of “time” as an analytical term that it remains rooted in the idea of a linear chronology. If the term is used to talk comparatively about different speeds of development, this comparison inherently implies the passing of judgments about relative “progress” and “progression” that are connected to the grand narrative of (European) “modernization.” For this reason – and also because Wenzlhuemer neither discusses nor “solves” this problem – I opt not to use this category as an analytic tool.

Actors

The “actor” is given a central position in Wenzlhuemer’s conception of “global history.” First, he defines actors as humans who have *agency* and act according to their capacities within certain boundaries.¹²¹ According to him, this allows us to understand the actor as, on the one hand, determined by circumstances while also being, on the other hand, the creator of these circumstances. On this understanding, actors are the focalization points of “connections” and “spaces,” and are “translators between spaces and/or connections.”¹²² Actors thus transfer agency onto the connections and are influenced by the changing of “spaces.” It is in terms of this interplay between actors, connections, and spaces that, according to Wenzlhuemer, a “global history” perspective should analyze “history.” He claims that “global history” should not only say that there are connections but should also explain how these connections can have an actual impact on historical events, or, to put it another way, they should explain how “connections” can have agency. Against this background, he is interested in the question of how actors act and think. He maintains that they think and act within “overlapping contexts”¹²³ and manifold “meaning correlations”¹²⁴ which they connect with each other. Actors have a “Scharnierfunktion,”¹²⁵ and this is why they bring

121 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 145.

122 “Übersetzer zwischen diesen Räumen und/oder Verbindungen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 149.

123 “Sich überlappenden Kontexten”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 176.

124 “Bedeutungszusammenhängen”. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 176. One could also use the word “connections” or “relations” here.

125 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 187.

together different “spaces,” “times,” and contexts in a given local event. In describing this “Scharnierfunktion,” one might say – in order to overcome the problem in Wenzlhuemer’s terminology – that actors “translate” connections into “relations.” This is precisely what makes Wenzlhuemer’s understanding of actors interesting for my attempt to conceptualize “encounters.”¹²⁶

Structures

The interplay between “actors” and “structures” is one of the main subjects in all the humanities. There is more than one book to be written about how “structures” and “actors” interact, but here we are only interested in Wenzlhuemer’s proposal insofar as it leads to a better understanding of encounters. His overarching point is that there are complex interplays between actors and structures. This idea allows one to think of encounters as a kind of interplay from which unpredictable effects can emerge. Wenzlhuemer explains that structures either manifest in infrastructures or as sociocultural and socioeconomical ways of “thinking” or “doing.” Wenzlhuemer’s approach falls short of conceptualizing the difference between these kinds of structures. Instead, he claims that infrastructures can be analyzed as being “representative of structures in general.”¹²⁷ This claim seems to downplay important differences between “structures” and “infrastructures.” However, what is persuasive about his understanding of structures is that he conceives them as being dependent on actors. On his view, structures can only have agency because of the agency invested in them by actors. This makes them dependent on the actors who invest agency into them while at the same time they also transcend any given particular individual because the structure includes and connects many different people. From this perspective, structures also have an overarching agency which might have a number of possible effects, both locally and globally, that were not anticipated by the actors involved in the creation of this agency. When this view is applied to global connections, structures often appear as the mediators that transmit local agency into the global context. In Wenzlhuemer’s descriptions, the structures constituted by the network of telegraphs and the global transport system of railways and seaways are structures par excellence.¹²⁸

126 Although Wenzlhuemer draws from the “actor-network theory” (see below), which would have to be considered separately to be properly evaluated and operationalized for this book, his idea of actors provides an important addition to the operationalization of “hybridity.”

127 “Stellvertretend für Strukturen im Allgemeinen.” Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 149–92.

128 Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 217–20.

The category of “structure” resists incorporation into the operationalization of “hybridity.” On Bhabha’s view, the “act of speaking” is the locus of agency, but this is hard to reconcile with Wenzlhuemer’s idea of “structures,” an idea that is deeply rooted in the “actor-network theory.” The transfer of agency points to the relative independence of structures from the individual actor and presents structures as being relatively stable.¹²⁹ It would make sense to include “structures” as the institutions of discourse, in Foucault’s sense of the notion,¹³⁰ within the concept of “hybridization.” However, the “actor-network theory” has its own theoretical program – with all the biases and difficulties that entails – which cannot be discussed here in appropriate depth. The same is true for Foucault’s theoretical approach(es).

These points indicate the difficulties that arise from combining different theories in an eclectic way, as I have attempted to do here. When the term “structures” is used in the following – with the exception of the idea of the transfer of “structures” in the processes of “hybridization” – I usually refer to infrastructures without stressing any transfer of agency or the institutionalization of the discourse. However, one point is of crucial importance and is implied whenever I refer to “structures” in what follows: “Structures” should be understood as “mediators” which connect actors and which are, themselves, part of the “hybridization” process.

Transit

The interplay between actor and structure, and especially the transmission of agency to the (infra)structures, is based on concepts drawn from actor-network theory, the most prominent proponent of which is Bruno Latour. Building on this theoretical foundation, Wenzlhuemer claims that “connections” are not simply “intermediaries” but “mediators.” The difference is that “intermediaries” connect points but do not influence these points. “Mediators,” on the other hand, “transform, translate, distort, and modify the meaning of the elements they are supposed to carry.”¹³¹ This is the basis on which, Wenzlhuemer argues, “transit” should be analyzed more deeply. He claims that transit does not

129 Bruno Latour, “Eine Soziologie ohne Objekt? Anmerkungen zur Interobjektivität,” *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, no. 2 (2001).

130 Reiner Keller, *Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse*, 3rd ed., Interdisziplinäre Diskursforschung (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2011), 127; Michel Foucault, *Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*, Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 184 (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977).

131 Bruno Latour cited in Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 222.

simply involve a going from a starting point to an endpoint but that it is, rather, a phase of transition in which actors, connections, structures, and, therefore, times and spaces are interconnected. In Wenzlhuemer's formulation, "transit" is closely linked to material forms of transit. He uses the examples of the transit of people in trains and on ships.¹³² Transit from England to India, for example, took at least three to four weeks. During the transit, a ship was both a kind of closed space yet at the same time embedded within manifold global and local connections of varying strength through its radio telegraph (although this was frequently unreliable and often did not work), the shipping company (structures) to which it belonged, and the people on board (actors). Worldwide radio connections were only established at the beginning of the 20th century. The main point is that all sorts of transit that are induced by encounters have their own temporal and spatial dimensions in which multifaceted "connections" and "relations" are at play.¹³³ This idea of "transit" is of great interest for the argument developed in this book because it stresses the transformative character of, and the multiple interconnections and influences which take place in, these transits. Nonetheless, Wenzlhuemer's focus on the means of transportation and the transitional character of these means falls outside the scope of this book.

4.5 The Notion of the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum

Discourses are not closed or fixed but are potentially interconnected with one another. This is what is connoted by the formulation "global colonial discursive continuum." This continuum is understood by me as being constituted by numerous local discursive fields that are connected to each other by what Wenzlhuemer calls "connections," that is, what establishes these local fields as simultaneously "global." The "discursive fields" are – as is implied in both Wenzlhuemer's idea of connections and Bhabha's conceptualization of the colonial discourse – understood as being interconnected, potentially at least, to

¹³² It would be interesting to follow this idea in connection with Annie Besant's manifold steamship and train journeys around the globe. I think that it would explain at least one thing: the immense literary output of Annie Besant. Traveling in the 19th century meant sometimes traveling for weeks at a time, which would one allow to work intensively. But this was also a time during which one would have had the opportunity to meet new people and talk to them. In Annie Besant's case, it can be assumed that she met many important people and political allies on trains and ships. A detailed study of this "connection" must, however, remain a research desideratum for the time being.

¹³³ Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 223–54.

all other fields (although geographical, and thematic, proximity increases the chance that the connections will actually be realized). Connections may be realized in encounters, whether these are encounters between actors or encounters between an actor and a text.

Wenzlhuemer's considerations help us to conceptualize these encounters as moments of contact between actors that take place in certain structures while diverse discursive fields become connected in the global colonial discursive continuum. The "global colonial discursive continuum" is understood as an abstract concept which includes all possible discourses in the colonial period at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. Numerous discursive fields are brought into relation in these encounters because actors usually belong to several discursive fields. The "actors" in these "fields" can be understood as the translators of "connections" into "relations" as they partake in the discourse and repeat certain "elements" or "structures" in diverse acts of speaking which are then "hybridized." A "field of encounters" is also understood as part of that global colonial discursive continuum, within which it constitutes a single discursive field that became connected to several others by the encounters that took place therein.

4.6 Proposal for a Systematization of "Hybridity"

My use of the word "encounters" here comes close to Wenzlhuemer's idea of "transit." I understand encounters as "episodes of mediation," in the sense that in an encounter several discursive fields become connected through contexts, actors, and structures. As I work on a textual level, I understand texts as the results of encounters in which manifold discursive fields were connected and placed into relationships with one another. This is what makes them "hybrid." Actors can encounter text as "already hybrids" which have their own agency in the sense that actors have transferred agency to them. Wenzlhuemer's considerations help us to conceptualize these encounters as moments of contact between actors that take place in certain structures while diverse discursive fields become connected in the global colonial discursive continuum. The "global colonial discursive continuum" is understood as an abstract concept which includes all possible discourses in the colonial period at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. This continuum is understood as being constituted by numerous local discursive fields that are connected to each other by what Wenzlhuemer calls "connections," that is, what establishes them as "global" simultaneously. Within the local discursive fields – "local" in the sense that actors have to be located in contexts – several actors can encounter each other. These encounters

take place in numerous structures which work as intermediators between the actors. Numerous discursive fields are brought into relation in these encounters because actors usually belong to several discursive fields. The actors in these fields can, as described above, be understood as the translators of connections into relations as they partake in the discourse and repeat certain elements or structures in diverse acts of speaking which are then “hybridized.” Understanding actors as temporal focalization points of “hybridization processes” allows the conceptualization of texts as manifestations of these temporal focalizations.

Using the terminology summarized below to describe the “relations” and the “hybridization processes” to which they refer will allow a more detailed picture of these processes to emerge. The table included here is the endpoint of an abductive process between the theoretical framework of this book and the sources analyzed using this framework. The analysis at times demanded an adjustment of the tool.

Table 2: Parts of “hybridization”. By the author.

Parts of “hybridization”	Terminology
1. Processes of “hybridization”	I. Translation II. De- and recontextualization III. Tradition IV. Relationalization
2. Movement	I. To transfer (most general) II. To translate (from one linguistic system to another) III. To de- and recontextualize (in the same linguistic system) IV. To repeat (result of the hybridization process)
3. Already Hybrids	I. Element(s) II. Structure(s)
4. Abstract “spaces” of encounters Impart agents of encounters with power and authority. Shape the actual “spaces” of encounters according to the institutionalized discourses	I. Discursive fields which are potentially interconnected in the “global colonial discursive continuum” II. Connections describe the realized “potential connections”
5. Actual “spaces” encounters Are not neutral as they can be understood as “institutionalized” discourses	I. Context(s) (cities, towns etc.) II. Medium(s) (journals, newspapers, magazines etc.) III. Structures (e.g., the Theosophical Society)

Table 2 (continued)

Parts of “hybridization”	Terminology
6. Encounter	I. Contact (precondition) II. Interaction
7. Agents of encounters Are not neutral because they occupy certain positions of power due to their institutionalized and/or charismatic authority	I. Actors II. Texts
8. Traces (often hegemonic attempts to close the discourse)	I. Multifaceted relationizings on the structure and the element-level and between structures and elements (cf. Table 1). II. References III. Structures and/or elements IV. Transliterated and/or translated words
9. Results	I. Relations II. In-betweens

II The Theosophical Society in the “Indian Middle Class,” (Theosophical) Evolutionism, and the Narrative of the Theosophical Masters: Three Essential Contexts

This section builds towards a discussion of Annie Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution.” I argue that this concept emerged in a discursive field that was shaped to a great extent by encounters between non-Indian Theosophists and Indians, both those who belonged to the Theosophical Society and those who did not. When the Theosophists came to India, they formed numerous links with the Indian intelligentsia. In Chapter 5, the totality of this milieu, including the non-Indian Theosophists, is understood as a field of encounters that I will call the “Indian Middle Class,” a field that comprehends the group of individuals labeled collectively as the (lowercase) “Indian middle class.” The “Quickening of Evolution” is based on the idea that evolution can be influenced by human beings. Theosophical evolutionism was part of a wider discourse on evolution in Europe and India, as will be highlighted in Chapter 6. The Theosophists’ engagement with India, as well as their ideas about evolution, cannot be understood without considering the Theosophical master narrative and the wider discourse in which this narrative was embedded (see Chapter 7).

5 The Indian Middle Class as a Field of Colonial Encounters

The “Indian middle class” is often described as the cradle of a pan-Indian nationalism and independence.¹ However, there is no linear development from the formation of an “Indian middle class” to the development of a pan-Indian nationalism and the resulting independence. Rather, we find a long process of establishing, altering, and reestablishing relations in numerous encounters in ongoing processes of hybridization. The Theosophical Society provided an important platform for these processes. To begin with, we can note that Theosophists were instrumental in the establishment of the Indian National Congress. Allan Octavian Hume (1829–1912), a retired British officer of the Indian Civil Service in contact with Viceroy Lord Rippon and also his successor Viceroy Lord Dufferin,² was pivotal in the founding of the Indian National Congress. Hume joined the Theosophical Society in 1880, two years before he retired to Shimla where he became the president of the Shimla branch.³ He and Alfred Percy Sinnett (1840–1921) both lived at Shimla, where Blavatsky and Olcott visited them in 1880.⁴ In 1865, Shimla had become the official summer capital of the British administration when John Lawrence, the Viceroy at the time, moved there to escape the heat that was characteristic of most of the subcontinent. As Metcalf and Metcalf argue, “hill stations” such as Shimla were part of an unofficial system of racial differentiation in colonial India. Just as urban centers were divided into an “old city” and a European quarter, so the Europeans marked themselves off from the “common Indians” when they fled the hot summer

1 Kenneth W. Jones and Gordon Johnson, *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*, The New Cambridge History of India 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184–209; Thomas R. Metcalf, *Ideologies of the Raj*, The New Cambridge History of India 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 222–34; Sanjay Joshi, “Introduction,” in Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, xv.

2 Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 81–82.

3 For information on Hume, see Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 81–82; Mark Bevir, “Theosophy and the Origins of the Indian National Congress,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 7, 1–3 (2003): 102.

4 Godwin, “Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy,” 23.

months to take refuge in the mountains, or even returned to England.⁵ As Nethercot tells us, Besant herself usually spent her Indian summers in England.⁶

At Shimla, Blavatsky performed two of her “miracles”: the “cup-and-saucer incident” and the “brooch incident”, as they came to be known, both of which were crucial in encouraging Hume and Sinnett to join the Theosophical Society.⁷ Hume’s membership of the Theosophical Society was relatively brief, lasting just three years until he left in 1883. Although he never doubted the existence of the Mahatmas, his criticism of Blavatsky ultimately led him to resign.⁸ Hume went on to become an important contributor to the formation of a pan-Indian society. The first meeting of the Indian National Union took place in December 1885, during which it was immediately renamed the Indian National Congress.⁹ Hume’s involvement was initiated by the Theosophical masters, who allegedly informed him about the dangers India was facing and told him that he should get involved in Indian politics for the sake of the Indian people.¹⁰ In 1917 Annie Besant became the president of the Indian National Congress. All these nation-building engagements on the part of Theosophists were pursued in close association with Indian Theosophists and non-Theosophists, most of them members of the Indian middle class.¹¹ The Theosophical Society provided organizational structures, such

5 Barbara D. Metcalf, Thomas R. Metcalf and Barbara Daly Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 3rd ed., Cambridge Concise Histories (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 110–11.

6 Arthur Hobart Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 2 vols. 2 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 70.

7 Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 81–82 The cup and the saucer are part of the exhibition at the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar.

8 For a thorough discussion of the argument between Blavatsky and Hume, see Ulrich Harlass, “Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft: Eine Untersuchung der theosophischen Lehrentwicklungen in der Zeit zwischen den Hauptwerken Alfred Percy Sinnetts” (Inauguraldissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde, Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Heidelberg, 07.08.2019), 119–21.

9 Bevir, “Theosophy and the Origins of the Indian National Congress,” 111.

10 Bevir, “Theosophy and the Origins of the Indian National Congress,” 110.

11 For a discussion of the Theosophical influence on the formation of the Indian National Congress, see, besides Campbell and Bevir, also Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 247–84. For Besant’s political engagement in India, see Muriel Pécastaing-Boissière and Marie Terrier, *Annie Besant: Weisheit und Wissenschaft*, Deutsche Ausgabe, 1. Auflage (Grafing: Aquamarin Verlag, 2017), Die Biographie, 263–311; Anne Taylor, *Annie Besant: A Biography* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 277–326; Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 213–306. Although the three biographies provide ample details and numerous dates and documents, they lack an analysis of the development of Besant’s Theosophy. This remains a research desideratum, although one that is partly realized by Wessinger; see Catherine Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, Studies in Women and Religion 26

as journals and magazines, infrastructure for meetings and housing, and education for both Indian and non-Indian Theosophists, and also for non-members who frequented the society's facilities or read its publications. The mutual engagement between Indians and non-Indians is documented in the wide range of topics discussed in the multitude of Theosophical journals and in the diverse subjects taught at Theosophical schools.



Figure 1: Besant lecturing in front of a large crowd in Bombay. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Mumbai, not dated. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre).

Just three years after the foundation of the Theosophical Society, Olcott and Blavatsky moved to India. When they arrived in Bombay, Olcott fell to his knees and kissed the ground in a display of reverence. Soon after, he began to hold lectures around India on a variety of themes. One of the major topics on which he spoke was the revitalization of Sanskrit and India's position as the

(Lewiston N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1988), 209–62. For the connection between Gandhi and Besant and their eventual falling out, see also Bergunder, “Gandhi, Esoterik und das Christentum” and Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth.”

“cradle of humanity.” The giving of public lectures was one of the most important factors in the dissemination of Theosophical ideas. Besant was regarded as one of the most gifted orators of her time,¹² and her lectures drew large crowds in countries such as the United Kingdom, the U.S., and Australia, and sometimes reached as many as several thousand people in India (Figure 1).¹³ Many of these lectures were later published in printed editions and it should be no surprise that many of the sources used for the present book are verbatim records of lectures given by eminent Theosophists.

Just as important as the lectures given by prominent Theosophists were the journals published by the Society. The most important of these, *The Theosophist*, was first published in October 1879.¹⁴ When Olcott and Blavatsky arrived in India, interest in their Theosophical Society arose primarily among the English-educated Indian middle class, but many British residents of South Asia also found the ideas stimulating, and interest in the Theosophical Society increased in the wider world as well. As a result, Blavatsky and Olcott were flooded with letters from around the globe. At the same time as these increased demands on their time and attention, they were confronted with financial problems arising from misjudged investments. The publication of a widely read popular journal offered a means of ameliorating both the problem of an unmanageable flood of letters and that of a lack of income.¹⁵ As Prothero notes, the outspokenly anti-missionary attitude of Blavatsky and Olcott and the “*Theosophist’s* mix of East and West, primitivism and science, esotericism and freethought hit the mark, at least among its target audience of India’s English-speaking anti-missionary-yet-vaguely-pro-Western middle class.”¹⁶ Campbell argues along similar lines that the founders’ sympathy towards “Hinduism” and Buddhism, and their admiration of India’s ancient past, was appealing for members of the “Indian middle class.”¹⁷ With a publication run of more than 600 copies after only three months, the sales of *The Theosophist* were profitable within just six months of its initial publication, a respectably high number for the time.

The Theosophical Society’s journal was favorably reviewed in several of India’s papers and less favorably in a number of missionary journals, which

12 Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 166.

13 Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 16.

14 Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 78–79.

15 Stephen R. Prothero, *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*, Religion in North America (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 81.

16 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 83.

17 Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 79.

latter boosted its popularity rather than diminishing it.¹⁸ The success of the journal was also founded on it providing a medium for South Asians to publish their own articles. As will be discussed in Chapter 10.6, numerous South Asian authors published their work in *The Theosophist*, and these pieces were not necessarily confined to “Theosophical” topics. This is especially true in the case of proponents of Vedānta such as Rama Misra Shastree, who could publish in a journal with a relatively large readership in order to argue his case in a debate which, initially at least, had nothing to do with Theosophy (see Chapter 10.5). As such, the journal belonged to the wider public sphere and provided the possibility for numerous encounters.

The Theosophist was only one of many Theosophically aligned journals that were published all around the world. It may well have been the most influential, and some of the others were only very short lived, but many achieved significant followings of their own and some continue to be published today, as does, for example, *The Indian Theosophist*. Morrisson holds that these periodicals served at least three purposes: 1) to spread Theosophical ideas, 2) to provide support for the emerging institution, both financially and in terms of the growth of its membership, and 3) to assist in legitimizing Theosophical ideas beyond the membership and out into the wider society by paralleling scholarly journals.¹⁹ In achieving these three goals, the importance of the Theosophical journals cannot be overestimated.

Besant’s endeavors as a publicist were most important both for spreading her Theosophical ideas and also for promoting her political and educational goals. Already in her pre-Theosophical career, she had successively engaged in writing for numerous journals and then editing and publishing periodicals, including *Our Corner*, *The Link*, and *National Reformer*.²⁰ She continued to do so when she joined the Theosophical Society. She wrote copiously in several Theosophical journals, including *The Theosophist* and *Lucifer*, both of which she would later edit. She also founded new journals, such as the weekly *Central Hindu College Magazine* and the daily *New India*.²¹ The importance of these

18 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 83; Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 79.

19 Mark S. Morrisson, “The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity and Counter-Public Spheres,” *Journal of Modern Literature* 31, no. 2 (2007): 4.

20 Arthur Hobart Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, 2 vols. 1 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961), 80–88, 198–211, 263–275. For a discussion of some of the contents of *Our Corner* and *National Reformer*, see also Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 173–220. For a discussion of *The Link*, see also Pécastaing-Boissière and Terrier, *Annie Besant*, 194–96.

21 There is little information on these journals. On *New India*, see e.g. Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 300–321. On *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, see Chapter 13 and Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 68–69.

periodicals for the spread of Theosophical ideas and the growth of the Theosophical Society is generally accepted in the literature.²² Nevertheless, with the exception of some research on German Theosophical journals and the journals of the Anthropologische Gesellschaft,²³ a systematic overview of the Theosophical journals, in part and in whole, remains a research desideratum, as does a thorough analysis of the vast corpus of material contained in these publications.

The other essential element in the dissemination of Theosophical ideas was the educational institutions run by the Theosophical Society. The history of the spread of this school system, as well as its extent, are still uncharted. In the following I will provide a short overview of that school system and point to its importance as a means for the spread of Theosophy in South Asia and beyond. As an example of this system, the Central Hindu College is discussed in more detail in Chapter 13.

When Olcott and Blavatsky first travelled to Ceylon in 1880 they found that there was a well-functioning educational system sponsored by the government. It was, however, irritating for them that almost all of these institutions were non-Buddhist schools. While this did not mean that Buddhists were unable to attend the schools, it was the Christian religion that was taught rather than Buddhism, and the language of instruction was usually English.²⁴ Notwithstanding that Olcott's campaigns on the island must be understood in light of Buddhist revival on Ceylon it is not the scope to discuss that context here. I will, thus, confine myself to a brief contextualization of the situation, focusing on the establishment of a Theosophical Buddhist Society and on the foundation of numerous (Theosophical) Buddhist schools on the island.

Theravāda Buddhism on Ceylon and the Sangha there were closely interlinked with the kingly dynasties. As in other Buddhist traditions, the Sangha consisted for the most part of ordained monks and nuns. However, their influence had been in decline for centuries since the arrival of the Portuguese at the beginning of the sixteenth century. In the middle of the eighteenth century, a revival was initiated that led to the reintroduction from Thailand of higher

22 E.g. Morrisson, "The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival".

23 Götz Deimann and Norbert Deuchert, eds., *Die anthroposophischen Zeitschriften von 1903 bis 1985: Bibliographie und Lebensbilder*, Beiträge und Quellen zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung und Gesellschaft (Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1987); Helmut Zander, "Theosophische Zeitschriften in Deutschland bis 1945," in *Aufbrüche – Seitenpfade – Abwege: Suchbewegungen und Subkulturen im 20. Jahrhundert; Festschrift für Ulrich Linse*, ed. Judith Baumgartner and Bernd Wedemeyer-Kolwe (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004) Both of these publications are, however, of only limited relevance for the present book.

24 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 86.

ordination to the Ceylonese Sangha, by which one took on the status of a fully ordained monk or nun. This revival was a project of the elites and culminated in the Sangha's refusal to ordain anyone who did not belong to the highest caste. The fisher caste, which by this time had gained a great deal of influence and wealth due to centuries of foreign trade which had largely confined itself to the shores and port stations of Ceylon, responded by seeking alternative venues for higher ordination, which they ultimately found in Burma. After their ordination, members of this caste formed a counterweight to the traditional Ceylonese Sangha through the foundation of the Amarapura Nikāya. This fraternity was acknowledged by the British administration. In turn, the traditional Sangha in the Kandy region tried to come to an agreement with the British to secure their own status. An agreement was initially established which aimed to secure the status of the Sangha, but this agreement was undermined by changing views in the British administration which led to a decline in the status of the traditional Ceylonese Sangha.²⁵

Christian missionaries such as Spence Hardy (see Chapter 9.3) did their part to discredit traditional Buddhist learning and to establish Christian missionary schools. English education and Christian baptism became compulsory for anyone who wished to receive a government position. In the mid-nineteenth century, the Buddhists of Ceylon began to react to this incipient Christian dominance by entering into a debate with the Christian missionaries, both in print and in public lectures and discussions. The best known of these public debates was that which took place in 1873 in Pānadura, a little to the south of Colombo. The event extended over two days, and the debate was later printed in book form. A copy of this book found its way into Olcott's possession.²⁶

Immediately after his arrival in Ceylon, Olcott set out on a lecture tour during which he discussed his ideas on Buddhism, presenting Buddha as a great social and religious reformer, and championing a view of a "purified" Buddhism. Buddhism, he argued, should be restored to its ancient greatness by cleansing it of the degenerative elements that corrupted its present state. As Campbell argues, the Theosophists were warmly welcomed in Ceylon because they were seen as "Westerners" who would support the cause of the Buddhist

²⁵ Richard Francis Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 157–58.

²⁶ For a comprehensive presentation of that Buddhist revival in association with what Gombrich associates with "Protestant Buddhism," which is closely linked to Olcott's campaigns and the Anagarika Dharmapala, see Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism*, 172–92.

revival. This picture of the “Western” champions of Buddhism was staged by Olcott and Blavatsky through their formal “conversion” to Buddhism.²⁷ Olcott lectured copiously in a number of places, including Kandy and Colombo. On his first tour, he established no fewer than eight branches of the newly founded Buddhist Theosophical Society. Of these eight branches, seven were established as lay branches and only one as a monastic branch.²⁸ The idea of a laity was a novelty in Ceylon, and it was on the basis of this novelty that the Buddhist Theosophical Societies built their influence.²⁹ While traveling through Ceylon in 1880, the pair founded several schools which were directly affiliated to the Buddhist Theosophical Societies. These schools not only drew in Buddhists, but also many Christian students. By the time Olcott and Blavatsky returned to India after their first tour, the Theosophical founders had left a decisive mark on Ceylon. While they were in Ceylon, they had been introduced to several important lay people as well as to some notable monks, most importantly Hikkaduve Sumangala, who became an important supporter of Olcott. Several other trips to Ceylon followed and numerous schools and branches of the Buddhist Theosophical Society were opened. Olcott also spent a considerable amount of his time in Ceylon lecturing on and practicing Mesmerist healing, among other things.³⁰

The establishment of the schools alone might not, by itself, indicate that they were also intended to be institutions that aimed at the dissemination of Theosophical ideas. However, Olcott’s *Buddhist Catechism*, first published in 1881, illustrates well that he saw himself not merely as a student but rather as a teacher of Buddhism. The *Catechism* was published in both English and Sinhalese.³¹ It initiated a tradition of catechisms published by the Theosophical Society, such as the *Sanâtana Dharma Catechism*, published twenty-two years later for use in the Central Hindu College (see Chapter 13). As Brettfield and Zander show, the *Catechism* itself should be understood as a work which was, although authored by Olcott, much influenced by Hikkaduve, especially with regard to the question of “Individuality” and its relation to “Nirvana.” Brettfield and Zander also document some of the changes in the *Catechism* that took place across its numerous editions, illustrating a process of continuous alterations in Olcott’s

27 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 96; Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 83; Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism*, 185.

28 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 96–97.

29 Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism*, 186.

30 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 96–113.

31 Sven Brettfield and Helmut Zander, “Henry Steel Olcott: The Buddhist Catechism (India, 1881/1908),” in *Religious Dynamics Under the Impact of Imperialism and Colonialism: A Sourcebook*, ed. Björn Bentlage et al., Numen Book Series volume 154 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), 473.

position as it evolved through multifaceted encounters with “Buddhism.”³² In this respect, Olcott’s *Catechism* can be understood, in terms of the analytical tool developed in this book, as a “hybrid” book. However, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to analyze the “hybridizations processes” that informed the production of Olcott’s work. Apart from Brettfeld and Zander’s pioneering article, there have been no scholarly analyses of either the *Catechism* or the Buddhist schools of Ceylon. The Theosophical school system on Ceylon thus remains a research gap for future scholars to fill.

As for the other Theosophical schools, there is even less research available. What little information there is on the schools is to be found in general works on the history of the Theosophical Society, so thorough studies of the various aspects of Theosophical education remain research desiderata. Some investigation has been carried out on the Steiner schools, mainly those in Germany,³³ and there has been a little research on the Point Loma Theosophical schools and universities founded by Kathrine Tingley.³⁴ Lawson, meanwhile, has discussed the connections between Spiritualist and Theosophical education, but without providing any wider contextualization.³⁵

The year 1894 marked an important development in Theosophical education. Olcott founded the first schools for the “Panchamas,” as he called the untouchables of the Hindu caste system. The Olcott Free School was the first such school to be opened in Madras, with the aim of providing a technical education to its students. This pioneering institution received a great deal of contemporary attention and even gained support from the governor of Madras. As a result, numerous other such schools were opened. These schools were administered by Sarah E. Palmer and N. Almee Courtwright, two American women who were educational reformers with experience of working in underprivileged areas of the U.S. As Prothero argues, these schools were not meant to provide an education that would lead on to higher academic degrees but were intended, rather, to prepare the pupils for labor that would secure their daily needs.³⁶

Olcott had another idea in mind for the Indian middle class. In 1894 he founded the Hindu Boys’ Association, an association not unlike the YMCA. It

32 Brettfeld and Zander, “Henry Steel Olcott.”

33 See Helmut Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 1357–1455.

34 Tim Rudbøg, “Point Loma, Theosophy, and Kathrine Tingley,” in Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 61–66.

35 Max Lawson, “Theosophy and Education: From Spiritualism to Theosophy,” *Theosophical History* IV, no. 3 (1992).

36 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 136–39; Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 114.

had a magazine, the *Arya Bala Bodhini*, which was printed in English and which later became *The Central Hindu College Magazine*. Among the numerous topics it addressed, the *Arya Bala Bodhini* promoted English dress for Indian schoolboys while upholding Hindu ideals. For use by Indian middle-class schoolboys, Olcott also issued another catechism, the *Dwaita Catechism*.³⁷ It is plausible that the Hindu Boys' Association was the model on which Besant based her ideas for the Central Hindu College.

Besant was interested in education already in her pre-Theosophical career. She was elected to the London School Board in 1888 and served as a member until 1891.³⁸ In 1896–7, while on her lecturing tour through Northern India, Besant started to collect money to support her plan to establish a Hindu school for boys (on the Central Hindu College, see Chapter 13), and later a school for girls. In the subsequent years, numerous other Theosophical schools were founded or became affiliated with the Central Hindu College.³⁹ In the current state of research, it cannot be said how many other Theosophical schools were founded in India, although an unpublished article from the Adyar archives lists more than thirty-five schools that were established by The Society for the Promotion of National Education. This society was founded in 1916 by members of the Theosophical Society and later, in 1924, merged with the Theosophical Educational Trust.⁴⁰ Besant seems to have been involved in both of these organizations but no research has been conducted on either. Theosophical education in other parts of the world remains similarly uncharted.

The necessarily incomplete overview presented above draws a picture of the Theosophical Society as a structure in South Asia. Above all, it was the Society's publications, and its journals in particular, that were most important for the spread of Theosophical thought in South Asia, as well as elsewhere. In addition, many Theosophists spent significant amounts of time lecturing on Theosophical topics. Besant, for example, lectured in numerous countries, including the U.S., many European countries, India, and Australia. Indeed, sometimes she lectured in all of the above in a single year, traveling around the globe for

37 Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 144–46.

38 For a discussion of the school board and its early female members, see Jane Martin, "Entering the Public Arena: The Female Members of the London School Board, 1870-1904," *History of Education* 22, no. 3 (1993). For some additional context and on Besant's engagement with the school board, see Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, 276–86.

39 Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 62–90.

40 Anon, *Society for the Promotion of National Education* (Adyar, unpublished). A copy of this document was handed to me on the last day of my research in the Theosophical archives in Adyar. The archivist could not give me any further information on its providence.

months by ship and train, and even, from 1924, by plane.⁴¹ Last but not least, the Theosophical schools were institutions in which Theosophical thought often formed the basis for the instruction provided, as will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 13. This structure formed an important part of the upper-case “Indian Middle Class” (see below) and initiated numerous encounters between “Westerners” and “Easterners.”

While both the Theosophical journals and the Theosophical school system remain under-researched, all these interactions collectively point towards an intense engagement in this field of encounters by a significant number of Theosophists. When considered in this context, the Theosophical Society can be understood as a *intermediating* structure which connected the English Society (Shimla) and the Indian middle class (Indian Theosophists), and also, at the same time, as an mediating structure that influenced and altered the field of encounters in which these connections took place.⁴² I argue that although evolutionist claims and attempts to establish an orthodox authority (e.g., the Blavatsky-Row argument, see Chapter 12.8) were common in the Theosophical Society, its Indian members exerted great influence, not only in the society itself but also in the “Indian middle class.”

The “Indian middle class” defined itself – and was repeatedly defined by others – by a differentiation from other “classes,” especially the lower classes, and by comparison to “the Western middle class.” As Joshi rightly points out, the middle class was never constituted by a homogeneous group of people. Regional, religious, and social differences within what became known as “the middle class” were much more significant than the later narrative would have it. I do not, thus, attempt to provide an essentialist picture of “the Indian middle class” in what follows but, rather, to map out what is understood in this book as a “field of encounters.” This field has several dimensions. First, the middle class is understood as consisting of actors who were able to encounter one another in a variety of ways (see 5.2.3). Secondly, it is understood as a network of literary production that was responsible for the publication of journals, magazines, and newspapers, as well as for writing pamphlets, giving public presentations, and so on. These media enabled encounters between actors that bridged spatial and temporal limitations (see 5.2.4). Thirdly, this field of encounters is understood as part of the global colonial discursive continuum, within which it constitutes a single discursive field that was potentially connected to all others. “Indian” here connotes a

⁴¹ Pécastaing-Boissière and Terrier, *Annie Besant*, 239–40.

⁴² Significant as it was, the Theosophical Society was not the only such structure, as is illustrated by the example of Rajendralal Mitra, who was a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and its first Indian president (see Chapter 10).

geographical localization and not a localization that is ethical or nationalist. Indian and non-Indian actors alike engaged in this field of encounters (see 5.2.5).

5.1 Why a “Field of Colonial Encounters”?

The “middle class,” which gradually started to adopt this label from the middle of the 19th century onwards, grew not merely in numbers but also in confidence during this period. Ideas associated with “Western” middle class identities were adopted by members who saw themselves increasingly as “champions of enlightenment, freedom, and progress, as well as the crusaders against superstition.”⁴³ These were characteristics and values the colonialists attributed to themselves and used to legitimize the colonization of India in the first place. The repetition of these topoi in the “Indian middle class” can be read in terms of the textual manifestation of relations between the colonizers and colonized. In Bhabha’s words, the middle class pursued a strategy of “mimicry.”⁴⁴ This hybridization process went back and forth between colonizer and colonized, and also between groups of Indians themselves, as the example of Ghosh illustrates (see the discussion below). Joshi argues that the anxiety of inauthenticity was one of the key features of the contemporary discourse on middle-class identity. This would fit well with Bhabha’s concepts of the “in-between” and “mimicry,” a fit that is unsurprising given that Bhabha developed his theory specifically with this “middle” or “in-between” class in mind.⁴⁵

⁴³ Joshi, “Introduction,” xxi–xxiii.

⁴⁴ Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 123.

⁴⁵ Huddart, *Homi K. Bhabha*, 61 Here we “encounter” an inescapable problem of historical research and theory building. If we look at the “Indian middle class” in particular, we see “in-betweenness” everywhere. However, in identifying this characteristic we risk falling into a tautological circle, for the subject matter we seek to analyze using these theoretical constructs is the same material from consideration of which Bhabha developed the constructs. It is no surprise, then, that we should find “in-betweenness” in the source material for the concept of “the in-between.”

5.2 The Emergence of the Indian Middle Class: Historical Background

Traditional approaches – especially those of the Cambridge school of historians, but also approaches pursued by Indian historians – have conceptualized the “middle class” in India as a product of British education and an incomplete copy of the “real” middle class in the “West.”⁴⁶ At the beginning of the British engagement in India through the medium of the East India Company, the company’s officers were in need of allies who could secure their trade interests. During the decades that followed, the Company established a diversified system of direct and indirect rule based on close cooperation with locals. Hindu rulers were established in what Susan Bayly calls “sponsored ‘Hindu’ realms,”⁴⁷ with the “new” rulers in many cases being recruited from the kshatriya caste in order to provide a counterweight to brahmin influence. The legitimization of the “restoration” of the “old” regimes was provided by a massive publication of literature that communicated “Hindu” values. As a result, these texts were popularized and became known to a wider public.⁴⁸ Bayly explains that during the 18th century the officers of the East India Company set in train a process that made it politically advantageous for Indians to deploy the unifying categories of caste identities as strategies by which they could claim authority. This led to an increased consciousness of caste status in Indian society. At the same time, trade, social and economic changes, and the spread of British rule, which gradually replaced that of the Mughal Empire, together induced an increased mobility in South Asia. These changes were both supported by and fostered a denser network of knowledge exchange.⁴⁹ These interconnections between foreign rule and indigenous rulers were in no way exclusive to South Asia.⁵⁰ As Reinhard argues, the British Empire was much weaker in its ability to exercise power than the colonized suspected, something that continued to be true under the Raj once the Crown replaced the East India Company as the ruler of India.⁵¹ After 1830, the British established a new regime of government, although still under the rule of

⁴⁶ Joshi, “Introduction,” xxxii–xxxiii.

⁴⁷ Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, The New Cambridge History of India IV-3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 89.

⁴⁸ Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, 90–91.

⁴⁹ Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*, 94–95.

⁵⁰ Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, 79.

⁵¹ Wolfgang Reinhard, *Die Unterwerfung der Welt: Globalgeschichte der europäischen Expansion 1415–2015* (München: C. H. Beck, 2016), 774–75.

the East India Company. “Britishness,” and especially the claim of the racial and cultural superiority of the English gentleman, became the leitmotif of this rule. These developments went hand in hand with increased educational endeavors – often provided by the missionaries who were allowed to establish themselves in India only after 1813 – and cultural exports in the fields of sports, the arts, architecture, and, of course, foods and drink. These cultural imports and the establishment of governmental structures, and probably also the claim of racial and cultural superiority, were among the many factors that contributed to the eruption in 1857 of what was termed “the Munity.” This tumultuous event had long-lasting consequences for British rule in India, not least because it led in 1858 to the replacement of Company rule with direct rule by the British crown. The integration of India into the empire reached a new level in 1876 when Queen Victoria adopted the title of Empress of India. While the East India Company had already based their rule on their relationships with Indian collaborators, after the Mutiny the British government sought to establish a closer collaboration with an Indian elite that would secure their hegemony.⁵² Introduced by Thomas Babington Macaulay, the British school system in India aimed at the creation of this Indian elite. In 1857, shortly before the Munity, the first three universities were established in India with the goal of educating this elite and making them “loyal servants.”⁵³ These developments had a great impact on Indian society and contributed significantly to the emergence of an Indian middle class.

Several authors have contested this chronological narrative. Christopher Bayly, for example, argues that prior to British rule India had a “public sphere” that was dominated by what he terms the “north Indian ecumene.” In his view, this was a group of well-educated influential Hindu literati, Muslim notables, and state officers – both Hindu and Muslim – who engaged in social, religious, and political critique long before the 19th century. Bayly thus presents the middle class under British rule not as something new but as the continuation of a pre-existing native middle class.⁵⁴ In Chatterjee’s view – his theory plainly owes a great deal to postcolonial considerations – the Indian nation-building project had to distinguish itself from the colonial narrative while simultaneously adopting the discourse practices of the colonial power. Indian nation builders, Chatterjee explains, built on the colonial structures and appropriated the discourses of

⁵² Reinhard, *Die Unterwerfung der Welt*, 778–85.

⁵³ Peter van der Veer, *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006), 6; Leah Renold, *A Hindu Education: Early Years of the Banaras Hindu University* (New Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29–31.

⁵⁴ Christopher A. Bayly, “A Pre-History of the Middle Class?,” in Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*.

reason and the institutions of law and administration while at the same time claiming superiority in the realm of spirituality. They thus translated the orientalist narrative of the spiritual “East” into their nationalist discourse. Chatterjee further explains that the notions of the “natural” and the “rural” were invoked as a counter ideal to the rationalist “West.” The middle class described by Chatterjee played a mediating role in this field by ensuring that the “natural” and “spiritual” they invoked was of a “classical” purity and devoid of degeneration, a goal that Chatterjee maintains was built on the blueprint of European classicism.⁵⁵ His description focuses on the manifold encounters between “Eastern” and “Western” ideas in the heterogeneous field of the Indian middle class. This perspective fits well with what are understood in this book as processes of hybridization, since he describes the appropriation and reformulation of discursive strategies in a constant process of negotiation in politics and the arts.

Similar topoi can also be found in the Theosophical Society. Like the middle classes, Theosophists also invoked the “spiritual” or “irrational” (Blavatsky’s miracles at Shimla) while maintaining that these powers were in fact natural and part of the ancient wisdom (Chatterjee’s classicist argument). On the other hand, Bayly’s contribution shows that these discursive strategies were built on a pre-existing foundation of “cultural entrepreneurship,” as Joshi would term it, which was itself hybrid because it emerged in the encounter with the previous rulers of India and in close contact with the Persian and Arabic languages. Taking these views into consideration, I would like to understand the “Indian middle class” not as a specific group of people but rather as a field of discourse, a field of encounters in which actors of various ethnicities could engage.

5.3 Encounters Between Individuals: Texts as Manifestations of Encounters and Established Relations

It is at the same time both unsurprising and a telling instance of hybridization that Jawaharlal Nehru’s *Discovery of India* (1889–1964, 1946) influenced much of the discourse about the Indian middle class. In this work, Nehru argued – with a strong Marxist undertone that, while common to the time and also common to the writings of several of his fellow Indians, is interesting to note given Besant’s socialist history – that the changing economic circumstances influenced the

55 Partha Chatterjee, “The Subalternity of a Nationalist Elite,” in Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*.

Indian classes and established the new middle class.⁵⁶ The text is a social critique of the capitalist exploitation of Indian workers sprinkled with a romanticizing view of the proletariat. On the other hand, Nehru also described the middle class as being in a condition that was “even more pitiful than that of the peasantry.”⁵⁷ Referring to Gandhi’s involvement in Indian politics, Nehru discussed two virtues that he understood as instrumental for Indian freedom and as remedies for the “pitiful” state in which the middle class found itself: “fearlessness and truth.”⁵⁸ These words stand out particularly strikingly in the context of the present book. “Fearlessness” (*abhaya*) was identified as a key virtue for initiation in Besant’s writings⁵⁹ and was also propounded as such in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* (see Chapter 13.4). Leading experts today translate *abhaya* as “fearlessness,”⁶⁰ as did Annie Besant⁶¹ and the translators of Gandhi’s Gujarati rendering of the *Gita*,⁶² but, as will be argued below, this rendering of *abhaya* was not canonical in the 19th century.⁶³ As for the word “truth,” similar observations can be made. “Truth” was one of the leading principles in Theosophy. The motto of the Theosophical Society is still “There is no religion higher than truth.” The argument is not that Nehru necessarily had Besant’s *Gita*, the *Sanātana Dharma Texts Books*, or the Theosophical motto in mind when he wrote about *abhaya* or *satya* (“truth”), but that his use of these terms points towards numerous relations that were established in previous hybridization processes. Both Nehru and Gandhi⁶⁴ knew Besant and knew her *Bhagavadgītā* translations. In the case of Nehru, it is also likely that he was familiar with the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*. His father was a long-standing Theosophist and young Jawaharlal was educated by Theosophists. He decided to join the Theosophical Society when he was thirteen and

56 Joshi, “Introduction,” xxx.

57 Jawaharlal Nehru, “A Class in Need of Help,” in Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 18.

58 Nehru, “A Class in Need of Help,” 20.

59 Annie Besant, *The Path of Discipleship: Four Lectures Delivered at the Twentieth Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, at Adyar, Madras, December 27, 28, 29 and 30, 1895*, 2nd ed. (London, New York, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1899), 70.

60 Angelika Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 207.

61 See Chapter 13.9.

62 Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Discourses on the Gita: Translated from the Original Gujarati*, Ahmedabad (Navajivan Trust, 1960), 62.

63 Also in the later editions, Monier-Williams does not include “fearlessness” as a standard translation. Monier Monier-Williams and Ernst Leumann, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special References to Cognate Indo-European Languages* (1964), 60.

64 For Gandhi’s connection to Theosophy and his interest in Besant’s *Gita*, see Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth”.

was initiated by Annie Besant herself.⁶⁵ Although this connection has often been discussed in research on the Theosophical Society,⁶⁶ a study that examines the connections between Theosophy and Nehru's biography remains a research desideratum. Even in the absence of such a study, Nehru's choice of terms remains an interesting case of a textual manifestation of hybridization processes and points towards the field of encounters described here.

5.4 Writing the Public Sphere: Journals, Magazines, and Public Speeches as Media for Encounters

When we talk about the Indian “middle class” in colonial India, the phrase does not usually refer to a middle stratum of society but to a “class” of mostly high-caste Hindus, as well as Muslims and Parsees, who belonged to the upper echelons of society. These individuals were often members of families that had traditionally been employed at the courts of the rulers and landlords of India. They thus possessed the necessary financial and, more importantly, educational backgrounds – which often meant being fluent in several languages, including English – to partake in India's colonial public life. As Joshi argues, the defining characteristic of the Indian middle class in pre-independence India was their “efforts of colonial entrepreneurship.”⁶⁷ By this, Joshi means that these individuals actively participated in the negotiation of values and the formation of an “Indian identity.” This activity was accompanied by the development of a public sphere, initially induced by the British but then accelerated and controlled by the Indian middle class. Many of the journals and newspapers published by members of the Indian middle class provided the backbone of the public sphere under British rule. It was through these channels that the middle class could communicate their ideas of India.⁶⁸ These structures made it possible to connect numerous actors in such a way that they could encounter each other. Theosophical journals such as *The Theosophist*, *The Indian Theosophist*, *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, and *New India* were all part of this field of

65 Jawahrlal Nehru, *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1938), 14–16; Jawahrlal Nehru, “India's Debt to Annie Besant,” in Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*.

66 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 259–60; Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 279, 296, 327; Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 76, 86, 251.; Pécastaing-Boissière and Terrier, *Annie Besant*, 280, 295, 309, 311.

67 Joshi, “Introduction,” xix.

68 Joshi, “Introduction,” xviii–xx.

encounters. Many important members of the Indian middle class, and fellows of the Theosophical Societies, including figures such as Bhagavan Das, T. Subba Row, Mohini Chatterji, and Manilal Dvivedi, published in Theosophical journals alongside “Western” Theosophists and non-Theosophists. At the same time, Theosophists frequently published in journals issued, edited, and published by non-Theosophical members of the Indian middle class. This constituted a field of encounters in which processes of hybridity could take place.

5.5 The Indian Middle Class in the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum

Some of the topoi which emerged in this field were imported from “Western” discourses on the “middle classes” and “cultural identities.” They were then translated and repeated as part of a nationalistic narrative. This can be seen, for example, in Aurobindo Ghosh’s text (1872–1950, from 1893), originally published in the *Indu Prakash*, in which he discussed whether the Indian National Congress was indeed national. He stated that the congress did not represent “the mass of the population,”⁶⁹ but rather a certain class, the middle class. In Ghosh’s article, this label stands in for an Anglicized class of Indians who are, according to him, inauthentic.⁷⁰ Here we can see two important topoi which were frequently repeated in the discourse on the “Indian middle class”: 1) the question of representation, meaning that of the popular vs. the elite; and 2) the question of authenticity, which goes hand in hand with the first question because the “elites” were often seen as inauthentic and Anglicized. The same argument about inauthenticity was also discussed by British officials. Paradigmatic of this phenomenon is a speech given by Lord Dufferin in which he described what later became known as the Indian “middle class” – a term Dufferin himself avoided in his speech for political reasons, treading a careful line between acknowledging this group while not giving them too much weight⁷¹ – as “Europeanized native gentlemen”⁷² and a “microscopic minority.”⁷³ The term “Europeanized native gentlemen” can be read

69 Aurobindo Ghosh, “A Cheap Shoddy Import,” in Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 10.

70 Joshi, “Introduction,” xxvi–xxvii; Ghosh, “A Cheap Shoddy Import.”

71 Joshi, “Introduction,” xxiv.

72 The Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, “A Microscopic Minority,” in Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 4. In the original as “the Europeanized native gentleman” in contrast to “the naked savage hillman.”

73 Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, “A Microscopic Minority,” 7.

as a claim of inauthenticity. They are “native” and not “English,” but the “Europeanization” made them “gentlemen,” although only “Europeanized” examples of such and not true “English gentlemen.” The description of this group as only a “microscopic minority” seeks to delegitimize their claim to speak for Indians more broadly. A minority, Dufferin seems to imply, apparently with the English political system in mind, cannot claim authority in a system of majority decision making. In Lord Dufferin’s speech, these topoi were employed for a reason quite distinct to that which underpinned their use in Ghosh’s text. Ghosh wanted “less Britain” and authentic Indians who would govern the “Indian nation”; Dufferin, by contrast, wanted “more Britain” and more British rule and education for the “Indian subjects.” This field of discourse can be understood in terms of a constant de- and recontextualization of hybrid positions in an ongoing process of hybridization in which new or altered relations are constantly established and reestablished.

5.6 Preliminary Conclusion: Encounters in the Indian Middle Class

It is important to note that most of this entrepreneurship was inherently masculine and upper caste, although the language of modernity employed by the “cultural entrepreneurs” tried to cover up these inherited inequalities. In addition, most of the Indian middle-class narratives are “Hindu” narratives which tend to marginalize the roles played by Muslims, Parsees, Christians, and members of other religions. However, as noted earlier, the “middle class” was heterogeneous and in this heterogeneity religious, gender, and caste identities were negotiated⁷⁴ in multifaceted processes of adaptation, adoption, and demarcation. These processes led to numerous new or altered relations. As can be seen from the few examples given above, this colonial field of encounters opened up the possibility of both Indians and non-Indians engaging in an “Indian” discourse. The possibility of encounters initiates processes of hybridization.

As discussed above, the Theosophical Society played a significant role as a structure in many ways in the colonial field of encounters and can therefore be seen as part of the Indian Middle Class. Its members were actors in this “field of encounters.” Both the Theosophical Society as a structure and its members as actors were parts of a larger discursive field which I have identified as the (up-percase) “Indian Middle Class.” However, this is only one of the “fields” in which all of these actors were involved: While encountering each other, they at the same time made connections between a multitude of other discursive fields.

74 Joshi, “Introduction,” xxxvi–xliv.

Through the connections they established in these encounters, the actors were able to bring about new relations by translating certain elements (the topoi described above) and structures (media production). As a “hybridization process,” this translation repeated these “elements” and “structures” while simultaneously altering them. When thinking of the translation and repetition of the rationalist, classicist, and orientalist topoi described above, we can understand them as being brought into a) harmonizing and b) hierarchizing relations.⁷⁵

75 Two issues must be noted. 1) It is difficult to separate what I describe using the category of “movement” (see Chapter 4.6, “Systematization of Hybridization”) from what I describe using the category of “processes of hybridization.” For example, in the case of “translation,” “to translate” and “translation” imply, respectively, the “process of hybridization” and the “movement” of the elements that are subject to the “translation.” Hence, the whole process is implied when describing “movement” with the verb “to translate.” Likewise, when using “to repeat” as a verb for “movement,” Bhabha’s ideas of “mimicry” and “hybridization” in general are always simultaneously implied because “repetition” is key to his concept. 2) It is also difficult to maintain the differentiation between the levels of “structure” and “element.” This is not only because the terms for relationizing may apply at both levels, but also because the term “structure(s)” has been used in a different way above. I will return to these issues at the end of Chapter 8.

6 Theosophical Evolutionism, or the Narrative of Progress

This chapter will discuss the ideas of “evolution” and “progress,” providing a part of the necessary context for the consideration in Chapter 8 of Annie Besant’s ideas about the “Quickening of Evolution.” This chapter will illustrate that, as is the case with all other topics, there are no closed discursive fields in the discourse on evolutionism. Rather, these fields were connected to each other at a global level, as is illustrated by the uptake of evolutionism in India that will be discussed in sections 1.8 and, especially, 1.9, below.

6.1 Historicism, Evolution, and the Idea of Progression in-between Darwin and Theosophy

Long before Charles Darwin (1809–1882) first set out his theory of evolution, geologists had discovered that the earth was much older than any timeline based on the Bible might lead one to think.⁷⁶ This development led to a fundamental change in the European perception of time and called into question the longstanding traditional interpretations of the Christian Bible. So too did the translation into European languages of Sanskrit and Pali scriptures in which were described vast spans of time, the *kalpas* (comprising a day and a night of *brahma*, which added up to 8,649 million years⁷⁷) and the *mahākalpas* (which were several times longer than a kalpa; the idea appears in the *Mahābhārata*, and, while it is not clear exactly how many kalpas it refers to, the period at issue certainly runs into the billions of years).⁷⁸ These structurally similar developments in science and the humanities were taken up and augmented in the

⁷⁶ Bowler, *Evolution*, 1–2.

⁷⁷ Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism*, 113.

⁷⁸ Numerous complex systems of time spans were elaborated in the South Asian religious and philosophical traditions. For an overview, see Luis González-Reimann, “Cosmic Cycles, Cosmology, and Cosmography,” in Jacobsen et al., *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*. These views of time were often connected to cycles of reincarnation and to views about liberation. For example, in Ājīvikism, a religion which emerged around the same time as Jainism but is now extinct, time spans were counted in terms of mahakalpas, each of which would amount to 35 quadrillion years. Johannes Bronkhorst, “Ājīvika,” in Jacobsen et al., *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*. These numbers illustrate how different the perception of time was in South Asian scriptures in comparison to Christian ideas of time.

Theosophical Society. The former development made it possible for scientists to imagine a process of biological development spanning millions of years, which came to be termed “evolution.”⁷⁹ The latter, meanwhile, made it possible to imagine a spiritual development taking place over millions of years, a view which became the centerpiece of Theosophical evolutionism.⁸⁰ In Besant’s writings, the ideas of spiritual growth and initiation as together providing an evolutionary scheme were translated into a pedagogical program. In the following, an overview of the multifaceted interpretations of evolutionism current in the 19th century will be given. Evolutionism was not, even in the sciences, a single theory, but rather a strain of thinking which included many, sometimes opposing, theories of how life on earth developed. These theories were often debated in nonscientific circles, sometimes adopted, sometimes rejected. But regardless of particular outcomes, their overall influence was enormous. In science, the Darwinist understanding of evolution in terms of natural selection became dominant, but it was simultaneously criticized and repeatedly reformulated. In Darwin’s view, evolution – a term which he used but rarely – was not progressive. Nonetheless, the concept that evolution strives towards increasing complexity and moves in the direction of an ultimate goal was a common idea, found in both academic and non-academic milieus. This view was perpetuated by the metaphors and pictures used to communicate evolutionist theories. Evolution was often illustrated in terms of ladders or trees with trunks, thus suggesting a progressive development. The Theosophical Society pioneered and maintained this idea of progressive evolution as one of its key teachings.⁸¹

The idea of progress is rooted in the assumptions of Christian epistemology, which is predicated on the notion that there was an original starting point – the moment of creation – from which everything developed and continues to do so.⁸² Alternative views concerning cyclical conceptions of times, such as the Indian ideas of the *yugas* and *kalpas*, resurfaced in the “West” in the wake of the import and translation of non-European thought, discussed above. Ideas about the cyclical development of the universe were not unique to South Asian concepts of

⁷⁹ Bowler, *Evolution*, 3.

⁸⁰ Zander discusses this “change in the perception of time” under the German idea of “Historicism,” which describes the revelation of Biblical concepts through the large-scale import of ideas from Indian religions, including “Hinduism,” Buddhism, and Jainism. He describes Theosophy as an attempt to mediate pluralism by claiming universalism in a syncretic concept of Theosophy. See Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 741–44.

⁸¹ Bowler, *Evolution*, 6–7.

⁸² Bowler, *Evolution*, 8–12.

cosmology, and were also known in the Greek world and in several other traditions,⁸³ but they were rediscovered in the 19th century primarily through the translation of South Asian scriptures. In the Theosophical Society, an idea of evolution which combined a cyclical model with progressive spiritual self-development was elaborated. I will describe this idea as it appears in Besant's thought as the "Quickening of Evolution."⁸⁴ One well-known proponent of the progressive idea who was also important for the uptake of evolutionism in the Theosophical Society was Herbert Spencer.⁸⁵ However, there has not yet been any substantial research analyzing the interconnections between Theosophy and Spencerian Evolutionism.⁸⁶

The following overview is necessarily incomplete; the field of evolutionist theories in the 18th and 19th centuries is far too vast to cover in a comprehensive manner and I do not attempt to do so. It nonetheless provides valuable context against the background of which some of the ideas proposed by the Theosophical Society can be understood, illuminating them as historical products and answers to contemporary debates.

83 For an informative overview of ideas of cosmology, including non-South Asian ideas about cyclic cosmology, see Helge Kragh, *Conceptions of Cosmos: From Myths to the Accelerating Universe; a History of Cosmology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 6–66. Note that the author of the present book strongly disagrees with Kragh's view of a progressive development from "myths" to "modern" understandings of cosmology. To give a specific example, Stoicism promoted cyclic ideas of cosmology. For a discussion of cosmological ideas in the Stoa, see Ricardo Salles, *God and Cosmos in Stoicism* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

84 This idea is only mentioned once in terms of a "quickenning of the evolution" in Besant's writings (Annie Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom: An Outline of Theosophical Teachings* (London, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Benares, Madras: Theosophical Publishing Society; The Theosophical Book Concern; "Mercury" Office; The Theosophical Publishing Society; "The Theosophist" Office, 1897), 409). For a discussion of the concept and an explanation for why I call it the "Quickening of Evolution," see Chapter 8, especially 8.2.

85 Bowler, *Evolution*, 8.

86 Chajes, for example, mentions Spencer in several passages but neither provides an analysis of the quotations about Spencerian evolution in Blavatsky nor discusses Spencer's theories in more depth. See, e.g., Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 179. It will be seen below that Spencer was also important for Dvivedi's ideas on consciousness and for his conception of *brahman* as the absolute consciousness (see Chapter 11).

6.2 Herbert Spencer's Progressive Evolution

Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) is often associated with the notion of “social Darwinism,” an adaptation of evolutionist ideas to sociology.⁸⁷ Spencer was a philosopher and although he was well trained in several academic disciplines, he was, in contrast to Darwin, interested in the universal principles of the universe rather than in specialized academic questions. His work focused on the principles of life, consciousness, and the structures of society, and was well-received in Victorian society and beyond. Spencer was instrumental in the popularization of evolutionist ideas and in the introduction of the word “evolution” as a general term in theories about progression, development, and change. In his momentous work, *System of Synthetic Philosophy*, Spencer used “evolution” as a term which could refer to a variety of ideas about progress and development in fields ranging from biology to history and culture.⁸⁸ Spencer defined evolution as processes in which interconnected heterogeneous structures emerge from homogeneous states, with this differentiation implying a corresponding increase in complexity. Similarly, he conceptualized “dissolution”⁸⁹ as the opposite of evolution, suggesting that after a process of development towards increasing heterogeneity, evolution would then turn backwards towards complete homogeneity. Spencer tried to understand how the increased complexity implied by evolution came about and the role co-evolution played in this process. What he meant by co-evolution in this context was that the increase of complexity and the development of each part of a complex system went hand in hand with the increase and development in other parts. The idea of increasing complexity through co-evolution was not new, but Spencer integrated it into a scheme which started with a “big bang” – not in the later sense of discussions about the Hubble-Lemaître law,⁹⁰ which led to the introduction of the term in 1949 by Fred Hoyle⁹¹ – a sudden unprecedented starting point from which evolution progressed through stages of physical, chemical, biological, and, finally, cultural evolution. Spencer was widely read during his lifetime, often in popularizing paraphrases of his work that were accessible to

87 Michael Beetz, “Herbert Spencer und dessen Rezeption als Sozialdarwinist,” in *Streitfall Evolution: Eine Kulturgeschichte*, ed. Angela Schwarz (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2017), 336.

88 Beetz, “Herbert Spencer und dessen Rezeption als Sozialdarwinist,” 336–38.

89 Beetz, “Herbert Spencer und dessen Rezeption als Sozialdarwinist,” 341.

90 For a discussion of the scientific basis for the idea of the “big bang,” and of the experiments conducted to “prove” this basis, see Wilfried Kuhn, *Ideengeschichte der Physik: Eine Analyse der Entwicklung der Physik im historischen Kontext*, with the assistance of Oliver Schwarz, 2nd ed. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Spektrum, 2016), 469–77.

91 Helge Kragh, “Big Bang: The Etymology of a Name,” *Astronomy & Geophysics* 54, no. 2 (2013).

non-specialists, and his ideas were adopted by several other thinkers, although after his death his views were increasingly discredited.⁹² What is important for our present purposes is that Spencer's ideas about evolution seem to have influenced the reception of evolutionist theories in the Theosophical Society. A number of possible sources for this influence will be discussed below, but the current state of research does not allow us to determine securely through precisely what channels or to what exact degree Spencer's work was taken up in the Theosophical Society.

6.3 Darwin, Orthogenesis, and Lamarckism

Darwin proposed a theory according to which evolution was understood as being steered entirely by the demands of the environment. Evolution involved the random production of characteristics in species, which would then be passed on to new generations only if they proved to be sufficiently useful in the specific environment in which the species lived. The environmental circumstances thus determined which species successfully reproduced and which died out. According to this view, evolution has no goal and can, potentially, continue indefinitely.⁹³ In opposition to this view, the theory of orthogenesis claimed that there are internal faculties at work which determine evolutionary changes and drive them along predetermined lines of development. Darwin proposed a rigid heredity through which only those characteristics that are included in the genome can be passed on to subsequent generations. As a consequence, capacities accumulated in the lifetime of a given member of a species could not be transferred to the next generation. A competing theory, often associated with French biologist Jean-Baptist Lamarck (1744–1829), argued that individual characteristics acquired during the life span *could* be transmitted. Despite its association with Lamarck in particular, “Lamarckism” was rather a whole research branch which positioned itself in the discourse on evolution in opposition to the Darwinist school. It was by no means a marginal current. The retrospective narrative of the “Darwin revolution” simplifies a complex process of negotiation in which Darwin's theory gradually became the hegemonic approach. This change of paradigm was non-linear and took more than a century. Indeed, at first even many adherents of Darwinism would not accept the centerpiece of Darwin's theory; the idea of Natural Selection was often rejected while

⁹² Beetz, “Herbert Spencer und dessen Rezeption als Sozialdarwinist,” 342–45.

⁹³ Bowler, *Evolution*, 10.

the general idea of an evolutionary process was hailed.⁹⁴ This ambivalence illustrates well that there are no defined points in history at which new ideas instantly change the way in which the world is perceived, and nor is there any gradual unveiling of the “truth.” Rather, ideas are set aside and adopted in a constant process of negotiation between different positions in a necessarily ongoing discourse.

6.4 Evolutionist Ideas of Race

In the case of evolutionism, the impact nonetheless had an incredible scope, eventually leading to a radically altered perception of human beings and their place in nature. This was and still is one of the reasons for the public interest in evolutionism.⁹⁵ Evolutionism challenged the “identity of humanity” in the “West,” making it necessary to redefine that “identity” with respect to “others.” Europeans increasingly identified themselves as in a more advanced evolutionary state than the “apelike” non-Europeans. European scholars such as Camper, Buffon, Blumenbach, and Linnaeus classified humans into several races from the highest – Caucasian, white – race, to the lowest and most degenerate, the Ethiopian race.⁹⁶ The idea that the “white race” originated somewhere in central Asia near the Caucasus – thus the term “Caucasian” – fit well with “Aryan Myth”⁹⁷ which was developed about around the immigration of the Aryas to India. The “Aryas” were nomadic tribes who migrated to India between 1500 and 1000 B.C., with “Aryas” being a self-description meaning “noble.”⁹⁸ In the wake of the emerging field of Indology and the description of the close connections between Indo-European languages, starting with the work of William Jones in England and Friedrich Schlegel and Franz Bopp in Germany,⁹⁹ the Aryan narrative became increasingly charged with racist interpretations that crystallized in the German word “arisch,” which

⁹⁴ Bowler, *Evolution*, 11–26.

⁹⁵ Beetz, “Herbert Spencer und dessen Rezeption als Sozialdarwinist,” 334.

⁹⁶ Bowler, *Evolution*, 52–53.

⁹⁷ Dunlop was one of the first authors to discuss the problematic development of the “Aryan Myth” as an idea with Euro-Indian racial connotations. See Knight Dunlop, “The Great Aryan Myth,” *The Scientific Monthly* 59, no. 4 (1944).

⁹⁸ For a description of this immigration and a discussion of the etymology of the term “arya,” see Kulke and Rothermund, *Geschichte Indiens*, 44–65.

⁹⁹ Ernst Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*, Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde 1. Band, 1. Heft (Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1917), Erster Teil, 57, 71–72.

was ultimately taken up by Nazi Germany as a description of genuine whiteness.¹⁰⁰ This sort of racial evolutionism was connected to concepts of progress which had their forerunners in the 18th century.

6.5 Ideas of Progressive Development

From the late 17th century to the end of the 19th century, thinkers as varied as J. J. Rousseau, the Marquis de Condorcet, Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and, again, Buffon expended considerable efforts in developing ideas of progress. However, the idea of the progress of civilization was not necessarily seen as a positive development, with Rousseau in particular holding up the “noble savage” as the ideal human. Other thinkers developed progressive models which included ideas of advancement to higher and better forms of living.¹⁰¹ The idea of the “chain of being,” which had its roots in antiquity and was later rediscovered in the middle ages and in Renaissance Neoplatonism,¹⁰² was prominent in the 18th century. This notion was based on observations of the physiological resemblances between species. In the form in which it was propounded in the 19th century, the theory claimed that there was a “chain of being” along which development progressed first from elements and ether to higher forms of life, and then from plants to animals and, ultimately, to humans. Exponents of this theory, such as Charles Bonnet and Jean-Baptiste Robinet, claimed that each of these stages of progression developed from seeds or “germs” which were designed by God.¹⁰³ The idea of the “chain of being” resembles Theosophical ideas about the development of the “monad” through the “three kingdoms.”¹⁰⁴ In Besant’s writings, the idea

100 Kulke and Rothermund, *Geschichte Indiens*, 13, 45. For a general discussion of the links between esotericism and Nazism see Julian Strube, “Esoterik und Rechtsextremismus,” in *Handbuch der Religionen: Kirchen und andere Glaubensgemeinschaften in Deutschland*, ed. Michael Klöcker and Udo Tworuschka (Landsberg am Lech: Günter Olzog, 2018).

101 Bowler, *Evolution*, 54–57.

102 Arthur O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*, The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University 1933 (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970).

103 Bowler, *Evolution*, 63–66.

104 See, e.g., Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of the Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* Vol. I – Science (New York, London: J.W. Bouton; Bernard Quaritch, 1877), 17, 329; Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy: Being a Clear Exposition, in the Form of Question and Answer, of the Ethics, Science, and Philosophy for the Study of Which the Theosophical Society Has Been Founded* (London, New York: The Theosophical Publishing Company; W. Q. Judge, 1889), 183–84; Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine: The*

of “germs” as driving forces of evolution is also prominent.¹⁰⁵ However, despite the striking terminological similarities, we should not suppose any straightforward linear dependencies. In the Theosophical writings, the kingdoms are expanded into higher spheres of being and are discussed alongside karmic necessities, human anthropology, and spiritual evolution. I argue these ideas were formulated, negotiated, and reformulated in a global colonial discursive continuum and were products of multifaceted hybridization processes, as illustrated below with regard to their ideas about the stages of initiation and “Hinduism.”

6.6 Science, the Colonial Setting, Learned Societies, and Popular Reception

In the 19th century, the number and membership of learned societies and institutions of higher education grew dramatically. These organizations were frequented by a wide range of people, from professional scholars and scientists to lay and gentlemen pursuers of the same goals, from Occultists and Religionists to Agnostics and Atheists.¹⁰⁶ The transition to a recognition of science as a profession progressed slowly. Darwin, for example, was financed by his wealthy father and was taught science outside the regular curriculum at Cambridge, as England’s oldest

Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy, 3rd ed., rev., 2 vols. 1 (London, New York, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path Office; The Theosophist Office, 1893), Cosmogogenesis, 193–213; Annie Besant, “Death – and After? The Fate of the Body,” *Lucifer* Vol. XI, no. 62 (1892): 153; Continued from p. 61; Annie Besant, *Karma*, Theosophical Manuals 4 (London, Benares, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Theosophist Office, 1895), 25; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 49; Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 116–17.

105 See, e.g., Annie Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, Theosophical Manuals VIII (London, New York, Benares, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896), 59; Annie Besant, *Reincarnation*, Theosophical Manuals 2 (London, New York, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path; Theosophical Society, 1892), 14; Annie Besant, *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul: Two Lectures* (London, Adyar, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1895), 10.

106 Frenschkowski has recently shown how diversified this field was. For the example of “religious studies,” he discusses the extent to which “occultists” were involved in the formation of the field as an academic discipline (Marco Frenschkowski, “The Science of Religion, Folklore Studies, and the Occult Field in Great Britain (1870–1914): Some Observations on Competition and Cain-Abel Conflicts,” in Mühlematter; Zander, *Occult Roots of Religious Studies*). Several of the other articles in the same anthology point towards similar developments outside Britain and to structurally analogous processes in other disciplines. See Yves Mühlematter and Helmut Zander, eds., *Occult Roots of Religious Studies: On the Influence of Non-hegemonic Currents on Academia around 1900*, *Okkulte Moderne* 4 (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021).

and most renowned universities were initially reluctant to introduce the sciences into their core curriculum. In contrast to Darwin, a generation later, although Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895) still had to finance his research by working on a navy vessel he was able to study medicine at university. In the cases of both Darwin and Huxley, European expansion and the pursuit of science were closely interconnected. Indeed, both men carried out research while traveling the world on ships belonging to the Royal Navy.¹⁰⁷ However, the stories of European expansion and the emergence of “science” are not exclusive to the narrative of *European* history, but also feature in the histories of many other parts of the world. As such, rather than querying why the sciences “only” emerged in Europe, we should ask why “the sciences” were Europeanized and how the emergence of *Wissenschaft* became so closely connected to the narrative of the European *Sonderweg*. These questions fall beyond the scope of the present book but they nevertheless touch on the questions of hegemony and discursive dynamics that are important elements in the theoretical framing of the discussion here.

Several – often opposing – theories were discussed in evolutionist circles in Europe’s learned societies and institutions of higher education. These ideas were communicated in a multitude of journals, popular editions of scientific books, newspaper articles, and lectures that were open to the wider public.¹⁰⁸ They form part of the “structures” that connect discursive fields to one another. The popular discourse about evolutionism was typically dominated by mass-market editions, newspaper articles, and articles in periodicals, rather than by scholarly publications on the subject. New ideas and inventions were also received with a certain time lapse because of the means of communication.¹⁰⁹ It is likely that many Theosophists read popular editions of Darwin, Spencer, and the other evolutionists, rather than their original publications. At the same time, the Theosophical Society was an active player in this network of knowledge and simultaneously replicated a parallel structure in their own publications and lectures. In many respects – this is well documented for the Theosophical Society and is illustrated in this book by a number of examples – these “occult movements” were *parts* of a multitude of discursive fields that connected them to what is generally conceived of as “regular society,” rather than being straightforwardly “outside” it. I argue that the Theosophical Society – employing the word field discussed above – translated the “scientific” media structure into their society and repeated it. In addition, the “quasi-scientific” is an a posteriori label that seeks to marginalize the claims

107 Bowler, *Evolution*, 107–8.

108 Bowler, *Evolution*, 98–108.

109 Wenzlhuemer’s description of the Great Moon Hoax is instructive in this respect. Wenzlhuemer, *Globalgeschichte schreiben*, 39–78.

made in the Theosophical journals. As the articles collected in Mühlematter and Zander's *Occult Roots of Religious Studies* show, the boundaries between academia and "occultism" were by no means fixed at the turn of the 20th century.

6.7 The Problem of Human Intelligence and Morality: The Uptake of Evolutionism in Annie Besant's Theosophy

In opposition to many of his contemporaries, Darwin reflected critically on the questions of why and how humans had developed intelligence and why apes had not. According to his biological evolutionism, intelligence must have provided a reproductive advantage, but if it was an advantage per se, why had no other species evolved to have it. The gulf between animals and humans was conceived of as enormous, but this vast gap had to be explained in Darwin's theory in terms of a difference in degree rather than quality – humans were not to be understood as outside the natural evolutionary process but as representing its most advanced outcome. If this gap could not be explained, then the whole theory was in danger of falling. In attempting to resolve this difficulty, Darwin argued that intelligence was a by-product of the change from walking on four legs to walking upright. This change permitted the early humans to use their hands and it was in this usage that intelligence proved to be an advantage.

The other big issue facing Darwin was the need to explain human moral faculties. These, he claimed, developed gradually from social needs, with care for one's own offspring, tribe and then the wider society transforming over time into "universal moral values."¹¹⁰ Several passages in Besant's writings suggest that she was well aware of these debates. In many of her writings she developed ideas concerning the manner in which the transition from animal to human came about. Besant, in contrast to Darwin, held that there is a difference in both degree *and* quality between human beings and animals. She writes, "In man, and in man only, among all the races that people earth, do we find such great physical unity and such vast intellectual and moral divergency. I admit physical heredity as explanation of the one, but I need some new factor, not present in the brute, as an explanation of the other."¹¹¹ These lines show quite clearly that the problem of mental and moral faculties was an issue in Besant's writings. Despite this view of the difference between humans and animals, Besant still thought that animals were nevertheless potentially able to

¹¹⁰ Bowler, *Evolution*, 212–14.

¹¹¹ Besant, *Reincarnation*, 61–62.

cross over this gulf at some point in their evolutionary future. Because Besant takes animals to be younger than humans, and therefore not as evolved, there is no reason to think it impossible that they might develop in the same way as humans in the future.¹¹² But this evolution is very slow and takes extremely long periods of time.¹¹³

One element in the Theosophical view that is not fully consistent with this line of argument is the idea of the *manasaputras*, which Besant explains means “the sons of Mind.”¹¹⁴ According to the Theosophical view, the *manasaputras* descended into human bodies as soon as humans were evolved enough. These beings were the products of earlier rounds of evolution and were thus able to bring their higher mental powers with them and pass them on to humans.¹¹⁵ That is to say, they descended in order to “quicken” the general evolution of humanity.¹¹⁶ Besant explains that all these changes could have and would have happened in the general course of evolution in any case, but that “such has not been the course of Nature.”¹¹⁷ Although Besant’s writings are rooted in the Blavatskyian era of the Theosophical Society, her oeuvre is replete with developments from and augmentations of that source material. Whereas in her earlier writings she drew more frequently on the *manasaputras* in her argumentation, in her later work she developed ideas of evolving germs¹¹⁸ and of vibrations that evolve matter, bodies, and germs.¹¹⁹ As time passes, a movement towards emancipating herself from Blavatsky’s writings can be detected. In *The Seven Principles of Man* (1892), she explicitly quotes Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. II, whereas in *The Ancient Wisdom* (1897), by contrast, the idea of the *manasaputras* is linked much more closely to her idea of the “Quickening of Evolution.”

Besant also developed a system of moral progression that was similar to the ideas advanced by Darwin, using similar language to depict a process of

112 Annie Besant, *Dharma: Three Lectures by Annie Besant, F.T.S., Delivered at the Eight Annual Convention of the Indian Section Held at Benares on October 25th, 26th., and 27th., 1898* (Benares, London, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing Society; Theosophist Office, 1899), 15.

113 Besant, *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul*, 8.

114 Annie Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man*, Theosophical Manuals 1 (New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892), 26.

115 Besant, *Reincarnation*, 15–16.

116 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 119–20.

117 Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 252–53.

118 See Besant, *Dharma*. This work is particularly interesting because it documents how Besant started to learn about Hindu concepts and combines ideas of the *gunas* with her ideas about germs. On this view, *dharma* then ensures that the germs are developed in the best way.

119 The vibrations are most prominently discussed by Besant in Besant, *Man and His Bodies*.

development from care for one's own offspring, to concern for the well-being of society more broadly, and, finally, to the establishment of universal moral values.¹²⁰ In Besant's conception of this development, morality is always relative to the stage of evolution. She understands "Hinduism," especially the *āśrama* system, as a recognition of this relativity of morals, since every stage has its own *dharma* which fits best with the respective stage of morality.¹²¹ Her work also contains the idea of a universal morality that is based on the recognition of the absolute unity of everything with God.¹²²

Ideas of progression were also promoted by Darwin, who claimed in his 1871 work, *The Descent of Man*, that non-white people are inferior to and have smaller brains than white people.¹²³ It is no coincidence that, in *The Ancient Wisdom*, Besant discusses "Man's Ascent." At least some readers, if not all, will have understood the reference to Darwin's title and would thus have viewed Besant's position in a racial light. Indeed, so too would those who were familiar with broader Theosophical thought on evolutionism. In her chapter, Besant discusses "the final stages of man's evolution,"¹²⁴ and this should be understood in term of the Theosophical idea of evolution through seven root races and their subraces, a version of evolutionism that has a strong racial undertone. The Theosophical view is based on the idea of spiritual progression from the lowest first race to the highest God-like seventh race, a view that implies the parallel existence of "lower" and "higher" races, with the "higher" having a duty to guide the "lower" in their evolution.¹²⁵ The Theosophists – and Darwin – were not alone in holding such racist views in connection to ideas of cultural and mental evolution. Similar racist notions of progress were in fact promoted by the majority of Evolutionists at the time.

Once again, these views show that Theosophical ideas concerning evolution, in general, and Annie Besant's writings on the subject, in particular, were shaped within a diversified global colonial discursive field in which multifaceted hybridization processes took place. The extent to which Besant engaged directly with Darwin's writings is currently unclear, but it is not plausible to

120 Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 284.

121 Besant, *Dharma*, 49.

122 Annie Besant, "Theosophy and Ethics," in, *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17, 133.*

123 Bowler, *Evolution*, 211–17.

124 Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, XIV.

125 For a discussion of the racial implications of Theosophical evolutionism and their embeddedness in several other discourses, from Hermeticism to kabbalah and other "esoteric" currents, see Isaac Lubelsky, "Mythological and Real Race Issues in Theosophy," in Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current.*

suppose that she was unaware of the debates discussed above. As such, we should not be surprised to find similar subjects surfacing in Besant's work to those dealt with by Darwin. These subjects were certainly familiar to the wider Theosophical and non-Theosophical audience, both Indian and non-Indian, of Besant and her fellow Theosophists.

6.8 Evolution, a Universal Principle?: The Problem of Translation and Hybridization

The concepts of evolution as propounded in the Theosophical Society emerged as part of the global colonial discursive continuum in which European Evolutionism and South Asian conceptions about cosmology, its provenance, and the development of animals and human beings became entangled through the realization of numerous connections (see Chapter 4.5). As argued above, the Theosophical Society was part of the (uppercase) "Indian Middle Class." Theosophical ideas on evolution should thus also be read in the context of the reception of evolutionist ideas in India. There is a huge gap in the academic understanding of the reception of evolutionist concepts both in India in general and in connection to the Theosophical Society in particular, and it is not feasible to exhaustively till this fallow field in the present book. Nevertheless, I will attempt to irrigate it to some extent in the hope that it will prove more fertile to future researchers working in this area.

In his *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution*, Brown lays out a view that is paradigmatic of the longstanding ignorance concerning processes of hybridization in entangled histories, especially when it comes to Theosophy and to the Indian Theosophists in particular. Brown writes:

Another distinctive element in the Hindu and Buddhist discourses with modern science that sets them apart from both the Islamic and Christian is their assimilation and adaptation of various Theosophical motifs and its fundamental ideal of a scientific and scientized religion. This ideal, born in part as a reaction against traditional Christian dogmas that seemed to be crumbling with the onslaught of modern science, drew much of its own inspiration from the 'wisdom traditions' of the 'East,' especially Buddhism and Advaita Vedanta. The Theosophist proclamation of complete harmony between the eastern wisdom traditions and the findings of modern science was a siren song to those of the East who sorely felt the oppression of Western imperialism and Christian evangelization.¹²⁶

126 C. Mackenzie Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution: Darwin, Dharma, and Design*, Routledge Hindu Studies Series (London: Routledge, 2012), 9–10.

The most problematic feature here is that Brown does not elaborate on the “theosophical motifs” at issue. This lack of precision reflects one of the primary problems with scholarship on Theosophy. “Theosophy” is often used as an umbrella term for several opposing positions in the Theosophical Society. Or worse, Theosophy is often presented as a fixed worldview dominated by the writings of H. P. Blavatsky.

Another major difficulty faced by researchers is the lack of critical studies investigating the interdependencies between Theosophy and the translations of the early orientalist, such as George Thibaut. The issue here is that Brown bases his account in part on Thibaut’s translation of Śaṅkara’s *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya*. As discussed in Chapter 10.6, Thibaut was well acquainted with Blavatsky and Olcott and it is likely that at least some of his translations were influenced by Theosophy. It is highly problematic to seek to determine what Śaṅkara “really” wanted to say based on translations. Indeed, it is not possible to retrieve *any* original “meaning,” even if communicated in Sanskrit. On the other hand, without translation there is no communication. As Bhabha sees it, translation is hybridization and I strongly agree on this point. There is no solution for this difficulty, but one must keep it in mind. If the process of the translation of Śaṅkara’s *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* by Thibaut is understood in terms of hybridization, then it is possible that “Theosophy” is read into it when the term “consciousness” is used to translate Śaṅkara’s thought. The use of the term “evolution” is structurally analogous. Therefore, the concept of the hybridization of an already hybrid knowledge is fruitful for describing this diversified global colonial discursive field.

Brown uses the term “consciousness” to describe the highest stage of being of *brahman*, which is to say that the highest reality is the consciousness of *brahman*.¹²⁷ In Chapter 11 I will discuss how this concept was elaborated by Manilal Divedi in negotiation with Spencer’s writings and Theosophical concepts of higher knowledge and spiritual progression. The difficulties involved in translation discussed above suggest that we should be cautious about accepting claims that there were ideas of “evolution” in ancient India that could be equated with nineteenth-century European evolutionism. Such a parallelism was nonetheless retrospectively claimed by Neo-Hinduists in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, in what can be read as a movement of translation and repetition. Brown’s interpretation of Śaṅkara’s “evolutionism” is thus an interesting instance of how ancient Indian thought can be interpreted in accordance with “Western” ideas of evolutionism.

127 Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution*, 29.

This is also true for the reception of evolutionism in India in connection to the Theosophical Society, the Arya Samaj, Rammohun Roy and several other Indian and non-Indian actors. In the following, I will point out a number of possible entanglements. These will show that the Theosophical Society in India and its Indian members did not only draw their concept of evolution from the “West” but also negotiated their ideas within a discursive field in which “Hindu” concepts were just as prominent as “Western” ideas of evolution. Again, there is no solution to this problem.

6.9 The Reception of Evolutionist Concepts in India

Beginning in the 1860s, the Darwinist idea of the progressive development of nature was widely debated by members of the Indian middle class, especially in Calcutta. From the 1870s onwards, the theory was familiar to all and several well-known Indian scholars put forward their own interpretations of evolutionism. An important motif in this discourse was the idea that Indian spirituality and “Western” science could be merged to form a great alliance in which both would come to blossom. Brown argues that the reception of Darwinism in India was influenced by a number of factors, of which he identifies three. First, he explains that Darwinism had some points of connection with ancient Indian ideas of “evolution,” but stood in opposition to certain other points. In particular, the idea that there was an underlying “consciousness” that was not the result of evolution was positioned as a key argument against “materialistic” Darwinism. Secondly, “evolutionism” introduced into the Indian discourse the idea of investigating nature in terms of discovering the workings of God. This notion was certainly not unique to the reception of “evolutionism,” but recurs in engagements with “science” in general because it draws on the empirical method of the natural sciences. Thirdly, the reception oscillated between appreciation and rejection because science and technology were also received ambiguously, on the one hand being seen as means for advancing India while on the other being treated as tools of oppression. These factors were then negotiated in a colonial discursive field between “Western” and South Asian imaginary versions of the “other,” which often determined the reception of the “other’s” religion and science.¹²⁸

128 Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution*, 63–75.

Brown identifies five motifs that were persistent features of the discourse in which the reception of evolutionism in India took place from about 1860 to the early 20th century:

(1) a Vedic Golden Age encompassing spiritual insights *and* scientific discoveries; (2) a subsequent period of degeneration; (3) the possibility of social, cultural, and scientific revitalization and progress; (4) the comparative study of Indian and Western civilizations with respect to their particular roles and responsibilities towards each other; and (5) epistemological considerations regarding the role of scripture, perception, reason, intuition, and suprarational consciousness in ascertaining truth, both empirical and spiritual.¹²⁹

According to Brown, the reception of Darwinism in India can be sequenced into three periods in which one or the other of the aforementioned motifs were more important than the others.

Two major figures of the first phase were Rammohun Roy (1772–1833) and Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905). The former was the founder of the Brahmo Saba and the second reorganized the Saba into the famous Brahmo Samaj. The different positions of the three phases of evolutionist reception in India will be described briefly in the following.

Roy expounded an idea of Hindu monotheism based on a design argument connected to a concept of the universality of religion. The idea of universalism was wedded to a claim of “Hindu” tolerance towards all religions. Roy’s writings and vita are paradigmatic of the colonial discursive continuum at the beginning of the 19th century. He first published his works in Persian and Arabic, the languages of the fading Mughal empire, then learned English and read various European thinkers. He later published in English. He translated and repeated what he had read in the context of Śaṅkara’s work and developed his own monotheistic non-idolatry ideas of religion. Crucial to his ideas of progress was his understanding of idolatry as a lower form of worship directed towards a defined deity, whereas the higher, more advanced, form was worship directed towards an abstract idea.¹³⁰

Tagore developed an idea of divine creation according to which the whole universe was produced by the supreme being. On his view, this creating God is the cause of everything and provides all that humans need. Religion was seen by Tagore as God’s gift to humanity in order to free them from their sensual restraints. In opposition to Roy, Tagore formulated an idea according to which one investigates the true being of God, and hence the world, through intuition. According to this view, intuition, combined with meditation, prayer, and the

129 Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution*, 75.

130 Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution*, 75–90.

study of the scriptures, would lead to a complete understanding of God's creation and would ultimately elevate human beings to a knowledge of higher truths.¹³¹

As influential representatives of the second phase, it will now be useful to consider Dayanada Saraswati's ideas about what Brown calls "vedantic creationism" as well as Gurudatta Vidyarthi's development of that creationism. In Saraswati's view, God created the world from the primordial matter (*prakṛti*). However, this matter is not the cause of anything, as the causative role is reserved solely for the creator who designs. By his creative power, God produces a perfect environment for all sentient beings. This idea was then taken up and developed further by Gurudatta. Gurudatta explained that the plan in the mind of God is the prerequisite for the manifestation of the universe. This manifestation is mirrored in the bodies of humans, Gurudatta claimed, with the limbs and organs corresponding to certain parts of the cosmos. On this view, God created the human bodies to be inhabited by a divine life-principle, the *ātman*. Gurudatta and other Arya Samajists maintained that these *ātmas*, as well as the nations to which they belong, depended on the Supreme teacher to teach them all of the elements from which cultures are formed, such as language, the arts, etc. Brown groups the ideas expounded by the Arya Samajists under the heading of "modern Vedic Creationism" because these thinkers constantly refer to the scriptures while at the same time illustrating their claims using scientific and technological analogies.¹³²

Several of the motifs described above can be found in Theosophical writings. The idea of consciousness was discussed not only by Dvivedi but was also taken up by Besant (see Chapter 8.2). The idea of a creative supreme being who creates the world by a mental design can be found in Besant's view of evolution, as can the idea of the divine teacher.¹³³ The extent to which Besant and other

131 Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution*, 91–98.

132 Brown, *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution*, 99–130.

133 For what Besant terms "divine ideation," see Besant, *Reincarnation*, 30–31; Annie Besant, "Karma the Law of Causation, of Justice and the Adjustment of Effects," in *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17*, 76. The term "divine ideation" can also be found in Dvivedi's and Row's writings; see Manilal N. Dvivedi, "The Purānas: Philology Versus Symbology," *Lucifer* VIII, no. 45 (1891): 196; Continued; Tallapragada S. Row, "A Personal and an Impersonal God," *The Theosophist* 4, no. 6 (1883): 138. For the idea of the divine teachers who were at times identified as the Ancient Rishis, the Manasaputras, God, or Members of the Brotherhood, see, e.g., Annie Besant, "General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament: [On the Evolution of Man]," in *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17*, 158; Besant,

Theosophists knew and read the above-mentioned Indian writers is currently unclear, but it is plain that Śaṅkara was often cited, and in many cases these references were in connection with evolution. The writings of the Arya Samajists were also unquestionably well known in the Theosophical Society. Blavatsky and Olcott moved to India as the result of an alliance with Dayananda Saraswati, and the Theosophical Society was temporarily renamed the Theosophical Society of the Arya Samaj. However, this alliance was soon terminated following an ideological clash between the Theosophical founders and Saraswati.¹³⁴ Several similar motifs appear in the discourse on evolutionism in India, both within and beyond the Theosophical Society. It seems likely that these discourses on evolutionism were interwoven with others not only in India but also globally, in what I have called the global colonial discursive continuum. In this context the Theosophical concepts of evolution should be understood as hybrid knowledge of already hybrid knowledge which was constantly de- and recontextualized in manifold encounters which connected multifaceted discursive fields. These processes will be illustrated in more depth with reference to the example of the concept of “initiation” and ideas about “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society. Before these processes can be discussed meaningfully I will take up the ideas of the Theosophical masters as another piece of Theosophical evolutionism in the next chapter.

Karma, 60; Besant, *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul*, 17; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 277; Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 8.

134 For the connection between the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society, see Karl Baier, *Meditation und Moderne: Zur Genese eines Kernbereichs moderner Spiritualität in der Wechselwirkung zwischen Westeuropa, Nordamerika und Asien*, 2 vols. 1 (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009), 303; Joscelyn Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 319–20; Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East’,” 22; Patridge, “Lost Horizon,” 315; Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 106–7; David Gordon White, *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali: A Biography*, Lives of Great Religious Books (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 112.

7 Masters and Disciples, or: How to Transfer Knowledge

In Religious Studies, master/disciple relations have often been discussed in strict opposition to teacher-student relations, following the definitions of Joachim Wach and Max Weber, both of whom based their ideas on observations about the George-Kreis, albeit drawing very different conclusions from it.¹³⁵ Teacher-student relationships were understood as being less hierarchical and the disciple was held to be much more devoted to the master than the student is to the teacher.¹³⁶ The “master” is identified as one who has already perfected him- (or her-) self, and the “disciple” is one who wants to submit him- (or her-) self to this path of perfection. This submission to the path of perfection includes the idea of the possibility of an “improved” life.¹³⁷ This view fits well with the Theosophical master narrative and is also a well-known narrative in the wider field of “esotericism.” It is no coincidence that Faivre identifies “mediation” as one of the characteristics of what he termed “Western esotericism.” Faivre explains that the idea of “correspondences” implies that there are analogies between the human body and the cosmos and that analogous parts “correspond” with, and thus are connected to, each other. In his view, “esoteric” groups often claim to be “transmitters” between these spheres. The training of “imagination,” which is understood by Faivre as the tool by which the higher spheres of being are accessed, is often the purpose of the “esoteric” groups, on his view. Although his essentialist definition of “esotericism” must be dismissed (see also Chapter 2), Faivre identifies an important feature of what is discussed here as the master/disciple relationship. He also points towards a discrepancy between the path of mediation and gnosis. In his view, gnosis is usually not sought after by “esotericists” but “prefers to sojourn on Jacob’s ladder where angels (and doubtless other entities as well) climb up and down, rather than to climb to the top and beyond.”¹³⁸ This view is only partly applicable to Annie

135 Almut-Barbara Renger, „Der „Meister“: Begriff, Akteur, Narrativ,“ in Renger, *Meister und Schüler in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 39–44.

136 Renger identifies Wach as the first to popularize this dichotomy between master/disciple and teacher/student relations. In his work, so Renger explains, Wach connected the “master” to the early Christian communities (Stifterreligionen) and to charismatic personalities. This was received and unquestioningly repeated by Mensching and Goldhammer and became the master narrative in Religious Studies. Renger, „Der „Meister“,“ 20.

137 Renger, „Der „Meister“,“ 22.

138 Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, 12–13.

Besant's concept of the "Quickening of Evolution," the aim of which is to "climb to the top" but renounce the beyond for the common good. However, this is only a temporary renunciation since once all humans have evolved "enough" they will collectively move "beyond." The position is even more complex in the wider Theosophical context because there are numerous additional cycles yet to come in which "new" evolutions will take place. It is not the scope of this book to discuss the Theosophical debates about "evolution," although some subtleties of these ideas will be discussed below. As Baier notes, the Theosophical Society presented itself as an institution in which a path is provided by which one will become an accepted chela and eventually be initiated and achieve higher knowledge. As he maintains, the major problem was that suitable teachers for this program were lacking.¹³⁹ The point is that the Theosophical Society can be understood as a mediator, and the master narrative and the Theosophical educational endeavors as integral parts of the mediating function claimed by the Society. Against this background, Besant's "Quickening of Evolution" can be understood as an attempt to provide an actual path towards this goal. It is for this reason that I argue, like Renger, for both a conceptual and a practical continuity between master/disciple relations and teacher/student relations. The Theosophical school system can be understood as an institutionalized reflection of the Mahatma/chela relation that manifests it in the form of teacher/student relationships.

A fundamental question is whether, and if so how, master/disciple and teacher/student relationships can be understood as structurally similar and in what way they differ from each other. The same question is of great importance if one considers whether Guru-śiṣya relationships are comparable to master/disciple, teacher/student, and Mahatma/chela relationships. This is one of the fundamental questions with which this book is concerned and is closely linked to its theoretical foundations. In line with the theoretical considerations set out in Chapter 4, I argue that in the case of the Theosophical Society we encounter a hybrid idea of master/disciple relations in which we can identify several modes of hybridization by looking for traces which point towards the results of these processes.

This chapter provides an important background against which such "traces" can be identified in the broader field of master/disciple relationships as they appear in a wide range of non-Theosophical contexts. Renger holds that similar characteristics can be identified in the "Western" idea of the "master" and in that of other "specialists" found in almost any other (religious) tradition around

139 Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 305.

the globe. Likewise, she claims that the roles and functions of these specialists varied widely.¹⁴⁰ A major difficulty with this claim is that the word “master” is adapted to various traditions. In addition, the exchange processes between “Western” and “Eastern” “esotericists” are complex and multifaceted, as should become clear to even a casual reader of this book (see especially the example of Shastree’s article, in which he propounds the idea in connection to Advaita Vedānta; Chapter 10.6). It is, however, striking both that and how the idea of the “masters” was translated into the “Hinduism” and “Buddhism” employed in the Theosophical Society. Simultaneously, the term “Mahatma,” with its altered relation to the idea of the “masters,” was retranslated into Theosophy. The Theosophical narrative about masters emerges, in part at least, from encounters with several specific traditions. In the following, freemasonry will be discussed as one such tradition. These examples will point to possible traces of hybridization processes and the contexts in which they took place. At the current stage of research, these hybridization processes cannot be described in more depth, but it seems plausible that they developed along structurally analogous lines to those as those that are described for the stages of initiation in Chapters 9–13.

7.1 The Master Narrative in the Theosophical Society: From Exclusiveness to the “Quickening of Evolution”

The narrative of the masters played a crucial role in the Theosophical Society.¹⁴¹ Most recently, Harlass has discussed the role of the Theosophical masters in the writings of A. P. Sinnett. He convincingly shows that the shift from “Western” adepts to “Eastern” Mahatmas took place in the period between Sinnett’s two main works, *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*. One central argument is that the opposition between “Hindu spirituality” and “Western materialism,” and the knowledge of Sanskrit as a tool for accessing the occult knowledge in the Indian scriptures was key to that shift. Harlass further shows that the evolutionary argumentation about the adepts was also developed in this period and found its focalization in *Esoteric Buddhism*. Harlass’ argument is highly relevant and

¹⁴⁰ Renger, „Der „Meister“,“ 19.

¹⁴¹ See, e.g., Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 277–351; James B. French, “The Theosophical Masters: An Investigation into the Conceptual Domains of H.P. Blavatsky and C.W. Leadbeater” (A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Religion Studies, University of Sydney, August 2000); K. Paul Johnson, *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*, SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995).

plausible, as is his claim that the actual historical situations in the “West” and in India played crucial roles in the shaping of the discourse on the Mahatmas.¹⁴²

However, what is absent here is any research on the actual relationship of masters to their disciples in the Theosophical Society. In the case of the adepts of the “Great White Brotherhood,”¹⁴³ the relationship came about via several techniques. Best known are the “Mahatma letters.”¹⁴⁴ Several leading Theosophists received such letters in which the Mahatmas taught their teachings and gave advice or orders.¹⁴⁵ Whereas in the early days of the Theosophical Society the adepts seem to have been in some cases actual historical persons, it gradually became more common to see them as inaccessible mythological figures, a status that was finally fixed in the post-Blavatskyan era.¹⁴⁶ This development was reinforced by the fact that no further Mahatma letters were received after Blavatsky’s death, other than the disputed examples that Quan Judge used to try to secure his leadership of the Society. Judge’s claim to have received these letters was contested by Besant, who argued that they were forgeries made by Judge himself.¹⁴⁷ The movement towards seeing the Mahatmas as inaccessible went hand in hand with a

142 Harlass, “Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft,” 113–57.

143 The term “Great White Brotherhood” is sometimes used by Besant (Annie Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form: Four Lectures Delivered at the Twenty-Third Anniversary Meeting of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, 1898*, 2nd ed. (London, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900), 35–36), although usually she and most other Theosophists simply refer to “the brotherhood” or the “adepts/Mahatmas.” The idea and the usage of the term “brotherhood” is, of course, not exclusive to the Theosophical Society and had several forerunners. See Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 280–350; Goodrick-Clarke, “Western Esoteric Traditions and Theosophy,” 278.

144 The question of what these are and how they were “materialized” was often discussed. In the Theosophical narrative, the letters were messages from the masters of the brotherhood which contained their authentic teachings (see, e.g., Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 295–96). In the scholarship, the question often remains unanswered (Godwin, “Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy,” 23). In my opinion, it is more important to understand what their function and their content was. What is most widely known about the letters is that they were the basis for Sinnett’s most famous writings, but they also encompassed most of Blavatsky’s early teachings. Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 329.

145 Several series of letters were received which expressed different aspects of the Theosophical, mostly Blavatskyan, doctrine. In some cases, they are even in opposition to each other and refer to ideas from different cultures, especially the 19th century imagination of Egyptian culture in the first series of letters (see Goodrick-Clarke, “Western Esoteric Traditions and Theosophy,” 275) although the later series included Buddhist and Hindu ideas as well. Goodrick-Clarke, “Western Esoteric Traditions and Theosophy,” 289–90.

146 Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 366.

147 Wessinger Lowman, “The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar),” 45.

redefinition of what it was to be a Mahatma. These figures became increasingly understood as highly evolved and advanced humans whose knowledge and status as teachers was attached to the stage of evolution they were thought to have reached.¹⁴⁸ Their evolutionary position likewise points towards what I call the “Master Paradox.” This is the apparently irreconcilable difference between achieving higher knowledge through evolution and the educational approach, which involves the gradual discovery of truth. The two epistemologies that emerge from these approaches are both included in the notion of the “Quickening of Evolution,” corresponding, respectively, to the preliminary preparations and the stages of initiation (see Chapter 8, below). Claims of the first type are based on education, practical advice, and morality, while those belonging to the second type are based on an understanding of the cosmic principles as they are grasped by the individual’s higher faculties. One could argue that there is a qualitative difference between chelas and adepts, but that this difference can be bridged by initiation. Such a view is structurally analogous to that discussed above concerning the competing positions regarding the general drift of evolution and the possibility of bridging the qualitative difference between animals and men (see Chapter 6.7). Using the terminology developed in Chapter 4 can help us identify the Theosophical Society as the structure which connects these spaces. Or, to put it another way, the Theosophical Society is the mediator between the worldly realms and the spiritual realms.

The idea of the Mahatmas as evolutionarily highly advanced “Orientals” first appears in Sinnett’s writings¹⁴⁹ and develops into a standardized narrative through Besant’s writings.¹⁵⁰ In opposition to what Harlass identifies as the monopoly of the teaching of the Mahatmas¹⁵¹ in Sinnett’s writings, which is closely linked to the de facto impossibility of ever reaching the evolutionary status of a Mahatma, Besant provides practical advice connected to a program of self-improvement, the “Quickening of Evolution,” which reevaluates the teaching monopoly of the Mahatmas. Although the asymmetry remains between the claim that the Mahatmas are highly developed human beings who went through numerous, almost innumerable, reincarnations, and the possibility of reach that stage of evolution, the “Quickening of Evolution” provides a way of becoming a *jīvanmukta*. This is illustrated in *In the Outer Court* with the metaphor of the mountain and the idea of “the directer pathway.”¹⁵² I argue that Besant positions herself in these writings as the

148 Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 54.

149 Harlass, “Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft,” 114.

150 See, e.g., Besant, *Reincarnation*, 44; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 220.

151 “Lehrmonopol” Harlass, “Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft,” 117.

152 Annie Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 2nd ed. (Theosophical Publishing Society: London, 1898), 13–14.

teacher of this practical way and the provider of guidance on that “directer way.” By doing so, she bypasses the monopoly of the Mahatmas on teaching and ultimately institutionalizes that practical guidance in her school system. This will be illustrated by a close examination of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* in Chapter 13, below. The narrative of the Mahatmas is kept intact in Besant’s writings, allowing her to claim to represent an unbroken chain of tradition.

Hagiographic self-descriptions of key Theosophical figures often included the narrative of the masters. Blavatsky, for instance, claimed that she met several masters while she was traveling the world. Her first encounter with a master – at least on her account – took place as early as 1851, in Hyde Park, London.¹⁵³ As French argues, the idea of the masters was formed in close relation to Spiritism, with “spirit guides”¹⁵⁴ playing an important role in transmitting communications from the dead. Blavatsky, who had already been in close contact with spiritists in Paris, went to New York in 1873 to investigate the flourishing American spiritualist scene.¹⁵⁵ John King was one of the most famous “spirit guides” of the time and was often reported to appear at séances, usually accompanied by his daughter Katie. Blavatsky claimed from about 1874 on that she was in close contact with John King, who she identified as one of the masters.¹⁵⁶ As French argues, Blavatsky retrospectively presented spiritism as a prerequisite for the revitalizing of the ancient wisdom that took place in the Theosophical Society.¹⁵⁷ What is important for our purposes is that Blavatsky claimed to have been initiated by the masters, who advised her to teach this ancient wisdom. Similarly, Besant claimed in 1893 that she was a “student” and had seen “elementals, astral pictures, astral bodies, and so on.”¹⁵⁸ In 1895 she claimed in an article in *The Westminster Gazette* that she was first introduced to a Theosophical master in 1889 (see Chapter 8). In her later Theosophical career, she placed increasingly importance on the possession of the *siddhis*. This can be seen in the occult investigations she pursues with Charles Leadbeater in *Occult Chemistry* and *Thought-Forms*, and in their descriptions of their evolutionary development through remembrance of their past lives in *The Lives of*

153 French, “The Theosophical Masters,” 83–84.

154 French, “The Theosophical Masters,” 86.

155 Godwin, “Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy,” 16–17.

156 Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 22–23.

157 French, “The Theosophical Masters,” 87–91.

158 Annie Besant, *An Exposition of Theosophy: Reprint from “The World,” N. Y. February 26, 1893* (Boston: The Boston Theosophical Publishing Co., 1893), 16.

Alcyone and Man: Whence, How and Whither.¹⁵⁹ The *siddhis* and other occult powers marked out the Theosophical leader in Besant’s era. In the following, these ideas are put into a historical context against which background it can be seen that several topoi in Besant’s writings on the teacher/student relationship were common to ideas on master/disciple relationships in other traditions.

7.2 Masters and Disciples Between Freemasonry, “Hinduism,” and Theosophy

The idea of passing (secret) knowledge from one who knows to one who receives knowledge is a common feature in several (religious) traditions and is far from exclusive to the Theosophical Society. The master/disciple relationship can be understood as a specific form of knowledge transfer, in the sense that it is a strictly hierarchical relation which aims not only at knowledge transfer but also at changes in the disciple’s consciousness and their personality. This conceptualization of the relationship is at times accompanied by an idea of initiation into secret knowledge. This idea corresponds closely to the Theosophical idea of how the Mahatmas would transfer their knowledge with the goal of initiating their disciples (see below). The term “master” derives from the Latin *magister* and variants are found in most “Western” languages. In the Greek version of the bible, two terms are used to refer to concepts relating to the position of the “master.” The first is *kathegetés* and the other is *didáskalos*, both of which denote a “teacher.” It was Martin Luther who translated both terms as “Meister” and in doing so gave the term an integral place within the (Protestant) Christian tradition. In the New Testament and the subsequent tradition, master/disciple relationships and the dialogue between the two are important methodological topoi. The same writing style became constitutive for Christian theosophy, for example in Jacob Böhmne’s *Der Weg zu Cristo*, 1631. The didactic structure of the dialogue between master and disciple is also typical of Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence* and *The Key to Theosophy*. Renger claims that the master narrative was transferred, through Böhme and its uptake in freemasonry and Rosicrucianism, into

¹⁵⁹ For a discussion of the stories contained in *The Lives of Alcyone*, with special regard to evolution and the role of male concepts of female sexuality, see Siv E. Kraft, “Theosophy, Gender, and the “New Woman”,” in Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 366–68. For a discussion of the karmic stories of the past lives of Theosophists as biographical works, see Angelika Malinar, “Karmic Histories and Synthesis of ‘East’ and ‘West’: Annie Besant as Interpreter of Hinduism,” in *Asia and Europa – Interconnected: Agents, Concepts, and Things*, ed. Angelika Malinar and Simone Müller (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018).

the later “esoteric” context, and especially to Blavatsky.¹⁶⁰ It is plausible to suppose that Blavatsky borrowed from these traditions, which would support my argument that *The Voice of the Silence* is a book of initiation.

This didactic form of writing is specific to *The Voice of the Silence* and cannot be found in the other Theosophical texts analyzed for this book. Besant’s writings in particular tend to be more structured, and the form of a dialogue would not fit well with this more linear style. There are numerous other contexts in which master/disciple relations played crucial roles, not least that of Christianity, in which the relationship between Jesus and his followers can be seen as a prototype. This is also true for the desert hermits and the later monastic orders.¹⁶¹ Blavatsky, who was socialized in Christian Orthodoxy,¹⁶² was as familiar with such Christian models as Besant.¹⁶³ More research will be needed to highlight the possible influences here.

The masonic orders are understood by many scholars to be the prototypes of secret societies.¹⁶⁴ Master/disciple relationships in freemasonry are usually connected to a series of rituals of initiation.¹⁶⁵ Similar ritual series are documented for the Theosophical Society as taking place in the Esoteric Section, Co-Masonry, and as rituals for initiation into the Society itself. However, how these rituals were performed and what practices they included is not known. This is mostly due to the lack of available information about the Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society. It is likely that already in the early days of the Esoteric Section (ES), which was founded by Blavatsky in 1888,¹⁶⁶ ritual

160 Renger, „Der „Meister“,“ 19–31.

161 For a discussion of these Christian master/disciple relations, see Karl Baier, “Modelle der Meister-Schüler-Beziehung im Christentum,” in *Meister und Schüler: Tradition, Transfer, Transformation*, ed. Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch and Almut-Barbara Renger, Studien für Ostasiatische Kunstgeschichte 3 (Weimar: VDG, 2016).

162 See Goodrick-Clarke, “The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the ‘Mystic East’”; Goodrick-Clarke, “Western Esoteric Traditions and Theosophy”.

163 Besant was widely read in Christian scripture and engaged critically with what she read during her “atheist” phase. See First and Second Life in Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*. See also Besant’s own accounts in Annie Besant, *Autobiographical Sketches* (London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1885); Besant, *My Path to Atheism*.

164 Henrik Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), 44.

165 On the role of rituals of initiation in freemasonry and as prototypes for rituals of initiation in other “closed societies,” see Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*.

166 Wessinger Lowman, “The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar),” 44–45. Owing to the secrecy in the Esoteric Section, there are no records of its activity, but, as Godwin explains, the third volume of the Secret Doctrine, which was published

practices were performed.¹⁶⁷ Dixon notes, drawing from an article in *The Link* from 1909, that the purpose of the ES was to grant “access to the masters” and that it engaged in “carefully structured ritual activities.”¹⁶⁸ The actual practices involved are not specified, however. The ES soon also acquired an “Inner Group,” to which both Annie Besant and Quan Judge belonged,¹⁶⁹ with Besant going on to become the “Chief Secretary of the Inner Group of the Esoteric Section”¹⁷⁰ after Blavatsky’s death in 1891.

As for the rituals of initiation into the Theosophical Society, Nehru reported that Besant performed a ritual when he joined the Society (see Chapter 8, below). Dixon also notes that “Besant restored the ceremony of initiation for new members that had fallen into disuse in England, though it had been preserved at Adyar.”¹⁷¹ Quoting articles from *The Vahan* from 1911 and 1912, respectively, Dixon maintains that there was a ritual which involved meditation, incense, music and the reading of scriptures and Theosophical texts. The ceremony was meant to be “a symbol and a reminder of those grater initiations.”¹⁷² Co-Masonry, a form of masonry which admits women, was another of Annie Besant’s interests. Although institutionally distinct from the Theosophical Society, Co-Masonry was personally interconnected at the level of both members and leaders. In Co-Masonry, as in all masonic groups, rituals play a crucial role. Francesca Arundale joined Le Droit Humain first and then encouraged Besant to also become a member. In 1902, the first Lodge of the French Co-Masonic order was opened in London with Besant serving as its first master.¹⁷³

after Blavatsky’s death and possibly owes much to Annie Besant, contains some of the teachings to members of the ES. Godwin, “Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy,” 27.

167 Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 361–62; John L. Crow, “Taming the Astral Body: The Theosophical Society’s Ongoing Problem of Emotion and Control,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 3 (2012): 704. The little information there is on the practices of the Esoteric Section, and on the Teachings of the inner group, from which Besant surely drew when she wrote about the rules for meditation and her ideas on regulating food and sexuality, are well documented by Baier. What becomes clear is that Blavatsky elaborated a wide range of teachings on occult correspondences but did not provide much in the way of practices, with the exception of some basic raja-yogic meditations. Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 385–95. To my knowledge, there is no information available on how the Esoteric Section developed under Besant’s leadership.

168 Joy Dixon, *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 73.

169 Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 385.

170 Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 258.

171 Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 74.

172 Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 74.

173 Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 74–82.

As Dixon clarifies, “much of the inspiration for ceremonial activity within the TS came from the influence of James Ingall Wedgwood, who joined the society in 1904.”¹⁷⁴ Consequently, “much of the ceremonial activity” of the Society is of only peripheral interest for this book due to its chronology. Very little research has been carried out on the masonic activities of Annie Besant, and this is especially true for the practical side of that engagement.¹⁷⁵ This is unfortunate because freemasonry provides an important background for the general conceptualization of master/disciple relations.

Masonry employs a strictly hierarchical system of master/disciple relationships based on the ideas of compatibility and self-perfection. Simonis explains that masonic orders can be characterized as groups that one can join freely but within which advancement is dependent on proving oneself worthy. Doing so involves two connected steps: first, a series of trials, and, secondly, initiation according to certain rituals. Initiation in this context means above all passing over the border from general society into the secret society. It is believed that the aspirant can only succeed in the trials and be initiated with the aid of a guide, a master, a topos that is also present in the Theosophical Society.¹⁷⁶ The Theosophical masters become aware of the aspirant as soon as he or she is ready, and they aid him or her in their progress. They might also provide assistance before this point, but this is done without the knowledge of the aspirant.¹⁷⁷

Freemasonic ideas about master/disciple relationships were adapted for broad public consumption in a range of literary productions. Simonis discusses Abbé Terrasson’s work, *Sethos*, published in 1731, the story of which was popularized by Mozart’s adaptation in his *Zauberflöte*.¹⁷⁸ The story is set in ancient

174 Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, 82.

175 For Besant’s engagement in freemasonry, see Dixon, *Divine Feminine*, and Andrew Prescott, “Builders of the Temple of the New Civilisation’: Annie Besant and Freemasonry,” in *Women’s Agency and Rituals in Mixed and Female Masonic Orders*, ed. Alexandra Heidle and Joannes A. M. Snoek, Aries Book Series v. 8 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008).

176 Linda Simonis, “Esoterische Bildung: Suchende Schüler und ihre Lehrmeister bei den Freimaurern, esoterischen Bünden und Geheimbundroman des 18. Jahrhunderts,” in Renger, *Meister und Schüler in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 285–86.

177 The highest helper or teacher is the one who in bodhisattvic compassion remains on earth when liberated. See, e.g., Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 44, 71; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 10, 127.

178 Paul Nettl, “‘sethos’ und die freimaurerische Grundlage der ‘Zauberflöte’,” in *Bericht über die musikwissenschaftliche Tagung der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum in Salzburg vom 2. bis 5. August 1931*, ed. Erich Schenk (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1932). For a detailed discussion of the reception of masonic elements in *Zauberflöte*, with special regard to *Sethos*, see Florian Ebling, “Mozarts Zauberflöte: Der Schrecken des Todes und die Macht der Musik,” in *Theater um Mozart: Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung Theater um Mozart in Heidelberg und*

Egypt, where the protagonist Sethos is initiated into a circle of priests by a member of that group named Amedès. His training takes in a range of subjects extending from science to the fine arts. It also involves the development of a virtuous character – with virtue being understood in terms of the virtues of leaders set out in the German *Fürstenspiegel* and their French pendants – as well as an inner psychological development. In Terrasson’s story, the relationship between master and disciple is dissolved into a relationship with the whole secret society by way of initiation. Sethos passes several trials that were associated with the ancient Egyptian Isis cult as imagined in the 18th century, and then receives a thorough explanation of the “esoteric” ethics of the circle.¹⁷⁹

Several motifs in this tale resonate with topics that were discussed in the Theosophical Society. First of all, the reference to the Isis cult resonates strongly with Blavatsky’s *Isis Unveiled*. But more importantly for this book, the Theosophical ideas about the “Quickening of Evolution,” which are described in Chapter 8 and will be discussed further below, can be read as an attempt to have an actual impact on the lives of the disciples and to lead them to live virtuously. At the end of this process of development stands initiation into the occult knowledge. However, this initiation is considerably less ritualistic in the Theosophical Society. It is, rather, as Baier shows, connected to a cognitive process that leads from knowledge to action.¹⁸⁰ As will be seen below for Annie Besant – at least in her early Theosophy – initiation meant the expansion of consciousness that corresponds with the Master Paradox. It seems likely that several of the Theosophical ideas about such relationships were influenced by freemasonry, either through Co-Masonry or via the popular reception of such motifs as they appear in *Zauberflöte* or Bulwer-Lytton’s novel *Zanoni*. It is also likely – as mentioned previously – that masonic rituals were performed as rituals of initiation, especially in the Esoteric Section, in Co-Masonry, and as rituals of initiation into the Theosophical Society. Further exploration of this area remains an important research desideratum.

7.3 Succession, Charisma, and Office

Krech discusses the relation between charisma and religious succession. His key argument is that, from a sociological perspective, religious succession is always

Schwetzingen vom 19. September bis 19. November 2006, ed. Bärbel Pelker (Heidelberg: Winter, 2006).

¹⁷⁹ Simonis, “Esoterische Bildung,” 290–94.

¹⁸⁰ Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 356.

self-referential because it produces those semantics of transcendence to which it refers for evidence. He argues that, because of this self-referentiality, when staking a claim to authority, the only resource on which succession can draw is reference to its “origin.” By doing so, succession manages conflicting synchronic claims to authority by creating diachronic references.¹⁸¹ This constant re-establishing of new diachronic references links succession to the broader problem of a “tradition” that needs to invent itself ad hoc in a procedural act. Krech explains that “religious semantics”¹⁸² refer to a transcendence which must be explained using immanent means. Discussing two aspects of charisma, “the paradox of claims of truth and innovation,”¹⁸³ Krech makes intelligible how the creating of myths and occult language may help religious communication and shows that charisma is the focalization point for innovation. Firstly, charisma – which according to Weber is rooted in “Ausseralltäglichkeit,”¹⁸⁴ something which is out of the ordinary – is often connected to claims to possess supernatural powers. These claims were advanced by both Blavatsky and Besant.¹⁸⁵ What Krech identifies is a paradox between these claims and the need to communicate them while at the same time maintaining their extraordinary nature. In his view, this tension can be resolved by communicating religious experience in opaque language, since such a representation maintains the extraordinary nature of the experience and makes it worth pursuing and investigating. In Krech’s view, this implies self-referentiality because the opaque language refers to the extraordinary, which in turn refers to the transcendent, and vice versa. This is the paradox inherent in explaining the transcendent using immanent means. In Krech’s view, this paradox can be focalized in the charismatic person because she or he can serve as the immanent

181 “Sukzession wird thematisch und verläuft von der jeweiligen Gegenwart zurück zu den in der Objektsprache behaupteten Ursprüngen. Sukzession ist ein Produkt von jeweils *gegenwärtiger, synchroner* Umstrittenheit, regelt sie und evoziert sie zugleich durch Erzeugung von Diachronie.” Volkhard Krech, “Wie wird in Sukzessionen die Evidenz religiöser Semantiken hergestellt? Wissenssoziologische Beobachtungen,” in *Sukzession in Religionen: Autorisierung, Legitimierung, Wissenstransfer*, ed. Almut-Barbara Renger and Markus Witte (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 15.

182 “Religiöse Semantiken,” Krech, “Wie wird in Sukzessionen die Evidenz religiöser Semantiken hergestellt?,” 4.

183 “Erstens die Paradoxie von Wahrheitsanspruch und Akzeptanz charismatischer religiöser Kommunikation sowie zweitens das Moment der Innovation.” Krech, “Wie wird in Sukzessionen die Evidenz religiöser Semantiken hergestellt?,” 7.

184 Weber, Max and 1864–1920, *Grundriss der Sozialökonomie III. Abteilung: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1922), 140.

185 This dimension is discussed repeatedly in this book in relation to the *siddhis*. See Mühlematter, “Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge”. See also Chapter 12.7.

mediator between the ordinary and the extraordinary. Likewise, he or she acts as a mediator to guarantee the succession and the correct transmission of the “original” message, which is then taken up by his or her followers. For the second point, innovation, Krech claims that charisma has to refer to established structures of communication while reformulating and reinventing them. Both elements are combined in the Theosophical Society. The Mahatmas are charismatic and guarantee succession via their connection to higher knowledge. This is then transferred first of all to Blavatsky, who likewise claims to have supernatural powers and can therefore be described as a charismatic leader. Besant later relies on the same structures while also including innovative elements of her own in her notion of the “Quickening of Evolution.”

Another form of succession takes place in the passing of an established office, initially created, according to Weber, through the institutionalization of charisma. According to Krech, what these forms of succession have in common is that they rely on self-referentiality for the legitimization of their claims. In sum, different types of succession often overlap with or refer to each other. What should be noted here is that succession is understood by Krech as a form of shared “connection” to a common origin. In other words, succession tries to provide evidence by referring to the common (often transcendent) origin of all those in the lineage¹⁸⁶ in the Theosophical Society via the master narrative. Simultaneously, it must mediate between several synchronic claims of authority and it therefore includes a range of different positions. I argue that this mediation is a form of “relationizing” and, thus, of hybridization. Following Krech, it can be argued that a change of types of succession can be identified when comparing Blavatsky to Besant. As Blavatsky was a charismatic leader, Besant claimed her authority by office. This is, however, too simplistic an interpretation, since Besant combined several types of succession and authority claims. Her writings, which are more structured than those of Blavatsky, can be understood as an institutionalization of authority. On the other hand, in her leadership of the Esoteric Section and Co-Masonry, she claimed authority by “charisma,” supported by her clairvoyant investigations in partnership with Leadbeater. Krech’s viewpoint provides an insight into the function of the master narrative in the Theosophical Society, where it serves as a legitimation practice.¹⁸⁷ It is no coincidence that Besant claimed that her election as president of the

¹⁸⁶ Krech, “Wie wird in Sukzessionen die Evidenz religiöser Semantiken hergestellt?,” 10–15.

¹⁸⁷ For a discussion of the different modes of authority claim in the Theosophical Society, see Mühlematter, “Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge” and Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society”.

Theosophical Society was sanctioned by the masters, who supposedly appeared to Olcott shortly before his death while Besant was nursing him.¹⁸⁸

7.4 Preliminary Conclusion: Transfer of Knowledge, Forms of Succession, and Claims of Charismatic Leadership

To summarize, teacher/student relationships are prototypes of knowledge transfer. These relationships become closer when they aim at actual changes in a person's behavior and also include the passing on of secret knowledge and/or an initiation into a closed/secret society. In the Theosophical Society, master/disciple relationships were first and foremost embedded in the Mahatma narrative, which sought to legitimize authority and succession in the organization. This narrative was closely connected to what I have called the Master Paradox, the seemingly unbridgeable epistemological difference between the evolutionary position of the master (higher knowledge) and their educational approach. In addition, teacher/student relationships were institutionalized in several institutions of the Esoteric Section, Co-Masonry, and, above all, the Theosophical schools. These actual relationships had to refer to the Mahatma narrative and were usually structured in terms of a "charismatic" succession and/or an "official" succession. Theosophists such as Blavatsky and Besant claimed supernatural powers while at the same time – especially in the case of Besant – relying on institutionalized forms of succession and authority. The master narrative provides the link to the perennial wisdom here. Identifying the masters as highly evolved *human* beings implies that everyone is able to attain this higher stage of evolution. However, the idea that this evolution takes an almost uncountable number of life cycles moves that possibility into a far distant future. Besant's "Quickening of Evolution" provides a swifter path towards that future evolution. In her self-representation, this has a double-sided effect. On the one hand, she can claim to be the mediator between the masters and the chelas while promoting herself as the teacher of the Theosophical Society, which imbued her with an unquestionable authority based on the master narrative. On the other hand, she could claim that she was an accepted chela on her way to a higher stage of evolution. Her demonstration in *Thought-Forms, Occult Chemistry* that she possessed supernatural powers proved, according to that narrative, that she was rapidly advancing towards becoming a master herself. And at the same time, her rapid advancement was a demonstration of the

¹⁸⁸ Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 434; Wessinger Lowman, "The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar)," 45.

effectiveness of her program aimed at the “Quickening of Evolution.” Master/disciple relations thus played a crucial role in the Theosophical Society. Initiation marked the start of the master/disciple relationship in its strict sense, whereas the Theosophical educational system served as a preparatory institution for those making their way towards this initiation.

**III The “Quickening of Evolution” 1: The Stages
of Initiation in Annie Besant’s Early Theosophy
and *The Voice of the Silence***

This part opens in Chapter 8 with a discussion of Annie Besant’s early Theosophical thought, with special attention being paid to her ideas concerning the “Quickening of Evolution.” This concept, and the idea of human progress through initiation that is foundational for it, runs through the book as a *fil rouge*. It will be taken up in Chapter 9, where I argue that the stages of initiation were already important for Blavatsky’s writings. In *The Voice of The Silence*, Blavatsky published a book of initiation which aimed, at its core, at the “Quickening of Evolution.” This is indicative of the importance of that conception for not only Annie Besant but Theosophy as a whole.

8 The “Quickening of Evolution”: The Stages of Initiation as the Cornerstone of Besant’s Early Theosophy

A close reading of Annie Besant’s early Theosophical writings pulls the reader towards identifying the “Quickening of Evolution” as lying at the core of her thinking. As the successor of H. P. Blavatsky and the president of the Theosophical Society from 1907 until her death in 1933, Besant had a great impact on the history of the Theosophical Society. In 1909 she met young Krishnamurti for the first time and identified him as the future world-teacher. His decision to renounce this role and dissolve the Order of the Star in the East (later, the Order of Servants was founded – see Figure 2) in 1929 is seen by many scholars as one of the major factors accounting for the decrease in the membership and influence of the Theosophical Society in the years that followed (Krishnamurti himself continued teaching and was an important proponent of the “esoteric” scene of the 20th century).¹ However, Besant was not just one of the most outstanding figures of the post-Blavatskyian era of the Theosophical Society; she also played an important part in the history of India more broadly. After she settled in India, she engaged in numerous endeavors that aimed to reform and “uplift” the subcontinent. When she eventually entered politics, she championed self-rule and Indian nation building. As Rajagopalachariar (1878–1972) who was an Indian politician and close associate of Gandhi² puts it: “Among those who have materially contributed to the shaping of India, Mrs. Besant is one of the biggest personalities. She helped young India to feel sure of the greatness of Indian culture and religion.”³ One of the areas she engaged in was the development of the educational system. Malaviya, with whom she founded the Benares Hindu University in 1915, lauded her with the following words:

1 Wessinger Lowman, “The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar),” 18, 26–29, 33, 44–45.

2 “Rajagopalachariar, Chakravarti,” in *A Dictionary of World History*, ed. Edmund Wright, 2nd ed., Oxford reference online premium (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007).

3 C. Rajagopalchariar, “Annie Besant and the Revival of Religion in India,” in Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 58.

India owes a special debt to her. She rendered very valuable services to the cause of education, the study of religion and also to the cause of India’s freedom. Along with her fellow workers she founded the Central Hindu College at Benares in 1898 and heartily co-operated in establishing the Benares Hindu University.⁴

In 1921, Annie Besant received “the degree of Doctor of Letters”⁵ from Benares Hindu University, honoring her for her part in its establishment. She engaged with the cause of education in India not only as an organizer and founder of schools, but also as a teacher (see Figure 3). As the Theosophist couple Edward L. Gardner and Adelaide Gardner put it, “although not primarily a teacher, for many



Figure 2: Order of the Servants of the Lord. Front row (on the floor) from left: Mrs. Padma Bai Snajiva Rao, Mr. B. Shiva Rao, Vasanti Dalal, B. Sanjiva Rao, N.S. Rama Rao, Krishnalal, Samant, Rathunandan Prasad. Second row: Ms. Arundale, William H. Kirby, George Arundale, A. Besant, J. Krishnamurti, C. W. Leadbeater, C. Jinarajadasa, J. Nityananda, Maria Luisa Kirby. Third row (standing): Banki Behari Varma, G. V. Subba Rao, Damodar Prasad, M. G. Kanetkar, Irving S. Cooper, J. N. Gurtu, E.A. Wodehouse, C.S. Trilokekar, D.k. Telang, K.R. Deobhankar, Y. Prasad. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Shanti Kunj, Benares, 1912. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai).

⁴ Madan M. Malaviya, “Service to Education,” in Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 70.

⁵ Malaviya, “Service to Education,” 70.



Figure 3: Besant at the Vasantha Pathashala, Vasantha is the Sanskritized version of Besant and Pathashala can be translated as school. So this is a picture of the Besant School in Karachi. The school was founded in 1917 under the auspices of the Society for the Promotion of National Education (SPNE), which merged with the Theosophical Educational Trust in 1921. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Karachi, 1919 or 1920. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai).

years she devoted herself to this aspect of Theosophical work – teaching.”⁶ Referring to “the path of spiritual growth,”⁷ they go on to explain that “the technique of spiritual training that Mrs. Besant presented was the traditional path of the religion of the world – of all the religions – but stripped of sectarian accretions and clearly restated in the ethical and psychological terms of her day.”⁸ Although the accounts cited above are surely biased, since they were collected as part of the centenary celebrations of Annie Besant’s birthday in 1947, they nevertheless provide a picture of Besant’s importance to at least some Indians, not least among whom were such prominent figures as Malaviya, Nehru (see above), and Gandhi. In the

⁶ E. L. Gardner and Adelaide Gardner, “Mrs. Besant as Teacher,” in Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 172.

⁷ Gardner and Gardner, “Mrs. Besant as Teacher,” 172.

⁸ Gardner and Gardner, “Mrs. Besant as Teacher,” 175.

same anthology, Gandhi wrote: “When Dr. Besant came to India and captivated the country, I came in close touch with her and, though, we had political differences, my veneration for her did not suffer abatement.”⁹ Given her roles in both India and Theosophy, her writings have been selected here as examples to illustrate the hybridization processes in the Indian Middle Class around the turn of the 20th century.

8.1 The Problem of Describing Annie Besant’s Life: State of the Research

The richness of Annie Besant’s life has been frequently acknowledged, not to mention documented in numerous biographies. Still the most detailed, and therefore the most helpful as a source for historical minutiae, is Arthur Nethercot’s work, published in two volumes amounting to a total of almost a thousand pages.¹⁰ The first volume of this biography – which was by no means the earliest to take Besant as its subject – was published in 1960, the second in 1963. Nethercot was able to conduct interviews with several of Annie Besant’s contemporaries, among them Bhagavan Das and Jawahrlal Nehru. Unfortunately, these interviews are now lost – or no one has yet looked in the right place – and Nethercot often cites his sources in summaries over many pages, making it difficult, and at times impossible, to verify his sources. This leaves us with a large and very detailed but unreliable source that can only partially be cross-referenced with other major accounts of Besant’s life. In some cases, Nethercot’s sources can be traced and re-evaluated, as, for instance, in the case of the purported connection between Besant’s reading of *The Voice of the Silence* and her first visit from a Theosophical master (see below). Nethercot’s biography should thus be read with care, and is best taken as a well-researched and (sometimes) documented work of “faction,” rather than as a scholarly biography.

A game-changer in this respect was Anne Taylor’s 1992 biography. Taylor’s work offers an insightful study of its subject which seeks to describe a continuity between Besant’s political engagement in England and her political career in India, with Taylor viewing Besant’s Indian career as consciously planned and conscientiously executed.¹¹ Taylor’s thesis, although well-argued and backed by thorough research, is overdetermined.

⁹ Mohandas K. Gandhi, “Veneration Despite Differences,” in Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 94.

¹⁰ Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*; Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*.

¹¹ Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 277–92.

Muriel Pécasting-Boissière, Besant's most recent biographer, directs harsh, but in my view justified, criticisms at both Nethercot and Taylor. She maintains that both biographers describe Besant's life in terms of episodes of periodic success embedded in a life that was ultimately a failure. In addition, Pécasting-Boissière reads Nethercot and Taylor as being informed and constrained by gender biases and psychologizing tendencies, while at the same time misjudging Theosophy as both a philosophy and an organization.¹² I agree with Pécasting-Boissière, whose points strike home particularly clearly with regard to the issue of gender bias, since both Nethercot and Taylor systematically depict Besant as being dependent on her male collaborators. This kind of narrative risks underplaying Besant's own agency. On the other hand, if Pécasting-Boissière's predecessors "misjudged" Theosophy, she may well be guilty of idealizing it. In her narrative, Besant's engagements with the Indian independence movement and the Theosophical Society are interpreted as humanist and socialist endeavors. Orientalist and colonialist tendencies in Besant's work and her ambivalent role as an English citizen in India are for the most part ignored. In addition, both Annie Besant's Theosophy and the Indian context remain under-researched in Pécasting-Boissière's work.¹³ Nevertheless, she provides a well-documented account of Besant's career that is especially enlightening in its contextualization of her subject's life with respect to Victorian culture.

Catherine Wessinger's *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism* provides an in-depth analysis of Besant's Theosophical thought. Although Wessinger places her analyses solemnly in the service of illustrating "Besant's millenarianism,"¹⁴ she successfully makes intelligible the way in which Theosophy appealed to Besant's pre-Theosophical ideas. Wessinger concludes that Besant shared the "Victorian belief in progress and [the] desire to ameliorate current social conditions."¹⁵ According to Wessinger, Besant's "ultimate concern"¹⁶ was "service or self-sacrifice."¹⁷ Alongside Besant's focus on ideas of progress and a "desire to solve the world's problems,"¹⁸ Wessinger claims that she "found in Theosophy a doctrine that taught that human nature could be transformed by individual effort and that humanity as a whole would be transformed

12 Pécasting-Boissière and Terrier, *Annie Besant*, 10.

13 Pécasting-Boissière and Terrier, *Annie Besant*.

14 Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, 6.

15 Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, 33.

16 Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, 7.

17 Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, 10.

18 Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, 307.

by new stages in human evolution.”¹⁹ Wessinger here points towards what I will describe below as the “Quickening of Evolution.” It will be seen that this dimension of her thought was pivotal to Besant’s early Theosophy, and probably also to her later writings. In what follows, I will discuss her ideas about initiation as the center of the “Quickening of Evolution” and will trace the varying views of the concept of initiation from Besant’s predecessors, such as Manilal Dvivedi and Blavatsky, through to the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*.

8.2 The Importance of the “Quickening of Evolution” in Besant’s Early Theosophical Writings

By tracing some of the relations that repeatedly occur in this notion of the “Quickening of Evolution,” it will be seen that it was a hybrid concept based on other similarly hybrid concepts. As a preliminary step, I will seek to show that the “Quickening of Evolution” was one of the central features of Annie Besant’s early Theosophy. This section will examine Besant’s early writings on Theosophy. The textual corpus comprises several of Besant’s works written between 1889 and 1904, including *Death and After?*, *The Seven Principles of Man*, *Karma*, *Man and His Bodies*, *In the Outer Court*, *The Path of Discipleship*, and *The Ancient Wisdom*. Although it has not been possible to consult all her works, those considered here represent the majority of Besant’s literary production during this period.

The corpus comprises more than 2500 pages of Annie Besant’s early writings. Reading these pages makes clear that several topics recur frequently (see below on the dimensions of the “Quickening of Evolution”), all of which point towards “initiation” standing at the center of her “Quickening of Evolution.” As a result of this research, three of her works stand out as forming the core corpus of her writings on initiation. These are *In the Outer Court*, *The Path of Discipleship*, and *The Ancient Wisdom*. These three texts come from two different genres of books. The first two are edited verbatim records of talks given by Besant, while the latter is an introductory work to Theosophy composed as a monograph. It is important to note that, while I use the term the “Quickening of Evolution,” Besant uses a much wider terminology to describe and talk about this concept.²⁰ This concept will be traced through the corpus by examining three

¹⁹ Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, 310.

²⁰ Annie Besant coins the expression in *The Ancient Wisdom* as “the quickening of evolution of the world.” Cf. Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 409.

of the terms she uses in this way. These are “quick,” “rapid,” and “haste.” I begin with a quantitative analysis of the frequency of their use, before going on to examine a number of quotations that include these terms. This process will lead to a description of the “Quickening of Evolution,” which will be seen to have a number of conceptual components which share a fundamental concern with the training of humanity in order to accelerate its evolution.

The word “quick” appears some sixty times in the whole corpus, but in only a fraction of these passages is it used in the context of the acceleration of evolution. Derivative terms are listed below in order of frequency of occurrence. The first number refers to the number of times the term occurs in the texts, while the second gives the number of times it is directly linked to evolution in the sense of the “Quickening of Evolution.” For some derivative terms, a third number captures the number of occurrences of one of these terms together with a synonym for evolution (e.g., “progress”). Detailed explanations are given in the footnotes.

1. quickly (28, 2)
2. quicken (9, 6)
3. quickening (9, 1)
4. quickened (8, 1, 2)²¹
5. quickens (3, 2)
6. quick (3, 0)
7. quicker (1, 0)
8. quickenings (1, 0)

The idea of the “Quickening of Evolution” is expressed by derivatives of “quick” in fourteen paragraphs across the examined texts. These paragraphs are clustered in *The Ancient Wisdom*, from 1897, and *Dharma*, from 1899, accounting for eight out of the fourteen appearances. The remaining uses are found in *Man and His Bodies*, from 1896 (quicken, 1); *Evolution of Life and Form*, from 1900 (quickened, 1); and *Thought Power*, 1901 (quicken, 2).²² No derivatives of “quick” were found referring to an idea of accelerating evolution in any of the other works examined.

²¹ In the first instance, “quickened” is linked to “the progress of the world,” which is interpreted as a synonym for “evolution.” In the second, “quickened” is used in connection with “germs of thought,” which in turn “[in] our minds helped in their evolution.”

²² The two quotes which are not directly linked to “evolution” are found in *The Path of Discipleship* from 1896 (quickened, 1 – “progress of the world”) and *Thought Power* from 1901 (quickened, 1 – “germs of thought”).

I now turn to the word “haste” and its derivations. “Haste” occurs as:

1. hasty (5)
2. hastily (4, 0, 1²³)
3. hastening (3, 3)
4. hasten (3, 1, 1²⁴)
5. hastened (3)
6. hastens (1, 0, 1²⁵)
7. unhasting (1, 0)

Interestingly, “haste” occurs significantly less frequently than does “quick,” but in seven of its twenty appearances it is related to ideas of evolution. Again, this usage appears most prominently in *The Ancient Wisdom* (3). In contrast to “quick,” there is also one occurrence in an early work, *What Theosophy Is* (1), from 1891. The other three times it appears are in *The Path of Discipleship*, 1896; *Thought Power*, 1901; and *Some Problems of Life*, 1899.

The term “rapid” and its derivations occur more frequently than either “quick” or “haste.” Given the number of quotations examined, a fourfold categorization has been adopted here. The first number in brackets states the total numbers of occurrences. The second number refers to occurrences that are directly linked to the word “evolution” within a sentence. The third number refers to occurrences that are directly connected to other terms which can be read as being synonymous with “evolution,” such as “progress,” “growth,” etc. The last number represents all those passages in which “rapid” is indirectly connected to ideas of evolution. “Rapid” occurs as:

1. rapid (38, 5, 16, 0)
2. rapidly (36, 4, 8, 3)
3. rapidity (17, 3, 1, 1)

Although this usage is absent from writings prior to 1893, two instances appear in the *General Presentation* at the World’s Parliament of Religions of 1893, after which point they are found in almost all the publications examined. Again, we find a clustering of the terms in *The Ancient Wisdom*, *In the Outer Court*, and

23 The number refers to a quote in which “hasten” is connected to “growth.” In the context of the quote, “growth” cannot be understood in the sense of “evolution.”

24 The number refers to a quote in which “hasten” is connected to “our own progress.” In this case, progress seems to be synonymous with “evolution.”

25 The number refers to a quote in which “hastens” is connected with “the time when that Monad shall become the spiritual Ego.” This again can be understood as synonymous with “evolution.”

Dharma, spanning the period between 1897 and 1899, although this clustering is not as significant as it is in the case of “quick.”

Taken together, a clear picture emerges from this data. In almost every publication considered here, the idea of the “Quickening of Evolution” is mentioned. In those publications in which the idea is not mentioned by name,²⁶ it is referred to using other terms, as will become clear in the more detailed outline below. For example, if we add “accelerate” to our list, we find additional quotes in *Karma*, *Theosophy and its Practical Application*, and *Death and After?*. The appearance of the idea of the “Quickening of Evolution” across almost every work belonging to the period of Besant’s early Theosophy makes it clear that it was one of the key elements in her thought. The substantive analysis that follows supports this claim of centrality and identifies five different aspects of the “Quickening of Evolution.”

8.2.1 What is the “Quickening of Evolution”?

The earliest passage referring to the “Quickening of Evolution” is found in *What Theosophy Is*.

Thus the soul journeys on his way from life to life until all that earth can give him of experience has been reaped. He reaches the greatest altitude compatible with life in this world, and then a choice is before him. He can pass onward triumphant into realms of loftier nature and there expand and grow; or, this glorious prize within his grasp, he may turn back to earth patiently again to bear the burden of the flesh, until the lowliest child of man has reached his own level and he enters into peace with all his race. The Great Souls that choose this lot are the Saviours of the world, and They wait, watching to help whenever help can be given, the Elder Brothers of our race, the perfected Sons of Man. Blessed beyond all blessings are they who in any fashion can aid Them in lifting the heavy burden of our world, and can co-operate, even if it be in humblest way, in hastening the evolution of the glorious destiny of man. For the Service of Man is the noblest of privileges, and to work for the world the richest of prizes. Our philosophy, our science, our religion have only worth as they make us more useful members of the Brotherhood of Man.²⁷

²⁶ The simple statistical method deployed here does not bring to light any data of interest in the following writings: *Life, Death, and Immortality*. 1886 (pre-Theosophical), *Death – and After?*; several volumes of *Lucifer*, 1892, 1893; *Reincarnation*, 1892; *The Seven Principles of Man*, 1892; *A Word on Man, his Nature and his Powers*, 1893; some of the presentation at the World’s Parliament of Religion. However, it is mentioned in the *General Presentation*, *Theosophy and its Practical Application*, *Lucifer*, 1893; *Avatâras*, 1900; *The Secret of Evolution*, 1900; *The Three Paths to the Union with God*, 1896.

²⁷ Annie Besant, *What Theosophy Is*, Theosophical Tracts no. 4 (London: H.P.B. Press, date of publication not identified [1891]), 6.

This early quotation explains the trajectory of the “Quickening of Evolutions” while embedding it within several key doctrines of the Theosophical Society. First, it is claimed that human beings stand at different stages of evolution, meaning that there are some who are more evolved than others. Secondly, the possibility of liberation from the life of the flesh is spoken of. Thirdly, the necessity of reincarnation is mentioned. These three dimensions are the cornerstones of Besant’s concept of evolution. Finally, we read of the “Great Souls,” “the Elder Brothers” who are members of the “Brotherhood of Man” and are the helpers of the less evolved. By means of this aid, evolution is hastened.

Two pivotal ideas can be detected in this passage. First, the ideal of the perfected helper of humanity and, secondly, the idea of the “Brotherhood of Man,” which latter refers to the Theosophical master narrative (see previous chapter). This idea is developed further in the *General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament*, 1893. Besant begins her talk by announcing her subject as “the Evolution of Man. Man, as you take him in the past, man as we see him in the present, man as he shall be in the future, the very first fruits of that future being men living on the earth to-day.”²⁸ The last part of this clause is rather cryptic at first glance but can be illuminated by reference to other Theosophical ideas. Blavatsky’s conception of evolution involves several cycles which are repeated over and over. However, this is not an undifferentiated repetition, as the results of each cycle form part of the next cycle. As a result, in each cycle there will be more evolved humans living on the earth.²⁹ This point is repeatedly discussed by Besant. One key element of this idea is that with the passing of each cycle more and more evolved persons are present in the world to help the evolution of men. These more evolved people are taken from this view, the Theosophical masters.³⁰ What concerns us here are those “men living on the earth to-day” and the relation they have to the current cycle of evolution. As Besant explains, each human has to realize the “inner force, life after life,”³¹ in order to start striving towards “the divine spirit [that has . . .] His Sanctuary in the innermost heart.”³² At first, he “makes slow progression till a time comes in the life of the man when more rapid growth begins to be possible; the time when the man by

²⁸ Besant, “General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament,” 157.

²⁹ Meera Nanda, “Madame Blavatsky’s Children: Modern Hindu Encounters with Darwinism,” in *Handbook of Religion and the Authority of Science*, ed. James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer, Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion volume 3 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 306.

³⁰ See, e.g., Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 47.

³¹ Besant, “General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament,” 160.

³² Besant, “General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament,” 160.

gradual evolution is beginning to understand the far-off possibility of reuniting.”³³ Then “a conscious acceptance of Man’s true goal in life, the service of his race,”³⁴ takes place. We see here the two poles of 1) gradual evolution and 2) deliberate self-improvement entwined with one another. This is characteristic of Besant’s Theosophical thought, in which human evolution is a conscious process of self-development, in contrast to the Darwinist understanding of the term.

The keystone of Besant’s idea of “self-evolution,”³⁵ or rather “self-improvement,” is “the service.” Evolution, on this view, is connected to an ethical obligation to help the less evolved. Besant explains that, for her, “at once a Socialist and a Theosophist, the matter is of vital importance, for the possibility of realising Socialism turns on the capacity of the human race for self-improvement.”³⁶ The idea of “self-improvement” surfaced in the discourse on liberalism in England and was propounded by figures such as Mill. It was also taken up by the Lamarckism on which Spencer based his ideas about “self-improvement.”³⁷ This is another of the multitude of instances which illustrate that Theosophy was part of a larger discourse on “Evolutionism” (see Chapter 6).

The ideas of “service,” or helping the less evolved, are an important feature in Besant’s conceptualization of the “Quickening of Evolution,” and will be treated below as the fourth dimension of the notion. Having this ideal in front of him, man becomes ready for the next step: initiation. While man strives for the ideal set before him,

the life becomes purer and purer and fuller; and the last cycle of births is entered, which when completed will leave the man one of those who have triumphed over sin and death; and when these last lives are beginning, one lesson comes from those who have already achieved, one special direction is given to the disciple by which his life is to be guided, by which his safety on the path is to be secured.³⁸

33 Besant, “General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament,” 160.

34 Besant, “General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament,” 161.

35 The term “self-evolution” is used by Besant only in connection to Īśvara. Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 147. Blavatsky uses the term to describe the “special training and education [of the Mahatma who . . .] evolved those higher faculties and has attained that spiritual knowledge, which ordinary humanity will acquire after passing through numberless series of re-incarnations during the process of cosmic evolution, provided, of course, that they do not go, in the meanwhile, against the purposes of Nature and thus bring on their own annihilation.” Helena P. Blavatsky, “Mahatmas and Chelas,” *The Theosophist* 5, no. 58 (1884): 233.

36 Annie Besant, “Karma and Social Improvement,” *Lucifer* IV, no. 24 (1889): 457.

37 Bowler, *Evolution*, 99, 238.

38 Besant, “General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament,” 161.

These passages talk about two elements which are presented as necessary pre-conditions for the exponential acceleration of evolution. The first is the setting of an ideal according to which it is right to help humanity and the second is initiation (“one lesson,” “one special direction”) by men who are more highly evolved (“those who have already achieved”). The evolutionary hierarchy is the foundation of the teacher/student relationship, which occupies an important place in Theosophy (see Chapter 7.1). Education is thus an intrinsic element of Annie Besant’s Theosophy and one of the dimensions of the “Quickening of Evolution.”

In the Theosophical hierarchy, knowledge is handed down from a range of teachers on different levels, from the Brotherhood via the Mahatmas to their representatives, in the first instance especially Blavatsky, and all the way down to children, with the goal of accelerating the evolution of humanity.

Such helping divine Teachers, liberated souls, remain among us [. . . they] aid us to climb more swiftly towards the light. From that Brotherhood has ever come revelation, the revelation of fragments of the Divine Wisdom. They send out their disciples as messengers, who repeat the truths they in humbleness have learned, in order that the world may evolve more rapidly.³⁹

The “divine teachers” and “the revelation” that is based on the knowledge of the possibility of accelerating evolution are combined in this passage in the idea of “progress by living.” This idea encapsulates a preliminary stage in the “Quickening of Evolution.” The first preliminary step is daily practice while living the ideal of helping others. Even before this ideal is set, and fully realized at the higher stages of evolution, it is necessary to “take one faculty after another to train; train your reasoning faculty, your memory, your power of comparison and contrast.”⁴⁰ Daily practice in the sense of bodily training and the purification of the body are preliminary steps to the acceleration of evolution, which is also understood as co-operation with the divine will.⁴¹ When connected to the ideal of the helper of humanity, this practice becomes a plea for educational engagement, which is rooted in the idea of the evolutionary hierarchy and the teacher-student relationship, which mirrors the occult hierarchy. To reiterate, in Besant’s Theosophical thought, the purpose of education is the “Quickening of Evolution.” As she explains:

39 Annie Besant, *Some Problems of Life*, 2nd ed. (London, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904), 31.

40 Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 158–59.

41 Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 158–59.

In another way more rapid progress will be made in the days towards which we are looking. In education I suppose it has hardly struck you when dealing with children, when dealing with very young lads, how great are the possibilities that lie within them, if only their teachers had knowledge enough to directly foster the good and to dwarf and starve out the evil in them. [. . .] Now when a young child comes into the world and passes through the early stages of its growth, there is this peculiarity about its aura: it brings with it the karmic outcomes of its past [. . .] within that aura lie the germs of tendencies which may be developed. Some are good and some are evil. The trained eye distinguishing these characteristics, might cultivate the good and starve out the evil by bringing suitable influences to bear on the child.⁴²

In consequence, more evolved men who are able to understand the occult truths and see the auras should teach those who are less evolved in order to bring out the best in them.⁴³ This is why education is a necessity for the “Quickening of Evolution.”

The fifth element, which is connected to the idea of teachers as “karmic helpers,” is the human capacity of “thought power” as understood in Theosophical doctrine. Because human beings have the ability to influence the world and other humans by their thoughts,⁴⁴ mental powers and the individual’s control of their thoughts are critical for the acceleration of evolution.⁴⁵ This idea of thought power has a direct impact on how teacher-student relationships are conceptualized in the Theosophical Society, since teachers can work directly on the minds of their pupils and “influence particular individuals in order that the progress of the world may be quickened and the growth of humanity may be facilitated.”⁴⁶ Annie Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution” thus touches every aspect of human life: 1) daily behavior, and 2) moral, 3) educational, 4) mental, and 5) spiritual progress.

8.2.2 Summarizing the Five Dimensions of the “Quickening of Evolution”

The preceding analysis has shown that the “Quickening of Evolution” in Annie Besant’s Theosophy involves at least five different elements: 1) daily practice, 2)

⁴² Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 138–39.

⁴³ A similar idea is also present in the Waldorfpädagogik. It seems plausible that Steiner based these ideas on Besant’s writings. For a discussion of the teachers as “karmic helpers” in the Waldorfpädagogik, see Ann-Kathrin Hoffmann, “Vom Kopf auf die Füße stellen. Waldorfpädagogik als Kulturforderung im Zeitalter des Intellektualismus?,” in Bauer; Zander, *Forschungsstand Anthroposophie* (working title, forthcoming).

⁴⁴ Annie Besant, *Thought Power: Its Control and Culture* (London and Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901), 108.

⁴⁵ Besant, *Thought Power*, 108.

⁴⁶ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 137.

the ideal of service, 3) education, 4) mental powers (thought power), 5) initiation. After initiation, the evolution of the accepted chela is significantly more rapid than before and he will make progress on different planes of being, control additional powers, and be more helpful to the great brotherhood of men who pursue the goal of helping other individuals. The aim of the other four dimensions is thus to prepare the students/disciples for initiation.

In the next section, initiation itself will be examined. I will begin by describing in detail the steps of initiation as presented by Besant in *The Path of Discipleship*. This will be the starting point for the tracing of these steps in Theosophy and beyond. On an analytical level, I will pursue the relationalizings which are manifested in a range of Theosophical texts, from Blavatsky, through Manilal Dvivedi, Subba Row, and many others, to the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. Analyzing these traces of hybridization will point us towards the hybridization processes which were essential for the formation of Besant’s concept of initiation.

8.2.3 Initiation as the Keystone of Annie Besant’s “Quickening of Evolution”

Initiation as a general idea implies either gaining access to a body of “secret” or “special” knowledge or being admitted into a “closed society,” and often serves as a central goal in “esoteric” groups. In many cases – but not all⁴⁷ – these initiations are accompanied by ritual practices involving members of the group into which one is being initiated.⁴⁸ With the exception of Bogdan’s *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, there are no in-depth analyses of initiatory practices in “esoteric” currents. In the preceding chapter, I discussed master/disciple relationships in general as an important context for understanding Theosophical ideas on initiation, as well as touching on a number of other points relating to initiation.

Some initiatory practices had a formalized role in the Theosophical Society, although the details are not documented, at least to my knowledge. Despite this lacuna in our evidence, it is known that Annie Besant occasionally initiated people. For example, Nehru wrote about his initiation into Theosophy: “I became a member of the Theosophical Society at thirteen and Mrs. Besant herself performed the ceremony of initiation, which consisted of good advice and

⁴⁷ Godwin describes a kind of Self initiation for the H.B. of L. (probably the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor) in which the future initiate would take a pill and then follow certain instructions communicated to him in writing. Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 357.

⁴⁸ Bogdan, *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, 35.

instruction in some mysterious signs, probably a relic of freemasonry.”⁴⁹ The use of Masonic rituals as initiatory practices was not unique to Theosophy: they are also documented for Steiner’s anthroposophy,⁵⁰ the Golden Dawn, and several other “esoteric” societies, such as the H.B. of L., which drew from numerous traditions.⁵¹ At the current stage of research, it can only be noted that initiation played an important role in Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution.” While I doubt that this idea of initiation was connected to initiatory rituals in the early phase of Besant’s Theosophy, which is our concern here, it is not unlikely that such rituals were introduced by Besant later, at least for the Esoteric Section and Co-Masonry. The question of whether or not Besant’s Co-Masonry served as a model for what Nehru writes or for Steiner’s masonic rituals remains unanswered at the present time. In the following, initiation is presented as it is described in Besant’s *The Path of Discipleship*, where we do not read of any rituals. Ritualistic practices are rather described therein as belonging to the earlier stages of development through which one passes before actual initiation takes place.⁵²

8.2.4 The Qualities of the Disciple: The Preliminary Path

In *The Path of Discipleship*, we find a chapter on *the Life of the Disciple* subtitled *the Probationary Path, the Four Initiations*. In this paragraph, Besant explains what qualities a disciple must have to be accepted as a student by a Theosophical Mahatma. The view here reflects the early Theosophists’ practical approach,⁵³ which

⁴⁹ Nehru, *An Autobiography*, 15.

⁵⁰ Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 1013–15.

⁵¹ For several interesting hints about initiation practices, see Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 224, 361–362.

⁵² Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 25.

⁵³ For the early Theosophical practice, see John P. Deveney, “The Two Theosophical Societies: Prolonged Life, Conditional Immortality, and the Individualized Immortal Monad,” in Chajes (née Hall); Huss, *Theosophical Appropriations*. Deveney identifies a shift within early Theosophy from a practical to a non-practical approach towards occultism. He claims that the second generation of the Theosophical Society then totally neglected practice. My book shows that this is not the case. Scripture and learning are integral parts of the “occult practice” of the second generation of the Theosophical Society, so are other practices including meditation, active purification, etc. Of course, the mind and the higher faculties are more highly valued than the body because they may downwardly influence the bodies, but, on the one hand, “thought-control,” meditation, and reading are also practices, while, on the other hand, physical exercise, etc. was also propagated in the Theosophical schools. It is almost symptomatic that Deveney does not quote a single book by Besant, Leadbeater, or any other second-generation Theosophist. In any case, it

finds its continuation throughout the post-Blavatskyan period of the Theosophical Society. As we have already seen in earlier chapters, daily practices and purification are preliminary steps on the way towards initiation. The subsequent four stages or initiations lead – in Besant’s jargon – directly “out of the ordinary humanity into a humanity which is divine.”⁵⁴ In the first four stages, the aspirant is not yet accepted by an adept but is only recognized as a “probationary chelâ.”⁵⁵ He (and it is always a “he” in Besant’s presentation) is thus “not expected to perform perfectly everything he begins to practice. He is expected to attempt, but perfect performance is not demanded from him.”⁵⁶ This is a topos which is also common to other master/disciple relationships (see Chapter 7). The teacher will not reveal himself to the student at this point of his path. Referring to, “a Brâhmana, then in England, and a member of the Theosophical Society, Mohini Mohun Chatterji of Calcutta,”⁵⁷ Besant attempts to describe the stages of the probationary path and the qualities that the disciple has to show, at least in a preliminary form, while treading it. The first of these qualifications is “VIVEKA, or discrimination. Discrimination between the real and the unreal, between the eternal and the transitory. Until this appears he will be bound to the earth by ignorance, and worldly objects will exercise over him all their seductive glamour.”⁵⁸ The second is “indifference to worldly objects, Vairâgya,”⁵⁹ which is understood as a result of *viveka* and stands at the end of a long process of training that “has been carried out by a man certainly for life after life.”⁶⁰ The third qualification is “SHATSAMPATTI, the six-fold group of mental qualities or mental attributes.”⁶¹

The first of the six “mental qualities” is: “*Shama*, control of the mind, that definite regulation of thought, that definite understanding of the effects of thought, and of his relation to the world around him, as he affects it for good or for evil by his own thinking.”⁶² *Śama* is presented as the preliminary stage to achieving a complete control of thought that will allow him to direct his thought towards the goals set by the masters. The second is “*Dama*, control of the senses and the body,

would be best to set aside the term “second generation” because it implies some kind of rupture and has the connotation of a degeneration of Theosophical thought.

54 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 74–75.

55 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 75.

56 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 75.

57 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 76.

58 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 77.

59 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 78.

60 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 77.

61 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 79.

62 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 79.

that which we may call regulation of conduct.”⁶³ From the “the occult standpoint [. . . t]he outer appearance or action is only the translation of the inner thought which in the world of form takes shape as what we call action; but the form is dependent on the life within, the shape is dependent on the moulding energy which makes it.”⁶⁴ The third is “*Uparati*, best translated perhaps as a wide and noble and sustained tolerance [. . .] a kind or sublime patience which is able to wait, which is able to understand, and, therefore, demands from none more than he can give.”⁶⁵ As Besant explains, this tolerance is based on the individual achieving insight into the different stages of development of human development, and because of this “he learns tolerance of all different forms of religion, tolerance of all the different kinds of custom, tolerance of all varying traditions of men. He understands that all these are transitory phases which men ultimately outgrow.”⁶⁶ The fourth mental quality is “*Titiksha*, endurance, a patient bearing of all that comes, a total absence of resentment.”⁶⁷ Achieving this quality comes about, in Besant’s view, from an insight into the “Good Law,” which equates with karma.⁶⁸ The aspirant thus “knows that whatever comes to him in life is of his own creating in the past. And so, his attitude is the attitude of absence of resentment.”⁶⁹ Achieving *Titiksha* will aid the aspirant as he strives towards his goal, as he will endure many a trial filled with hardships during his life. This is because “the man who has entered on the probationary path intends to accomplish within a very limited number of lives what the man of the world will accomplish in hundreds upon hundreds of lives.”⁷⁰ Therefore *Titiksha* is one of the key qualities for Besant. We should note that the process through which these qualities are developed may stretch over several lifetimes. Nonetheless, the process will take far less time than it would under normal circumstances, although on this path the aspirant must endure all the effects of his *karma* during a very short period. His life will, consequently, be very intense. He will suffer greatly because the “great Lords of Karma”⁷¹ will balance his debt by putting on him all the burdens he has brought onto himself. This idea of advancing more

63 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 80.

64 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 80.

65 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 81.

66 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 81.

67 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 82.

68 Besant, *Karma*, 50.

69 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 82.

70 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 83.

71 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 84.

rapidly and achieving higher states of evolution by initiation is the key factor for the quickening. Despite the tribulations involved, by knowing the law of *karma* the individual will not fall into despair because he will understand that the turmoil is proof that his longing for initiation was heard by the masters.

That the masters, who have aided the disciple all along, have now finally “heard” the chela is of no little importance for the disciple’s progress. What this means is that he has caught the conscious attention of the masters who will reveal themselves to him and aid him in the accomplishment of the final initiations. “Shraddhâ,” the fifth mental quality, that is “faith, or we may call it confidence – confidence in his Master and in himself,”⁷² is the precondition for *Titiksha* and the effect of the insight into the “Good Law.”⁷³ This quality is confidence in the higher self and in one’s “guru” – again we see the common topos of master/disciple relationships here (see Chapter 7) – that is gained as the initiate comes to understand his guru’s divinity and, consequently, his own: “he understands [. . .] that what his Guru is to-day, he himself is going to become in the lives that still stretch out in front of him.”⁷⁴ This confidence triggers “*Samâdhâna*, balance, composure, peace of mind [. . .] With the gaining of this the probationary path is trodden, the chelâ-candidate stands ready before the gateway.”⁷⁵ Once he reaches this point, the aspirant at last develops “MUMUKSHÂ, the desire for emancipation, the wish to gain liberation, that which, crowning the long efforts of the candidate, shows him

Table 3: Preconditions for initiation according to Besant. By the author.

Preconditions according to Besant	(1) Viveka	
	(2) Vairâgya	
	(3) Shatsampatti	six-fold group of mental qualities: (i) <i>Shama</i> (ii) <i>Dama</i> , (iii) <i>Uparati</i> (iv) <i>Titiksha</i> (v) <i>Shraddhâ</i> , (vi) <i>Samâdhâna</i> ,
	(4) Mumukshâ	

⁷² Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 86.

⁷³ Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 186.

⁷⁴ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 87.

⁷⁵ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 88.

to be an Adhikari, to be ready for initiation.”⁷⁶ With this stage the preliminary phase (see Table 3) ends, and the disciple becomes an accepted chela.

8.2.5 The Stages of Initiation: An Exponential Progression

Besant claims that only a few hints have appeared about these initiations prior to her work, adding that “giving the information is not to gratify curiosity, [. . .] the hints that are given are meant for men who are in earnest, for those who want to know in order that they may prepare, [. . .] And so from time to time these hints are given.” “Two mighty Teachers [. . .] the LORD BUDDHA; and [. . .] SHRÎ SHANKARÂCHARYA”⁷⁷ gave information about the initiations. She claims that “in the teaching itself there is perfect identity, it is only in the phraseology adapting it respectively to one faith or the other that differences arise.”⁷⁸ The equation between Buddha and Śaṅkara is striking in at least three ways. 1) Besant positions herself as a proponent of “Hinduism,” seeking to supplant the central role played by Buddhism in the Blavatskian era of the Theosophical Society. 2) As part of this strategy, she equates Śaṅkara with Buddha, drawing on his exalted position to elevate the “Hindu” concept. 3) It is a reference to the philosophia perennis and therefore, in the Theosophical context, to the “Great Brotherhood.” In the following, the four stages of initiation will be discussed. As we will see, Besant ideas on initiation were closely linked to master/disciple relationships, to the ideal of service discussed above, and to the expansion of consciousness.

8.2.6 Besant’s Definition of Initiation: The Expansion of Consciousness

The expansion of consciousness was important in many ways to Annie Besant’s Theosophy. As I have explained elsewhere, in her opinion this expansion would lead to an “occult insight” into higher spheres of existence.⁷⁹ This notion

⁷⁶ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 87–88.

⁷⁷ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 90.

⁷⁸ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 91.

⁷⁹ Yves Mühlematter, “Some will be ready to expand ere long into the consciousness of God’: The Purpose of Human Evolution as presented in Annie Besant’s writings” (7th Biannual Conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), Amsterdam, July 02, 2019).

of the expansion of consciousness is also crucial for her understanding of initiation. As she puts it:

initiation means this; it means the expansion of consciousness: which is brought about by the definite intermediation of the Guru, who acts in place of the one GREAT INITIATOR of humanity and gives the second birth in His Name. This expansion of consciousness is the note as it were of initiation, for this expansion of consciousness gives what is called ‘the key of knowledge’; it opens up to the Initiate new vistas of knowledge and of power, it places within his hand the key which unlocks the doors of nature. To what end? In order that he may become more serviceable to the world at large; in order that his power for service may be increased.⁸⁰

We see here that service to the masters, and thereby to the world, is the primary goal of initiation. The expansion of consciousness helps the disciple to engage actively in the higher spheres of being and thus to direct his thought towards helping others.⁸¹ Service to the world equates with the subjugation of the individual under the divine will, and this working under the auspices of the divine leads to the quickening of the evolution of the individual and of humanity as a whole.⁸² Initiation is not sought after for selfish reasons, on Besant’s understanding, but rather for the good of humanity. By expanding his consciousness, the aspirant will be able to direct his efforts more deliberately and will therefore make swifter progress. The “Quickening of Evolution” is thus conceptualized as an exponential progression. In the following, the stages of initiation are discussed following Besant’s presentation of them in *The Path of Discipleship*. It is interesting to see that Besant lays out these stages as part of an Indian religious conceptual framework, mainly drawing on Advaita Vedānta concepts. She states:

I am anxious that you should know the four stages of the Path as they are spoken of in Hinduism, as some people imagine that they were revealed only by the LORD BUDDHA, whereas He but proclaimed again the ancient narrow Path, that all Initiates of the One Lodge have trodden, are treading, and shall tread.⁸³

This illustrates how the idea of a Great Brotherhood and a perennial wisdom which is guarded by that brotherhood underlies Besant’s idea of initiation. As we follow the stages of initiation further, we will see that each stage is marked by

80 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 91.

81 Besant, *Thought Power*, 73–74.

82 E.g., Besant, *Dharma*, 54; Annie Besant, *The Three Paths to Union with God: Lectures Delivered at Benares, at the Sixth Annual Convention of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, October 19th, 20th and 21st, 1896* (London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1913), 19; Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 65; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 111.

83 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 93–94.

specific qualities that must be acquired. The main differences from the probationary path are that the qualities must be mastered in these higher stages and that the guidance of the masters will be direct and conscious.⁸⁴ The first stage is the stage of the “Parivrajaka” or the “Srotâpatti.”⁸⁵ The Pali term given in Buddhism means “he who has entered the stream which separates him from this world,”⁸⁶ as Besant explains. For her this has the same meaning as the term used by Śaṅkara, which she translates as “the wanderer.”⁸⁷ She describes Parivrajaka as a state of non-residence, not simply in the world but also beyond, stating that “his inner life is separated from the world.” As a result, “he can go here, there and anywhere, where his Master may send him. No place has power to hold him, no place has power to bind him; he has shaken off the fetters of place.”⁸⁸ This notion of non-residence also involves the idea that the one who is outside the world does not want anything from it but to follow his teacher and to help humanity. When the aspirant becomes a “Srotâpatti,” “he can never again be uninitiated [. . .] He has stepped into the stream; he is separated from the world.” In this stage, he will have to accomplish three tasks. The first is to “get absolutely rid of [. . .] the illusion of the personal self.”⁸⁹ “The chelâ must recognize himself as one with all other selves, for the Self of all is one. He must realize that all around him, man, the animal and plant worlds, the mineral and elemental forms of life, are all one.”⁹⁰ This realization is presented as part of the expanding consciousness that will pierce the illusion, leading to all false ideas passing from him. The second task that must be accomplished is getting “rid of doubt by knowledge.”⁹¹ What this means is that realizing and actually seeing “certain fundamental truths”⁹² will lead to them being understood as facts. The truths in question are “the great truth of Reincarnation; [. . .] the great truth of Karma; [. . .] the great truth of the existence of the divine Men, of the Jîvanmuktas, who are the Gurus of humanity.”⁹³ Knowledge is therefore gained by empirical means and this knowledge provides certainty about these laws beyond doubt. The last of these three tasks is “to entirely cast off [. . .] superstition. Superstition means [. . .] reliance on external sectarian

84 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 92–94.

85 Besant gives the names of both the Buddhist and the Vedānta traditions and parallels them. An overview is given at the end of this paragraph.

86 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 93.

87 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 93.

88 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 93.

89 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 96.

90 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 93.

91 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 96.

92 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 96.

93 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 96–97.

rites and ceremonies for spiritual help.”⁹⁴ It does not necessarily follow that Besant belittles rituals and ceremonies entirely. Rather, she understands them as prerequisites, simple tools that belong to previous stages of development.⁹⁵ At the stage considered here, the aspirant has pierced through illusion and hence understands the truth that lies behind such rites, and is, thus, no longer dependent on these outer forms.

Besant identifies the second stage of initiation with Śaṅkara’s “Kutîchaka” and Buddha’s “Sakridâgâmin.” She explains that these terms can be translated as “the man who builds a hut” and “the man who receives birth once more.”⁹⁶ In this stage, the *siddhis* – superhuman powers that are acquired through yogic practices – are to be gained because they are necessary for the further assistance of the masters and therefore for swifter evolutionary progress. In this stage, the initiate will learn to act “in the other worlds that [. . .] lie outside the physical plane.”⁹⁷ The main power one achieves at this stage is that of being able to separate the astral body from the physical and consequently becoming able to leave the physical plane without any disruption of consciousness, allowing one to work consciously on the astral plane.⁹⁸

The third stage, or the third initiation, as Besant has it, is called “Hamsa” in the tradition of Śaṅkara and “Anâgâmin” in the Buddhist tradition. Besant explains that the “Anâgâmin” is “the man who receives birth no more, save indeed by his own free will.”⁹⁹ Hence, this is the stage at which unity is fully understood, “because in his expanding consciousness he had already risen into the region in the universe where that identity is realized, and had experienced ‘I am It’.”¹⁰⁰ Besant’s Indian audience would most likely have understood the

94 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 97.

95 E.g., Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 17–18; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 375; Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 118–19; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 19; Annie Besant, “The Supreme Duty,” in *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World’s Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17, 186*.

96 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 101.

97 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 101.

98 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 102. It is interesting that Besant denies the possibility of using the astral body as a vehicle for astral travelling in her later works, especially in *The Ancient Wisdom*. However, she does not completely deny the possibility of astral traveling, but changes her nomenclature and explains in more detail what forms can be taken for astral journeys.

99 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 104.

100 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 104.

reference here to the famous phrase from *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.11.¹⁰¹ Achieving this state also means that the initiate is now able to bring back memories and insight from the higher planes of existence.¹⁰²

At this stage, as Besant explains, egoism is impossible because the initiate knows that he is one with every being and that he will therefore not long for anything that is not directed towards the good of humanity as a whole. Hence, even spiritual achievements lose their attractiveness if they are concerned with the individual, and everything that is achieved on this stage and those that follow is gained for all of humanity. At this stage further accelerated progress for everyone can be made. In Besant’s words:

He stands in a region of the Universe whence strength comes; down into the world of men, and as he gains it he passes it on, he sheds it on all, he shares it with all. Thus all the world is better for each man who reaches this stage. All he wins is won for humanity, and all that comes into his hands comes only to pass through them into the wider world of men. He is one with BRAHMAN, and therefore one with every manifestation; and he is that in his own consciousness, and not only in hope and aspiration.¹⁰³

At this stage of unity, the initiate will “be love and compassion to everything, love and compassion to all. He spreads round him as it were an all-embracing circle of affection.”¹⁰⁴ When this stage is attained, the stage the name of which is “used so widely and so carelessly, used so often for mere compliment, for an outer appearance instead of for a living reality,”¹⁰⁵ the initiate is one stage short of gaining *jīvanmukti*. Here his waking conscience expands further into the “Turiya region. He has no need to leave the body to enjoy it. He has no need to leave the body to be conscious in it. His consciousness embraces, has expanded to, that, although at the same time it may be working in the lower brain.”¹⁰⁶ He thus has constant access to this region’s knowledge and can apply it while working in the body through the brain.

At this stage he also “throws off the last five ‘fetters,’ that he may become the *Jīvanmukta*.”¹⁰⁷ The first of these five “fetters” is “Rûparâga, desire for ‘life in form’ – no desire for such life can move him.”¹⁰⁸ The second is “Arûparâga, desire

101 Olivelle translates “I am this.” Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*, South Asia Research (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 285.

102 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 104.

103 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 105.

104 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 105.

105 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 107.

106 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 106–7.

107 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 107.

108 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 107.

for ‘life without form’.”¹⁰⁹ The third, “Mâna is cast away, and again we have to use an English word far too gross to express the real subtle nature of the fetter cast off – pride.”¹¹⁰ This means that the initiate is not proud about his achievements and does not feel himself to be superior to others because he reached this stage of existence. The fourth fetter to be cast off is “the possibility of being ruffled by anything that may occur.”¹¹¹ This means that “nothing that can happen to the manifested world can shake the sublime serenity of the man who has risen thus to the realization of the Self of all. What matters a catastrophe – it is but the form that is broken.”¹¹² Finally, “Avidyâ – that which makes illusion; the last faint film which prevents the perfect insight and the perfect liberty”¹¹³ is destroyed.

Now the initiate can finally be liberated and becomes “the Jīvanmukta, according to the Hindu phrase, the Asekha Adept, or He who has no more to learn, according to the Buddhist nomenclature.”¹¹⁴ When this is achieved, he now has the freedom to choose between different paths. Besant, however, only discusses one possible path as this is obviously the one that is preferred. This is the “Path of the Great Renunciation.” On this path, the *jīvanmukta* “refuses to leave it [the world of men], refuses to go away from it, says that He will remain and take to Himself a body again and again, for the teaching and for the helping of man.”¹¹⁵ Those who decide to stay, to be reborn until human evolution is completed are called “the great Masters of Compassion”¹¹⁶ because they stay on earth to help men in their evolution.

All are glorious who have reached that lofty level, all are divine who stand where They are standing. But perhaps one may dare to say without irreverence, that the dearest to the heart of humanity, gratitude for the renunciation made, are Those who might have gone from us but who stay with us the most closely bound to it by the ties of passionate gratitude for the renunciation made, are Those who might have gone from us but who stay with us, who might have left us orphans but who remain as the Fathers of men. Such are the great Gurus at whose Feet we bow; such the great Masters who stand behind the Theosophical Society. They sent Their messenger, H. P. Blavatsky, to bring the message to the world which the world had well-nigh forgotten, to point again to the narrow and ancient Path along which some feet are treading now, along which your feet may tread.¹¹⁷

109 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 107.

110 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 107–8.

111 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 108.

112 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 108.

113 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 108.

114 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 109.

115 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 109–10.

116 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 110.

117 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 110–11.

This last paragraph shows that initiation was strongly linked in Besant’s early Theosophy to the idea of the Great Brotherhood. The succession of knowledge through the Great Brotherhood, the evolution of humanity, and education as the means for the “Quickening of Evolution” are the three main topics which will be traced further through this book. Before going on, however, I will first draw a preliminary conclusion and attempt to apply the theoretical framework to the material presented above (summarized in Table 4). This will be of considerable assistance in the argumentation below, as these stages will be encountered in several of the other examples discussed.

8.2.7 Overview of the Stages of Initiation as Described in Annie Besant’s *The Path of Discipleship*

Table 4: The stages of initiation according to Besant. By the author.

Stages of Initiation		
Name called by Shrī Shankarāchārya	Name called by Buddha	Main characteristic
Parivrajaka	Srotāpatti	Not belonging to the world Wants nothing from this world Three fetters Get rid of “the illusion of the personal self” “Get rid of doubt by knowledge” “Cast off superstition”
Kutīchaka	Sakridāgāmin	<i>Siddhis</i> “Develop his inner faculties”
Hamsa	Anāgāmin	Unity Casting off the fetter of Kāmarāga No egoism, all is gained for humanity Love and compassion
Paramahamsa	Arhat	Stage before jīvanmukti Expanding consciousness to the Turīya region Having access to all that knowledge without any break in consciousness Casting off the last five fetters: Rūparāga, Arūparāga, Māna, “the possibility of being ruffled by anything that may occur,” Avidya

Table 4 (continued)

Stages of Initiation		
Name called by	Name called	Main characteristic
Shrī Shankarāchārya	by Buddha	
Jīvanmukta		Great Renunciation Help in the evolution of men Theosophical masters

I argue that these stages are the product of a long hybridization process which manifested as numerous relations (for the conceptualization of the idea of “relations,” see Chapters 3 and 4) in *The Path of Discipleship*. It will be the task of the coming chapters to trace these relations and point to some of the actors who took part in this process of hybridization. The next section will provide a preliminary conclusion for Chapter 8 in which I will point to some possible relations. The following section will then discuss these relations and ask in a deductive manner whether the theoretical approach developed in earlier chapters helps to provide a better understanding of Annie Besant’s early Theosophy and the context in which it developed.

8.3 Preliminary Conclusion: Exponential Evolution, Self-Development, and the Bridging of the Master Paradox

I argue that human self-development is the aim of Annie Besant’s early Theosophy. The line of argument followed above points towards the conceptualization of progress as a human-induced – or at least human-accelerated – process for bringing about the universal good. This conceptualization is connected to the idea of a guiding force, identified in Besant’s writings as the “divine will,” a guiding force that is intrinsically connected to a morality which demands submission to the divine will because this will leads to an acceleration of progress. The idea of the “Quickening of Evolution” describes this connection between self-development and submission to the “divine will” as “service to humanity” and to the “masters.” It likewise has a practical dimension which aims at the “acceleration of individual progress” and, with this, of evolution in general. The path described as part of the “Quickening of Evolution” can be separated into two broad levels: a “beginner’s level,” comprising all the preliminary stages, and an “advanced level” that is reached after initiation. At the end of this process of initiation the chela becomes a master. Becoming

a master is associated, in the Theosophical master narrative, with passing through long spans of life cycles involving numerous incarnations. Human progress is described as a teleological process in which humans eventually become divine. The chasm between those who are “divine” (the masters), or at least close to it, and those who are still evolving (the disciples) seems almost unbridgeable. The apparent impossibility of crossing this divide has been discussed in Chapter 7.1, above, as the “Master Paradox.” Annie Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution” provides a way of training and teaching as a method for bridging this chasm. Education and following a certain way of life eventually leads one to a spiritual initiation that induces a change of consciousness and perception. As this path is the intermediary stage between the educational epistemology of Theosophy and the higher knowledge, it can be understood as the core of the Theosophical teaching. In the following chapters, several elements of the “Quickening of Evolution” will be traced further through Theosophical writings, starting with H. P. Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence*, which will be identified as a book of initiation. This discussion will, on the one hand, draw attention to the centrality of the idea of the “Quickening of Evolution” in the Theosophical doctrine while, on the other, illustrating how this concept evolved through a long hybridization process of translation, de- and recontextualization, and repetition in which numerous actors were involved.

Numerous relations of the sort conceptualized in Chapters 3 and 4 can be identified in Annie Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution.” Outstanding examples are the stages of initiation and the preliminary qualifications of the disciples, both of which point towards a process of the translation of Indian concepts into the Theosophical context. Elements from both “Hinduism,” mostly as part of a specific reception of Advaita Vedānta (discussed in more detail below), and Buddhism are presented as stages of initiation in a process of human progress. In this presentation, the elements (stages) are absorbed into the structure (evolutionary progress). The movement of these “elements” points to a “hybridization process” (translation) in which the “Eastern” elements become the center of the “Western” concept of evolutionist progress.

However, there are additional complexities that must also be considered: As the discussion of the reception of “evolutionism” above has illustrated – and as the general theoretical approach in this book assumes – it is highly problematic to label “elements” and “structures” as “Eastern” or “Western.” In the case of the “elements,” as will be seen, these had already been hybridized through the process of translation prior to Besant’s use of them in *The Path of Discipleship*. But these elements were in fact also “hybrids” before translation because they were part of a long tradition of repetition in numerous asynchronous contexts. Similarly, the “structure” is not only “hybrid” in the discursive field concerned

with “Evolutionism” in the “West” (repetition in several contexts) but also in the global colonial discursive continuum, as its reception in the Indian context discussed in Chapter 6.9 shows. In Chapters 9 and 11, it will be seen that the conceptualization of “stages of initiation” as actual “stages” in an evolutionary process developed through an encounter between Manilal Dvivedi and H. P. Blavatsky. Structurally similar developments can be described for numerous other “elements” and “structures” in Annie Besant’s early Theosophy, not least her ideas about master/disciple relationships. These points will be discussed in more detail in the following chapters. In addition, what can be said of the master/disciple relationship is also true of teacher/student relationships as they appear in Besant’s pedagogy (discussed in Chapter 13). The idea of an ancient wisdom, which is closely linked to the Theosophical masters, points to further processes of relationizing. The claim that this ancient wisdom was preserved in several religions and was then rediscovered in Theosophy can be described as a process of epistemological and chronological hierarchical relationizing (see Chapter 4.6). This relationalization is also genealogical because the “masters” who are identified as the “great teachers” of all religions secure the kinship of all religions and the “Great Brotherhood.” What Annie Besant had to say in *The Ancient Wisdom* is paradigmatic for that process of relationizing. In the introduction to this work, Besant employs comparative methods to lay out a genealogy of religions. Therein she explains similarities between religions by employing the paradigm of relationizing described above. She writes:

The second [the first being that religions are the results “ignorance tilted by imagination” and gradually evolved in sequential steps] explanation of the common property in the religions of the world asserts the existence of an original teaching in the custody of a Brotherhood of great spiritual Teachers, who – Themselves the outcome of past cycles of evolution – acted as the instructors and guides of the child-humanity of our planet, imparting to its races and nations in turn the fundamental truths of religion in the form most adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the recipients. According to this view the Founders of the great religions are members of the one Brotherhood, and were aided in Their mission by many other members, lower in degree than Themselves, Initiates and disciples of various grades, eminent in spiritual insight, in philosophic knowledge, or in purity of ethical wisdom. These guided the infant nations, gave them their polity, enacted their laws, ruled them as kings, taught them as philosophers, guided them as priests; all the nations of antiquity looked back to such mighty men, demi-gods and heroes, and they left their traces in literature, in architecture, in legislation.¹¹⁸

Besant explains here the hierarchical idea of the evolution of religions. It is plausible that, in doing so, she draws on Tylor’s idea of a connected evolution of

118 Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 2–4.

religions, since Besant's argumentation is close to that of Tylor in his introduction to *Primitive Culture*.¹¹⁹ However, in contrast to a Tylorian explanation, the evolution of religions is instead said to be guided by the members of the great Brotherhood. These teachers are themselves the result of previous cycles of evolution and can be understood as those who renounced the higher fruits of initiation to "quicken" the evolution of all of humanity. Another important feature of Annie Besant's evolutionism is that the teachers taught the "fundamental truths of religion in the form most adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the recipients." This reflects Besant's view that evolution in humans takes place asynchronously. For every step in that evolution, the means of evolution must be adapted. This idea was expressed in Besant's early Theosophy using a wide range of terms and concepts, a fundamental feature of which was "karmic necessity." Such necessities, she held, were properly understood by masters/teachers, who, as a result, were able to aid their disciples/students in their evolution (see above). This idea of the master/teacher as "karmic helper" seems to have been forged in Besant's encounters with multifaceted concepts of master/disciple relations (see also 7.1, above).

8.4 Hybridization and Encounters in Besant's Early Theosophy: The Textual Level and the Level of the Discourse

It has been seen above that the concept of "translation" as a "movement" of "elements" and/or "structures" works well in describing the "repetition" of "elements" from a linguistic system as they are "transferred" into another. However, I think that it works less well when applied to transfer processes within the same linguistic system, because the term "translation" is tied to the idea of transfer from one language to another. Using it for transfer processes in a single language may, thus, be confusing. Consequently, the term "translation" and the verb "to translate" will be used to talk about transfer from one linguistic system to another while transfer processes that repeat a structure or element within the same linguistic system will be described in terms of "de- and recontextualizing," which I understand as parallel "hybridization processes." The idea of "repetition" should, then, be conceptualized as an effect of the two "hybridization processes" indicated above.

¹¹⁹ Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Resaerches into the Developement of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion Language, Art and Custom*, 2nd ed. (London: John Murray, 1873), 18–19.

This consideration of Besant’s early Theosophy strengthens the argument that “encounters” are the premises for “hybridization processes.” Hence, I maintain that every “contact” leads to “hybridization.” Nevertheless, it seems that there are different degrees of “hybridization,” although – as discussed above – conceptualizing “hybridization” as taking place gradually involves certain problems, not the least of which is the danger of hierarchizing “hybridization processes” (see Chapter 4.1). In subsequent chapters, I will turn to the question of the extent to which it is possible to find terms that describe these different “hybridizations” without employing value judgements. One possible way of doing so, discussed in more detail below, is to distinguish between two different levels: 1) the textual level, and 2) the level of “hybridization.”

Against this background, the terms drawn from Berner’s *Instrumentarium* are inappropriate when it comes to describing the level of “hybridization.” Berner’s *Instrumentarium* works well for the description of “Besant’s idea,” but, as indicated in 4.4 and 4.6, it does not describe the level of “hybridization” in a way that is congruent with Bhabha’s theory. Besant’s work can be read as a hegemonic attempt to close the discourse. Berner’s *Instrumentarium* provides a terminology which allows for the description of this relationalization, although it does not describe what impact this had in terms of “hybridization” on Besant’s Theosophy. In summary, Berner’s *Instrumentarium* is *useful* for pointing out hegemonic attempts at relationizing and therefore for indicating relations, but it does not describe the “relations” or “in-betweens” in accordance with Bhabha’s view. What Berner describes are “traces,” not “relations (see Chapter 4.6).”

In summary, it can be said that the concept of “relationizings” as “traces of hybridization processes” is an analytical tool that allows a) the identification of “hybridization processes” on a textual level and b) the differentiation of patterns of such “hybridization processes.” At the same time, these processes should also be understood in terms of the power-relations that are necessarily at play in them as a result of them being embedded in the global colonial discursive continuum.

9 Following the Traces of Hybridization: The Stages of Initiation in Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*

I will begin by discussing Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*. A detailed analysis of this text will show that it was a book of initiation, and in this respect it was of great importance to Annie Besant. Indeed, Besant claimed that she received her first visit from a master after having read *The Voice of the Silence* (see below). In this work, Blavatsky discusses several stages of initiation. The "elements" of these stages were transferred to Blavatsky's work from Manilal Divedi writings, while Blavatsky herself provided the "structures" in which these elements were embedded into the grand scheme of Theosophical evolution. The idea of initiation with a specific purpose – which is, I argue, the main concern of Besant's early Theosophy – was developed within a discursive field in which several Indian Theosophists were involved. Their involvement will be illustrated by looking at the early reception of Advaita Vedānta in the Theosophical Society, first as presented in the pages of *The Theosophist* (Chapter 10), and secondly in relation to T. Subba Row's contributions (Chapter 12). These chapters, as well as those that follow, will illustrate and further conceptualize the hybridization processes which took place in diversified discursive fields within the Indian Middle Class and beyond.

9.1 The Gurvi and her Disciple: Annie Besant's Initiation and *The Voice of The Silence*

Blavatsky's small booklet was composed at Fontainebleau during the summer months of 1889 and published the same year. Besant first read it while visiting Blavatsky at Fontainebleau together with Herbert Burrows, with whom she attended the International Labour Congress in July. The same night, Besant had her first visit from a Theosophical master, whose name she gives as Morya.¹²⁰ Nethercot's account of this episode is based on a number of sources. The story of the reading of *The Voice of the Silence* was first given by Annie Besant in her autobiography.¹²¹ The visit of the master was, according to Nethercot, described in

¹²⁰ Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, 177.

¹²¹ Annie Besant, *Annie Besant: An Autobiography* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908), Illustrated, 352–53.

an article in *The Westminster Gazette* years later in 1895.¹²² In this article, Besant does not mention *The Voice of the Silence* but she does mention the visit of the master, the date, and her visit to Fontainebleau.¹²³ It seems, then, that Nethercot constructed his statement by combining Besant's two accounts. The events described in the two accounts fit together chronologically, but it is interesting that Besant did not mention either *The Voice of the Silence* or Blavatsky in her account in *The Westminster Gazette*. This article, should, I think, be read in the light of the struggle over Blavatsky's succession, and understood as being aimed in particular at the discrediting of Judge's claims. One can only speculate about Besant's intentions in not mentioning Blavatsky and *The Voice of the Silence*, but it seems likely that she felt that mentioning Blavatsky here would have sent the wrong signal, as the main charge leveled against Judge was that he had forged his claimed Mahatma letters.¹²⁴

The Voice of the Silence is generally recognized as "one of the most popular Theosophical texts,"¹²⁵ and its importance for Annie Besant is documented by her biographers,¹²⁶ while its significance for later Theosophy has often been noted in the scholarship.¹²⁷ Despite this significance, it has never been examined in any great depth. Godwin summarizes the contents and points out the

122 The article is quoted, unfortunately without direct reference, in Theodore Besterman, *Mrs Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1934), 170. The description names Fontainebleau and the year 1889 but does not directly refer to *The Voice of the Silence*, at least not in the paragraph given by Besterman. Similarly, Geoffrey West, *The Life of Annie Besant* (London: Gerald Howe Limited, 1933), 173.

123 Annie Besant, interview by "A representative of The Westminster Gazette," Wednesday, April 24, 1895, London; Mrs. Besant and the Mahatmas: How They Look and How They Are Scented; "Master Morya's" View of Mr. Judge.

124 Annie Besant, interview by "A representative of The Westminster Gazette". Interestingly, Blavatsky herself faced exactly the same charges concerning her own communications in what came to be known as the Coulomb affair. Richard Hodgson, who investigated the matter on behalf of the Society for Psychical Research, came to the conclusion that Blavatsky was, indeed, guilty of falsifying her claimed contacts. See Godwin, "Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy," 25–26.

125 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 235.

126 Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 248; Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, 177. Not so Pécastaing-Boissière and Terrier, *Annie Besant*. Pécastaing-Boissière does not mention *The Voice of the Silence* or *The Path of Discipleship*. Indeed, the whole topic of initiation is marginalized in Pécastaing-Boissière's Besant biography.

127 Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 605. Zander not only points out the relevance of this little treatise for Steiner's personal "spiritual development," but also its practical dimensions. Zander claims that *The Voice of Silence*, in its German translation by Franz Hartmann (1893), was one of the sources for Steiner's "Schulungsweg."



Figure 4: Theosophical Convention. Standing, Babaji, and Olcott. Second row from right to left, Rudolf Gebhard, Franz Hartmann, Helena Blavatsky, and T. Subba Row. Between Blavatsky and Subba Row in the middle of the picture is Damodar Mavalankar. Front row with glasses and white moustache is Tookaram Tatya. For information on Rudolf Gebhard and Franz Hartmann who were both important figures in German Theosophical Society, see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 109–14, 281–85. For information about Mavalankar and Babaji, see Eek, *Dâmodar*. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Adyar, December 1884. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai.)

two paths and the “the great sacrifice of the Bodhisattva,”¹²⁸ but the practical dimensions of the work concerning the stages of initiation are neglected. Similarly, Campbell, notwithstanding that he shows a great familiarity with the work and that he provides the most comprehensive summary of it, cannot make intelligible why the book is considered to be among the most influential books in Theosophy.¹²⁹ The fact that the book is not commonly understood as a book of initiation may account for the neglect of this dimension of the text in particular. *The Voice of the Silence* is written in cryptic language and it is necessary to read it very closely in order to understand the hints given about initiation, including its

¹²⁸ Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 329.

¹²⁹ Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 48–51.

many assumptions about Theosophical concepts relating to bodies, evolution, the masters, and initiation. In the following *The Voice of the Silence* is examined in depth in order to bring out the practical dimensions found in the book and to map out the stages of initiation described therein.

9.2 The “Already Hybrids” of the Stages of Initiation in *The Voice of the Silence*

Blavatsky names three of her sources in *The Voice of the Silence*. Although she mentions them critically and as being unreliable – “how little one can rely upon the Orientalists”¹³⁰ – it seems that she nevertheless both read them and drew much of her information from them. In 1895, Emmet Coleman (1843–1909) published his article *The Sources of Madame Blavatsky’s Writings* wherein he traced, in a polemical tone, the sources she had used and accused her of plagiarism. He of course had his own agenda for doing so. As we are not primarily interested here in the manner in which Blavatsky composed her works, but rather in examining “hybridity” in Besant’s ideas on initiation, we can set aside the accusation of plagiarism and the motives of her accuser.¹³¹ Although Coleman focused mainly on *Isis Unveiled*, he also identified sources for others of Blavatsky’s writings, including *The Voice of the Silence*. He wrote that an enlarged version of his article with detailed accounts would be published soon, but, unfortunately, the work never appeared. Coleman identified several of the sources Blavatsky drew on for *The Voice of the Silence*. Some of these – mentioned above – Blavatsky named herself while others were not explicitly mentioned. Coleman states:

I have traced the sources whence it was taken, and it [*The Voice of the Silence*] is a hotch-potch from Brahmanical books on Yoga and other Hindu writings; Southern Buddhistic books, from the Pali and Sinhalese; and Northern Buddhistic writings, from the Chinese and Thibetan, – the whole having been taken by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky from translations by, and the writings of, European and other Orientalists of to-day. In this work are

130 Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence: Being Chosen Fragments from the “Book of the Golden Precepts”* (London, New York: The Theosophical Publishing Company; W. Q. Judge, 1889), For the Daily Use of Lanoos (Disciples), 88.

131 For more information on Emmett Coleman and his motivation for accusing Blavatsky of plagiarism, see Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 26–28; Jake Winchester, “Roots of the Oriental Gnosis: H.P. Blavatsky, W.E. Coleman, & S.F. Dunlap” (MA Thesis, Geschiedenis van de hermetische filosofie en verwante stromingen, University of Amsterdam, June 2015), accessed-February 28, 2019, 3–16; Jeffrey D. Lavoie, *The Theosophical Society: The History of a Spiritualist Movement* (Boca Raton: BrownWalker Press, 2012), 262–74.

intermingled Sanskrit, Páli, Thibetan, Chinese, and Sinhalese terms, – a manifest absurdity in a Thibetan work.¹³²

Coleman’s polemical tone rings out undoubtedly in this statement. His article provides an interesting example in which several discursive fields are brought together by Coleman’s interaction with Blavatsky’s texts. Coleman’s take as a Spiritualist and lay scholar was embedded in several contexts which he connected by means of his publication, which was itself likewise supported by structures such as the Society for Psychical Research. It will be shown in the following that these multifaceted connections, which triggered the establishment of numerous relations and their manifestation in text forms, were not exceptional cases but were, rather, the norm. In other words, the discussion below will point towards hybridization processes involving already hybrid “elements” and “structures” that connect numerous discursive fields.

The three authors mentioned by Blavatsky and Coleman are Robert Spence Hardy, Emil Schlagintweit, and Joseph Edkins. In addition, Coleman also mentions “Dvivedi’s *Raja Yoga*, and *Raja Yoga Philosophy* (1888); also an article, ‘The Dream of Ravan,’ published in the *Dublin University Magazine*, January, 1854, extracts from which appeared in the *Theosophist* of January, 1880.”¹³³ *The Dream of Ravan* was initially printed over several volumes of the *Dublin University Magazine* in 1853 and 1854 and then republished in 1895 by the Theosophical Society, with a short introduction by G. R. S. Mead, through several of their publishing houses in London, New York and Adyar. Coleman’s publication was probably earlier than the republication of *The Dream of Ravan* and the latter is thus not included in his survey. However, this later republication, as well as the text’s broader reception by Theosophists, underlines the importance of *The Dream of Ravan* for the early reception of Indian thought in the Theosophical Society.¹³⁴ Dvivedi’s *Raja Yoga* and *The Dream of Ravan* will be discussed further below.

Before turning to *The Voice of the Silence*, it will be useful to have before us a biographical overview of Schlagintweit, Hardy, and Edkins. This will provide the background against which I will develop my argument concerning the “already hybrids.”

132 Emmette Coleman, “The Sources of Madame Blavatsky’s Writings,” in *A Modern Priestess of Isis: Abridged and Translated on Behalf of the Society for Psychical Research from the Russian of Vsevolod Sergyeevich Solovyoff by Walter Leaf*, ed. Walter Leaf, Cambridge Library Collection. Spiritualism and Esoteric Knowledge (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895), 360.

133 Coleman, “The Sources of Madame Blavatsky’s Writings,” 362.

134 For the importance of *The Dream of Ravan* for the uptake of Indian thought, with special regard to *chakras*, see Baier, “Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer,” 327–31.

Robert Spence Hardy (1803–1868)	Hardy was a Methodist who joined the Wesleyan Mission, with whom he spent twenty-three years in Ceylon. During his time there, Hardy translated several Sinhala Buddhist manuscripts and worked on Pali texts. His book <i>Manual of Buddhism</i> , which was first published in 1853 and had its second edition in 1880 (Blavatsky probably used this later edition), was a pioneering work in Ceylon Buddhism. Hardy was an honorary member of the Royal Asiatic Society. After his return to England, he served as a minister in the Leeds district. ¹³⁵ Coleman suggests that Blavatsky used Hardy's <i>Eastern Monachism</i> in preparing her own writings.
Emil Schlagintweit (1835–1904)	Emil Schlagintweit was the youngest of the Schlagintweit brothers. The older three of the four brothers were passionate alpinists and studied geography and physics, with Hermann and Adolf pursuing the subject up to Habilitation level (Hermann in Berlin in 1850, Adolf in Munich in 1853), and the younger Robert earning a doctorate (also in Munich in 1853). The three brothers were chosen to lead an expedition in 1854 to the western provinces of India, backed by a collaboration between the Prussian King, the East India Company, and the Royal Society. Emil studied law and gained his doctorate in the subject in 1863. He was well acquainted with Tibetan culture and Language and published his book <i>Buddhism in Tibet</i> in 1863. ¹³⁶ This book was certainly used by Blavatsky (see below).
Joseph Edkins (1832–1905)	Edkins was a Protestant Missionary who was appointed to the mission in China by the London Missionary Society. He worked in China from 1848, first in Shanghai and later in Peking. He was one of the first Protestant missionaries to be allowed to live in Peking, where he remained until his death in 1905. Together with his colleagues, he translated the New Testament into Mandarin. He was also a member of the Royal Asiatic Society's China branch and published many books on China and the Chinese language, including <i>Religion in China</i> and <i>Chinese Buddhism</i> , both dating to 1880. ¹³⁷ The latter was probably the work used by Blavatsky.

9.3 Why Do I Speak of “Already Hybrids”?

In the following, *The Voice of the Silence* will be read using the analytical tool developed earlier in this book. I will attempt to show, where possible, which

¹³⁵ F. W. Andrew, “Hardy, Robert Spence,” in Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, 280.

¹³⁶ Helmut Mayr, “Schlagintweit: z.T. bayer. Adel 1859,” in *Neue Deutsche Biographie*, ed. Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 23 (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007), accessed February 8, 1029, 24–25.

¹³⁷ Ralph R. Covell in Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, 194–95.

passages Blavatsky used from the books identified above. However, while these concepts can be traced back to the books and authors named above, it is necessary to clarify that they are also repeated throughout Blavatsky’s own works and those of other Theosophists. Consequently, by the time she made use of them in *The Voice of the Silence*, they were already established within the Theosophical conceptual vocabulary. Nevertheless, it is important to make it clear that Blavatsky did indeed reference non-Theosophical books in *The Voice of the Silence*. The influence of Dvivedi’s work, in particular, is striking and has been neglected thus far in the scholarship on Theosophy. Identifying these influences will draw attention to several “bundles of connections” within the discursive field which manifested as relationalizations in *The Voice of the Silence*. Following these traces will help in providing a description of the processes of hybridization which took place therein. In order to address the problem of the metaphor of “hybridization,” which implies the “mixedness” of initially “pure” elements, I will conceptualize here the idea of “already hybrids.” This notion is based on Bhabha’s account of hybridity as a “historical necessity.”¹³⁸ Although the sources Blavatsky used were primarily European, I argue that they are already hybrid – even though they are written from a colonial Eurocentric perspective – because they are based on Indian, Tibetan, Chinese, and other scriptures which were translated and interpreted in close collaboration with learned local informants. Hence, they can be understood as “already hybrids” in which multifaceted spaces were already connected. In the case of *The Voice of the Silence*, this view is especially instructive when considering Hardy and Edkins, who spent most of their lives in the countries they wrote about and mastered several local languages. Starting from the idea that actors and texts are the agents of encounters and that each encounter initiates processes of hybridization, it is argued that texts changed their recipients in a manner that was structurally similar to the way in which the recipient changed the texts.

This process can be seen in the example of Spence Hardy. Hardy maintains that he wrote his books as “an humble instrument in assisting the ministers of the cross in their combats with this master error of the world [Buddhism], and in preventing the spread of the same delusion, under another guise, in regions nearer home.”¹³⁹ This statement illustrates very unmistakably the missionary-colonial

138 Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 41. See also chapter 3.2.6.

139 Robert Spence Hardy, *Eastern Monachism: An Account of the Origin, Laws, Discipline, Sacred Writings, Mysterious Rites, Religious Ceremonies, and Present Circumstances of the Order of Mendicants Founded by Gótama Budha* (London, Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1860), (Compiled from Singhalese MSS. and Other Original Sources of Information); with Comparative Notices of the Usages and Institutions of the Western Ascetics, and a Review of the Monastic System, ix.

approach taken by Hardy and the source of his initial interest in Buddhism. At the same time, Hardy spent “twenty years in Ceylon, and several thousands of hours [. . .] with the palm-leaf in my hand [. . .] the ex-priest of Budha by my side, to assist me in cases of difficulty.”¹⁴⁰ This was an immense effort and one carried out in very close collaboration with his local informant. His unnamed informant also represented a specific school of Buddhism, a learned elite of Singhalese priests. The information Hardy received from him must surely have influenced Hardy’s reception of Buddhism. Hardy further explains that he had a “deep interest in the subject [. . . and a] constancy of intercourse with the sramana priests.”¹⁴¹ Furthermore, he maintained that he “endeavoured to apply the great lesson herein taught to a practical purpose,”¹⁴² which seems to imply that he also practiced Buddhism to some extent. Taken together, these points illustrate how Hardy worked and the manner in which he was embedded in the Singhalese society of Ceylon. More in-depth research and additional textual analyses would be needed to trace the hybridization of Hardy’s text further, but it is already possible to see the extent to which he was immersed in his subject of study and how closely he worked with locals. The particular texts Blavatsky made use of were, then, the product of a missionary working in another culture and, consequently, were “already hybrids” that were parts of a number of different discursive fields.

The example of Hardy is not the exception but rather the norm. The hybridization of these texts is not a reversible process and no “original” can be retrieved therein because there is no way of going back to a state before the hybridization took place. The relations which were established in these processes cannot be erased and it is thus impossible to “retrieve” the “original meaning” of any text. Instead, each text emerges as an interpretation that necessarily establishes new and altered relations itself. Nevertheless, the contextualization of texts allows us to identify these traces of relations and to identify certain spaces which have become connected therein. In the following, a close reading of *The Voice of the Silence* will enable us to identify and follow some of these traces, which will then provide the basis for a description of the hybridization processes manifested therein.

140 Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, vi.

141 Robert Spence Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism, in Its Modern Development: Translated from Singhalese Mss.* (London: Patridge and Oakley, 1853), ix.

142 Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, vi.

9.4 A Close Reading of *The Voice of the Silence*: Following the Traces of New and Altered Relations

I argue below that *The Voice of the Silence* is, at its core, a treatise that leads the reader along an initiatory path. Dvivedi's work, as one of the first "books of initiation" that circulated within the wider circle of Theosophists, will provide an important backdrop against which *The Voice of the Silence* and Besant's *The Path of Discipleship* should both be read. I argue that Besant wrote at least two books of initiation before 1900 and that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* also have the same central concern (see Chapters 8 and 13). A detailed examination of its content, with special attention paid to the stages of initiation presented in the text, will provide support for this argument.

The Voice of the Silence is written as a dialogue between a master and his disciple. As discussed above, the dialogue form is used in a number of books of initiation (see Chapter 7.2) and its use in *The Voice of the Silence* suggests that it was intended to be such a book. In the preface to *The Voice of the Silence*, Blavatsky claimed that the work was a translation of a treatise called *The Book of the Golden Precepts*.

The Book of the Golden Precepts – some of which are pre-Buddhistic while others belong to a later date – contains about ninety distinct little treatises. Of these I learnt thirty-nine by heart, years ago. To translate the rest, I should have to resort to notes scattered among a too large number of papers and memoranda collected for the last twenty years and never put in order, to make of it by any means an easy task.¹⁴³

As indicated above, I will not discuss whether – or to what extent – Blavatsky plagiarized other works, but it is notable that she herself claims that *The Voice of the Silence* is a translation. This claim is interesting because it serves the master narrative: "Some years ago" can be read as referring to her alleged stay in Tibet, during which she allegedly visited the masters. However, it is also noteworthy that Blavatsky refers to philology as a means by which to reveal the secret doctrine. The form of the dialogue in which *The Voice of the Silence* is written again points towards the need for a mediator between the higher knowledge and the educational epistemology. This double-sided strategy reflects the two apparently competing dimensions of the Master Paradox which I have described elsewhere.¹⁴⁴

In the following three subsections, *The Voice of the Silence* will be outlined and analyzed, making it clear that the idea of the stages of initiation was at the

¹⁴³ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, ix.

¹⁴⁴ Mühlematter, "Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge".

forefront of Theosophical thought as far back as Blavatsky. The analysis will also draw attention to the multifaceted connections which manifested as traces of relations in Blavatsky's writings.

9.4.1 Part One: The Stage Terminology and the End-States of these Stages

Blavatsky's text begins by explaining how the idea of a different reality dawns in man and how he slowly but irreversibly starts to seek for something beyond this world. This search culminates in being accepted by a teacher, "whom yet thou dost not see, but whom thou feelest."¹⁴⁵ This idea that a teacher is found not through sight but through some sort of internal "sense" points towards a form of initiation. In Besant's *In the Outer Court*, this search for a "different reality" and the longing for a master are closely linked to the "Quickening of Evolution" and are parts of the preliminary stages of initiation (see Chapter 8.2).

In often cryptic language, *The Voice of the Silence* indicates the preparations that should be undertaken in order to ensure that an aspirant for initiation will be accepted by a teacher. The criterion for this acceptance lies not in social status, class, or caste, but in an earnest wish to become a student. This criterion reflects the idea of Buddha's teachings, teachings which are open to all regardless of the individual's social position.¹⁴⁶ Although similar ideas about the universality of a given teaching are common in the European tradition, the reference to Buddhism would have stood out to readers in India as indicating that Theosophy was open to everybody. Blavatsky would probably have been aware of the Buddhist version of this idea, since it is discussed in several of her sources.¹⁴⁷ This general openness fits well with Theosophy's "goals."

In the following, we will look a little more closely at the last two stages described by Blavatsky. They follow in their order of succession the presentation of Patanjali's yoga given in Dvivedi's *Monism or Advaitism*.¹⁴⁸ However, while Dvivedi presents "the eight divisions of Yoga – Yama, Niyama, A'sana, Prâṇâyâma, Pratyâhâra, Dhâraṇâ, Dhyâna, Samâdhi,"¹⁴⁹ *The Voice of the Silence* lays out only seven stages through which the chela passes on the way to

145 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 16.

146 Gombrich, *Theravada Buddhism*, 56.

147 Cf. Hardy, *Eastern Monachism*, 17–18.

148 Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism? An Introduction to the Advaita-Philosophy Read by the Light of Modern Science* (Bombay: Soodha Prakasa Press, 1889), 27–30.

149 Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 36.

adeptship.¹⁵⁰ The sixth of these is “Dhâranâ.” The master tells his disciple in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Thou art now in DHÂRANĀ the sixth stage. [. . .] When thou hast passed into the seventh, [. . .] And this, O Yogi of success, is what men call *Dhyāna* [In the glossary: *Dhyāna* is the last stage before the final *on this Earth* unless one becomes a full MAHATMA.], the right precursor of Samādhi [In the glossary: *Samādhi* is the state in which the ascetic loses the consciousness of every individuality including his own. He becomes – the ALL.¹⁵¹]¹⁵²

Although Blavatsky wrote about seven stages, Samādhi was included but was, in contrast to Dvivedi’s presentation, not enumerated as an independent stage. Rather, it is described as a change of perception that takes place when the disciple “loses the consciousness” of separateness and becomes “the ALL.” A close examination of Dvivedi’s writings (see below) reveals numerous possible dependencies between his work and that of Blavatsky. Not only did Blavatsky rely on Dvivedi in her descriptions of yogic states as stages of initiation, but Dvivedi also included this idea in the second edition of his *Rāja-Yoga*. In the first edition of Dvivedi’s *Vakhya-Suddha* translation, the word “stage” does not appear, but in the second edition he added a commentary in which he wrote:

The first stage is *Dhâraṇā* or simple fixing of the mind for any possible moment on one fixed idea or object. When the time of such fixing is increased to the extent of unifying the *vṛtti* with the object or thought in contemplation, the stage of *Dhyāna* is reached. *Samādhi* follows when the *vṛtti* so far identifies itself with the object as to forget itself and become the object. [. . .] All the three stages *dhâraṇā*, *dhyāna*, and *savikalpa-samādhi*, are external as well as internal; and indeed it is usual with practitioners of Rāja-yoga to devote as much time to internal as to external processes, every time they sit for them.¹⁵³

There is no direct connection to initiation here, but it is striking that Dvivedi adopts the terminology of stages during the time between his first and second edition. The second edition of the *Rāja-Yoga* appeared a year after the publication of *The Voice of the Silence*, and Dvivedi’s adoption of the stage terminology can be read as a direct reaction to Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence*. Dvivedi also talks frequently of initiation, but this is usually in connection with the requirements for

¹⁵⁰ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 14–15.

¹⁵¹ This is again very close to the description given by Dvivedi: “Then follows *Dhyāna* or meditation, leading to *Samādhi* or complete absorption in the eternal self.” Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 30.

¹⁵² Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 19–20.

¹⁵³ Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga: Being a Translation of the Vakyasudha or Ḍṛgḍṛṣyaviveka of Bhārattīrtha and the Aparokṣānubhūti of Śri Sankarāchārya*, 2nd ed. (1st 1885) (Ahmedabad: Aryodaya Press, 1890), (translations) 9–10.

being accepted by a guru in the Advaita tradition.¹⁵⁴ This reception of the Advaita tradition will provide another pivotal context for understanding the hybridization processes from which the idea of the stages of initiation emerged in the Theosophical Society.

9.4.2 Part Two: The Two Paths; Compassion, Bodhisattvas, and the Good of Humanity

We can turn now to the two paths. Blavatsky has the teacher explain: “The Paths are two; the great Perfections three; six are the Virtues that transform the body into the Tree of Knowledge.”¹⁵⁵ Blavatsky explains that “the ‘tree of knowledge’ is a title given by the followers of the *Bodhidharma* (Wisdom religion) to those who have attained the height of mystic knowledge –adepts.”¹⁵⁶ It is unclear from where Blavatsky takes the idea that the “tree of knowledge” became an actual title for persons who attained Buddhahood. The reference to the bodhi-tree under which Siddhartha became Buddha is, however, plain. It is also interesting that Blavatsky uses the term “Bodhidharma,” and that she translates it as “Wisdom religion.” “Wisdom religion” is a term frequently used in Theosophy.¹⁵⁷ Edkins has it that “Bodhidharma, [. . .] became the chief founder of the esoteric schools”¹⁵⁸ of Buddhism in China, a view that would fit well with Blavatsky’s idea of “Bodhidharma” as both an abstract concept that restored the “true Wisdom religion” and also a member of the Brotherhood who taught the “Wisdom religion.” This is only one of the instances in which early orientalist such as Edkins used terminology which fits well with perennialist concepts. Several other passages below will further highlight the shared terminology in these discursive fields. This common terminology points to numerous shared fields in the global colonial discursive continuum.

154 For the “Requirements of Discipleship” in the Advaita Vedānta tradition, see Anantanand Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity*, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 19–29. For its uptake by Dvivedi, see Chapter 11.

155 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 23.

156 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 82.

157 It is already made clear in *The Secret Doctrine* that Buddhism is one of the sources of the Wisdom religion. However, all religions contain parts of this Wisdom religion, which is the “inheritance of all the nations.” The assumption of this Wisdom religion is one of the core concepts of Theosophy. Cf. Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 2.

158 Joseph Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism: A Volume of Sketches, Historical, Descriptive and Critical* (London: Trübner & Co., 1880), 155.

In *The Voice of the Silence*, several elements of the Buddhist and Hindu tradition – especially yoga, as received through the mediation of Manilal Dvivedi and the early orientalist mentioned above – were translated by Blavatsky into her Theosophy. *The Voice of the Silence* was not only written for a “Western” audience but also addressed Indian Theosophists and the Indian Middle Class in general. As we can see from the quotation above, the purpose of the book was to describe the path to becoming an “adept,” a term that is deeply rooted in Theosophy.¹⁵⁹ Dvivedi used the same term to describe initiation, claiming that everyone who talks about initiation must understand certain doctrines “of Adepts and their laws, of the true and real significance of the secret doctrine.”¹⁶⁰ The term “adept” is also used by Edkins, although he does not explain it further. It is possible, however, that “adept” in Edkins’ work might also mean someone who possesses higher knowledge (or even occult knowledge).¹⁶¹ Throughout the following paragraphs – drawn mainly from the second chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* – I will highlight the two structures of a) initiation as steps and b) the notion of teleological progression that underlies it, as well as a number of key elements, such as the term “adept” or the titles of the steps of initiation. This will provide the background against which I describe and analyze the hybridization processes manifested as relationizings in *The Voice of the Silence*.

The Two Paths and The Great Renunciation

As mentioned above, *The Voice of the Silence* is structured as an exchange of questions and answers between the student and the teacher. This is especially significant for the second chapter, in which the student enquires about the right way to wisdom. “O Teacher [he asks], what shall I do to reach to Wisdom? O Wise one, what, to gain perfection?” The teacher responds: “Search for the Paths. But, O Lanoo, be of clean heart before thou startest on thy journey. Before thou takest thy first step learn to discern the real from the false, the ever-fleeting from the everlasting.”¹⁶² The next step is to look for the “eternal and the changeless SAT, mistrusting fancy’s false suggestions” and to be drawn towards the “Diamond Soul.”¹⁶³ The term “SAT,” used in this passage, is more usually found in Advaita philosophy, where it describes one aspect of *brahman*.¹⁶⁴

159 For more information on the “adepts,” see French, “The Theosophical Masters”; see also Chapter 7.

160 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

161 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 164.

162 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 25.

163 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 26.

164 Malinar, *Hinduism*, 249.

Dvivedi used “sat” in a similar sense to Blavatsky when he claimed that “the Absolute is all *Sat* which means more than a predicative of mere existence; it implies real conscious existence, a reality entirely wanting in the Unknowable of European philosophy. The unknowable is an indefinite negation; the Absolute is a finite position.”¹⁶⁵ In *The Dream of Ravan*, “the word *Sat* [means] primarily *Being*, and secondarily, *Truth* or *Goodness*, because that which *beeth* is alone *true*, and alone *good*.”¹⁶⁶ The quality of “existence” is stressed in Dvivedi’s account. It is interesting that he connects this idea with “conscious existence.” It will be seen below that “consciousness” is one of the key notions in Dvivedi’s work. By contrast, this connotation cannot be detected in *The Dream of Ravan*, in which the connection between “being” and “truth” is given the central position. Blavatsky explained concerning the quotation above that the “‘Diamond Soul’ ‘Vajrasattva,’ [is] a title of the supreme Buddha, the ‘Lord of all Mysteries,’ called Vajradhara and Adi-Buddha”¹⁶⁷ and that “Sat” is “the one eternal and Absolute Reality.”¹⁶⁸ By relationizing Buddhism and the idea of “Sat,” Blavatsky employs a strategy of equalizing – to speak in terms of Berner’s *Instrumentarium* – Buddhist elements and Advaita elements. This equalization in turn points to a process of hybridization that was induced by several encounters, one of which was with Schlagintweit’s *Buddhism in Tibet*. Schlagintweit explained in his chapter on the “System of Mysticism” that in “the Kâla Chakra System” it is believed that there is a hierarchy of Buddhas and that there is at the top of the hierarchy “a first, chief Buddha, Adi Buddha,” who “has the soul of a diamond (Vajrasattva).”¹⁶⁹ Blavatsky used almost the same terminology, but in a de- and recontextualized form.

Another trace of this hybridization process can be found in the identification of the truth beyond illusion within man himself. Blavatsky explained that one’s identification with one’s body was illusory, and that the real Self was rather inside, because “thy body is not self, thy SELF is in itself without a body.” Therefore, “look inward: thou art Buddha.”¹⁷⁰ The exact phrase “thou art Buddha” can be found in Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*, where it is spoken to

165 Dvivedi, *Râja-Yoga*, 27.

166 George Robert Stow Mead, *The Dream of Ravan: A Mystery* (London, New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path; The Theosophist Office, 1895); Reprinted from “The Dublin University Magazine,” 1853 & 1854, 40–41.

167 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 83.

168 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 83.

169 Emil Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet: Illustrated by Literary Document and Objects of Religious Worship* (Leipzig, London: Brockhaus, Trübner, 1863), With an Account of the Buddhist Systems Preceding It in India, 50.

170 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 26.

the infant Siddhartha by a seer.¹⁷¹ In a rereading of the work, the beginning of *The Light of Asia* can be understood as an allegory of Buddha's renouncing of Nirvana, thus accounting for the subtitle of the work: *The Great Renunciation*. In this light, the phrase "thou art Buddha" has the same meaning in *The Light of Asia* as it has in *The Voice of the Silence*. The seer can then be understood as the voice of the teacher who tells the aspirant to look inside and to understand that liberation is already manifested within one's self. This renunciation is the core of the idea of the two paths laid out in the second chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* and is also the cornerstone of Besant's ideas on initiation and the "Quickening of Evolution" (see Chapter 8).

Esoteric and Exoteric Knowledge: Eye and Heart Doctrine

Describing the two paths in more detail, Blavatsky declares that "false learning is rejected by the Wise, and scattered to the Winds by the good Law. Its wheel revolves for all, the humble and the proud. The 'Doctrine of the Eye' is for the crowd, the 'Doctrine of the Heart,' for the elect."¹⁷² In her glossary, she maintains that "THE two schools of Buddha's doctrine, the esoteric and the exoteric, are respectively called the 'Heart' and the 'Eye' Doctrine."¹⁷³ This idea of an "esoteric" and "exoteric" school of Buddhism was, as mentioned in passing above, put forward by Edkins. Evidently, Blavatsky refers to Edkins here, since she uses the "Tsong-men and Kiau-men"¹⁷⁴ schools as examples, which Edkins gives as examples in his own distinction between "esoteric" and "exoteric" schools. The terminology of the "Eye" and "Heart" doctrine is also most likely derived from Edkins, who associated "esoteric" and "exoteric" doctrines with those terms. For Edkins, "the exoteric is for the multitude of new disciples. The esoteric is for the Bodhisattwas and advanced pupils."¹⁷⁵ He further explained that the "heart-seal" of the Buddha, which was the symbol for the "esoteric" doctrine, was "called *svastika*. It contains within it the whole mind of Buddha. It was the monogram of Vishnu and Shiva, the battle-axe of Thor in Scandinavian inscriptions, an ornament on the crowns of the Bonpa deities in Thibet, and a favorite symbol with the Peruvians."¹⁷⁶ This is another instance in which orientalist discourses fit into the perennialist agendas of the Theosophists. It is likewise an instance of the "already

171 Edwin Arnold, *The Light of Asia, or: The Great Renunciation; Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1879), 8.

172 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 27.

173 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 82.

174 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 141.

175 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 43.

176 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 63.

hybrid,” since Edkins follows a strategy of equating several traditions with each other. The adoption of the element of the “eye” and “heart” doctrine into her Theosophy is another instance of the de- and recontextualization manifested in Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence*. It is also an instance of hierarchization. Blavatsky obviously values the “esoteric” doctrine more highly than she does the “exoteric,” an evaluation that is linked directly to the idea of the *philosophia perennis* taught by the “esoteric” doctrine.

The separation of a “true” and advanced “esoteric” doctrine from an “exoteric” doctrine for the masses, as well as the claim of the universalism of the esoteric doctrine can easily be found in Theosophical works. This goes hand in hand with Blavatsky’s further explanations in *The Voice of the Silence*. Real knowledge, she maintained, was to be distinguished from false knowledge. True knowledge will rely on the immortal and will understand that all is done for eternity, that is, it will understand the law of *karma*. Blavatsky therefore argued that action is necessary, but so too is love and compassion: “Believe thou not that sitting in dark forests, in proud seclusion and apart from men; believe thou not that life on roots and plants, that thirst assuaged with snow from the great Range – believe thou *not*, O Devotee, that this will lead thee to the goal of final liberation.”¹⁷⁷ While upholding the ideal of Buddha and his merciful teaching to the crowds, *The Voice of the Silence* formulates a command for merciful action in the world: “Sow kindly acts and thou shalt reap their fruition. Inaction in a deed of mercy becomes an action in a deadly sin.”¹⁷⁸ So, while working in the world the aspirant needs to have three qualities:

[1] Have patience, Candidate, [. . .] [2] Have perseverance as one who doth for evermore endure. [. . .] If thou would’st reap sweet peace and rest, Disciple, sow with the seeds of merit the fields of future harvests. [3] Accept the woes of birth. [Because] Out of the furnace of man’s life and its black smoke, winged flames arise, flames purified, that soaring onward, ’neath the Karmic eye, weave in the end the fabric glorified of the three vestures of the Path.¹⁷⁹

Working in the world, gaining experience, and “weaving” these experience into “the fabric glorified” means that through karmic merits the bodies are purified and made fit for liberation. There is one supreme rule to be followed while working in the world: “to benefit mankind.”¹⁸⁰ A similar motif can be found in

177 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 30.

178 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 31.

179 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 31–32.

180 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 33.

Besant's writings where she talks about "service."¹⁸¹ Working for the benefit of mankind is the primary objective, "to practise the six glorious virtues is the second."¹⁸² These virtues are explained by Blavatsky as part of becoming "a Yogi, with a view of becoming an ascetic."¹⁸³ These virtues, together with a life lived for the benefit of mankind, prepare the aspirant "to reach Nirvana's bliss, but to renounce it, is the supreme, the final step – the highest on Renunciation's Path."¹⁸⁴ This theme, that service for others is the highest aim in life, appears repeatedly on the following pages.

Those knowing less should be told "that he who makes of pride and self-regard bond-maidens to devotion; that he, who cleaving to existence, still lays his patience and submission to the Law, as a sweet flower at the feet of Shakyathub-pa,¹⁸⁵ becomes a *Srôtâpatti* in this birth."¹⁸⁶ In addition to the reference to Buddha and his role as teacher, this passage also refers to the master narrative in the Theosophical Society. The master/disciple relation in which the whole of *The Voice of the Silence* is embedded is here given as a mission. Blavatsky explains that the "*Strôtâpatti* or 'he who enters in the stream' of Nirvâna, unless he reaches the goal owing to some exceptional reasons, can rarely attain Nirvâna in one birth."¹⁸⁷

The two paths, then, are the "exoteric" and the "esoteric." "The PATH is one, Disciple, yet in the end, twofold. Marked are its stages by four and seven Portals. At one end – bliss immediate, and at the other – bliss deferred."¹⁸⁸ And again, the main difference between the two paths lies in the renunciation of the nirvanic bliss. The way of renunciation of Nirvana was identified by Blavatsky as the "esoteric" or Theosophical path. The second chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* ends with a promise that everyone can take this path: "Thou hast the knowledge now concerning the two Ways. Thy time will come for choice, O thou of eager Soul, when thou hast reached the end and passed the seven

181 See, for example, Besant, "General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament," 161; Besant, *Karma*, 33–34; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 15. There are many other passages in which Besant talks about service to other men as the basic principle for worldly activities. Of course, this service is meant to be in accordance with the divine will and this kind of action will, therefore, accelerate evolution on Besant's understanding.

182 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 33.

183 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 85.

184 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 33.

185 This Tibetan name for the Buddha Shakyamuni is found in Schlagintweit. The other authors do not mention this name. Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, 96.

186 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 37.

187 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 85.

188 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 41.

Portals.”¹⁸⁹ It would go beyond the scope of the present book to identify all of the numerous traces of hybridization in the passages above, but the discussion so far should suffice to make it intelligible that elements and structures from various traditions, especially Buddhist and Hindu, were translated into Theosophy by Blavatsky. In the next section of this chapter, I will discuss the “seven portals” mentioned by Blavatsky. The “seven portals” will be identified as stages of initiation that are directly connected to certain virtues, with these virtues being described by Blavatsky as the “keys” that unlock the portals. This discussion will provide the basis for the further analysis of these concepts throughout the remainder of the book.

9.5 Part Three: The Seven Portals, or: The Stages of Initiation

The third part of *The Voice of the Silence* is concerned with the explanation of the “seven portals.” We have already seen that the first step can be achieved by those who are devoted and are accepted by the teacher. In doing so, they become the “Srôtâpatti.” “Be of good cheer, Disciple; bear in mind the golden rule. [. . . T]hou hast but seven other births before thee, O thou of adamantine Will.”¹⁹⁰ We read about the “adamantine Will” as the first characteristic of the chosen chela. As the aspirant in the first verse of the third chapter of *The Voice of the Silence* says: “the choice is made, I thirst for Wisdom. [. . .] Thy servant here is ready for thy guidance.”¹⁹¹ Blavatsky explains the meaning of “Srôtâpatti” in the following while indicating the further steps that are to follow.

Srôtâpatti-(lit.) ‘he who has entered the stream’ that leads to the Nirvanic ocean. This name indicates the *first* Path. The name of the *second* is the Path of *Sakridagamin*, ‘he who will receive birth (only) once more.’ The *third* is called *Anagâmin*, ‘he who will be reincarnated no more,’ unless he so desires in order to help mankind. The *fourth* Path is known as that of *Rahat* or *Arhat*. This is the highest. An Arhat sees Nirvana during his life. For him it is no post-mortem state, but *Samâdhi*, during which he experiences all Nirvanic bliss.¹⁹²

Blavatsky further affirms that:

the four names just explained are given by R. Spence Hardy as: 1. Sowân; 2. Sakradâgâmi; 3. Anâgâmi, and 4. Arya. By the Rev. J. Edkins they are given as: 1. Srôtâpanna; 2.

¹⁸⁹ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 42–43.

¹⁹⁰ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 46.

¹⁹¹ Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 45.

¹⁹² Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 87–88.

Sagardagam; 3. Anâgânim, and 4. Arhan. Schlagintweit again spells them differently, each, moreover, giving another and a new variation in the meaning of the terms.¹⁹³

Her own account parallels the description found in Schlagintweit.¹⁹⁴

The path leads through “seven portals,” Blavatsky maintains, which all require a key to open. Interestingly, the list given here by Blavatsky as her “seven portals” is similar to that of the *Paramitas*, virtues, described in Buddhism. The number of these virtues varies between six and ten. Hardy provides a list of ten virtues, explaining that each has three different levels of accomplishment and that there are thus thirty different qualities of virtues to be accomplished.¹⁹⁵ Schlagintweit gives a list of six virtues and adds another four in the footnote. However, he only gives English translations for each.¹⁹⁶ Edkins provides a list of six virtues in English and also adds the Indian equivalents.

The expression *Tau-pi-an*, ‘Arrival at that shore,’ is explained as the Chinese equivalent of *Paramita*, embracing the six means of passing to the Nirvâna. These are – 1. ‘Charity’ (or giving), *Dâna*; 2. ‘Morality,’ *Shîla* (good conduct); 3. ‘Patience,’ *Kshânti*; 4. ‘Energy,’ *Vîrya*; 5. ‘Contemplation,’ *Dhyâna*; 6. ‘Wisdom,’ *Prajna*.¹⁹⁷

This list comes closest to that given by Blavatsky (see below). Blavatsky’s list can be understood as a result of multiple encounters, some of which were with the texts of Edkins, Schlagintweit, and Hardy.

Blavatsky’s list of the “keys” is embedded in the dialogue between the master and his disciple. During the inquiry by the student in *The Voice of the Silence*, the aspirant says to his teacher:

Yea, Lord; I see the PATH; its foot in mire, its summits lost in glorious light Nirvanic. And now I see the ever-narrowing Portals on the hard and thorny way to Gnyana.

Thou seest well, Lanoo. These Portals lead the aspirant across the waters on ‘to the other shore’. Each Portal bath a golden key that openeth its gate; and these keys are: –

1. DÂNA, the key of charity and love immortal.
2. SHÎLA, the key of Harmony in word and act, the key that counterbalances the cause and the effect, and leaves no further room for Karmic action.
3. KSHANTI, patience sweet, that nought can ruffe.
4. VIRAG’, indifference to pleasure and to pain, illusion conquered, truth alone perceived.
5. VIRYA, the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH, out of the mire of lies terrestrial.

193 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 88.

194 Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, 26–27.

195 Hardy, *A Manual of Buddhism, in Its Modern Development*, 102.

196 Schlagintweit, *Buddhism in Tibet*, 36.

197 Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, 417.

6. DHYĀNA, whose golden gate once opened leads the Narjol toward the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation.
7. PRAJNA, the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a Bôdhisattva, son of the Dhyānis.¹⁹⁸

Nonetheless, we see that there are differences between this list and that of Edkins. The most striking is the fourth virtue in Blavatsky's list, "Virag'," which cannot be found in any of the overviews of the *Paramitas* in the works considered here. It also does not appear in other books by Blavatsky. However, it seems likely that "Virag'," refers to *Vairāgya*, which is a common prerequisite in Advaita Vedānta for being accepted by a guru,¹⁹⁹ and is included in the list of stages of "Rājayoga" given by Manilal Dvivedi (see Chapter 11.4), one of the main sources for Besant's *The Path of Discipleship*.

9.5.1 Gaining the Keys to the Portals as Practical Advice

If we trace Blavatsky's stages of initiation, it seems that they have a practical dimension, that of the master/disciple relationships discussed above which aim "at changes in the disciples' consciousness and their personality."²⁰⁰ The keys to the seven portals – to retain Blavatsky's language – must be gained by certain virtues. 1) The aspirant is told to "learn to part thy body from thy mind [. . .] and to live in the eternal."²⁰¹ 2) To "be in full accord with all that lives" and to "bear love to men as though they were thy brotherpupils."²⁰² 3) The aspirant must be able to respond "to the tuneful breath of the GREAT WORLD-SOUL."²⁰³ The idea of the "tuneful breath of the GREAT WORLD-SOUL" expressed here fits well with what Besant later explained concerning the vibrations that are sent by the Īshvara. These vibrations set human bodies into motion and these bodies must be purified if they are to be able to resonate in harmony with the subtle vibrations coming from the masters.²⁰⁴ 4) Then, when the aspirant by love and his insight into the eternal and the underlying unity, is full "of Charity, of love and tender

198 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 47–48.

199 Anantanand Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity*, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006), 22–23.

200 See Chapter 7.

201 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 49.

202 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 49.

203 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 49.

204 This was most prominently discussed by Besant in *Man and His Bodies*. Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, 73, 86, 102, 130, 148.

mercy,”²⁰⁵ he can pass through the first gate. The second stage is then passed through: 5) “Harmony in word and act.” This means that the mind now controls the body and leads it without desire. As a result, no karmic effects will be produced. But while the *karma* is used up, the aspirant will face a more difficult path than before. Consequently, the third gate’s key is 6) “patience.” This patience is a result of 7) “*Virâga*[, which] is that feeling of absolute indifference to the objective universe, to pleasure and to pain.”²⁰⁶ When the third gate is approached, “the last great fight, the final war²⁰⁷ between the *Higher* and the *Lower* Self,”²⁰⁸ takes place. Advancing further along the path now becomes more difficult. “But once that thou hast passed the gate of [8] Kshanti [. . .] Thy body is thy slave. Now, for the fourth prepare, the Portal of temptations which do ensnare the *inner* man.”²⁰⁹ For the next step, the power of the “*inner* man” must be known. The results of these powers, which up to this point had been produced unconsciously for the most part must be made “harmless [. . .] thy own creations, the children of thy thoughts, unseen, impalpable, that swarm round human-kind.”²¹⁰ These are the thought-powers, the thought-forms which work on the higher planes of being for the good or for the harm of all around. 10) It must be understood that there is nothing except the inner Self. When this is realized, all the longings for “*Maya*’s gifts” will perish. 11) Mastery over the thoughts and the soul must be attained and the mind must be centered on the “One Pure Light, the Light that is free from affection.”²¹¹ The idea of the “Pure Light” which is the all and into which one must dissolve is formulated in *The Dream of Ravan*.²¹² When this gate is left behind, all desires are conquered forever more, but the aspirant must make sure to 12) “protect thy mind from pride and satisfaction at thoughts of the great feat achieved.”²¹³ The next step is to 13) become indifferent towards one’s own pains and sorrows but compassionate towards those of others.

205 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 52.

206 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 90–91.

207 A similarly martial terminology can be found in Arnold’s *The Light of Asia*, in the scene of the final liberation of Buddha under the Bodhi tree. Arnold, *The Light of Asia*, or, 157–60.

208 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 55.

209 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 55.

210 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 55–56.

211 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 58.

212 George Robert Stow Mead, *The Dream of Ravan: A Mystery* (London, New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path; The Theosophist Office, 1895); Reprinted from “The Dublin University Magazine,” 1853 & 1854, 46.

213 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 59.

Thou hast estranged thyself from objects of the senses, travelled on the 'Path of seeing,' on the 'Path of hearing,' and standest in the light of Knowledge. Thou hast now reached Titiksha state. [In the Notes: *Titiksha* is the fifth state of *Raja Yoga* – one of [14]) supreme indifference; submission, if necessary, to what is called 'pleasures and pains for all,' but deriving neither pleasure nor pain from such submission – in short, the becoming physically, mentally, and morally indifferent and insensible to either pleasure or pain.²¹⁴

By reaching the “Titiksha state,” the aspirant crosses the fifth gate and is “now on the way that leadeth to the Dhyâna haven, the sixth, the Bodhi Portal.”²¹⁵ The sixth gate, however, is finally opened only by crossing the fifth. Now the aspirant became a Narjol that is a “saint, an adept.”²¹⁶ Henceforth he is “a new soldier in the army of those who work for the liberation or salvation of mankind.”²¹⁷ Finally, when “plunged in Dnyan Marga, [15] mind and Soul] mirror nought of Maya’s realm illusive,”²¹⁸ and then will “the Portals that thou hast to conquer on the Path fling open wide their gates to let thee pass, and Nature’s strongest might possess no power to stay thy course. Thou wilt be master of the sevenfold Path.”²¹⁹ But “now bend thy head and listen well, O Bôdhisattva – Compassion speaks and saith: ‘Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?’”²²⁰ The answer is of course, no, there can be no bliss when the rest of mankind is still suffering. Thus when passing the seventh gate one shall “refuse to pass into the Nirvânic state [. . .] as it would then become beyond their power to assist men.”²²¹ Now it is declared: “A NEW ARHAN IS BORN.”²²² This means that “a new and additional Saviour of mankind is born, who will lead men to final Nirvâna *i.e.*, after the end of the life-cycle.”²²³ Thus, *The Voice of the Silence* ends with that which is the goal of Besant’s “Quickening of Evolution.” This idea of self-improvement through the practice of virtues in order to become a saviour of humanity is pivotal for Theosophy.

214 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 64.

215 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 64.

216 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 48.

217 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 63.

218 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 60.

219 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 61.

220 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 71.

221 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 95.

222 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 72.

223 Blavatsky, *The Voice of the Silence*, 97.

9.5.2 Summary of the Stages of Initiation in Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*

Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence* is by no means an easy read. It is full of references to numerous traditions and includes a wide range of terms that refer to similar concepts. It is a paradigmatic example of multifaceted relationalizations. Several of these relationalizations have been discussed above, and the possible sources from which the specific elements and structures were recontextualized pointed out. Further research will be needed to provide an exhaustive analysis of all the references and modes of relationizings in *The Voice of the Silence*. The main focus of the above discussion has not been to provide such an analysis, but rather: a) to illustrate that the elements recontextualized into and translated to *The Voice of the Silence* were already hybrids; b) to show that stages of initiation were discussed already by Blavatsky in connection to virtues, with the aim of inducing a certain lifestyle; and c) to show that the goal of initiation in the Theosophical Society was to gain certain powers in order to help humanity.

To facilitate future research and as a basis for the analyses of the stages of initiation pursued below, it will be useful to summarize the steps of initiation as they appear in *The Voice of the Silence*.

9.6 Preliminary Conclusion: The Hybrid Voice of the Silence; A Book of Initiation Based on "Already Hybrids"

The Voice of the Silence appears to have been intended to describe a path of initiation (see Table 5). The description given therein is framed as a conversation between a student and a teacher, a feature that is characteristic for books of initiation. This should be unsurprising given the centrality of the student/teacher relation within the Theosophical hierarchy, which extended into higher spheres of being via the master narrative.²²⁴ The path of initiation introduced in *The Voice of the Silence* is presented using a wide range of vocabulary drawn from Indian religions, especially Buddhism, in its Tibetan and Chinese denominations, and "Hinduism," understood in terms of the advaita vedāntic *rājayoga* tradition in particular. It will be seen in Chapter 11 that much of the Theosophical conception of *rājayoga* emerged from the encounters with Manilal Dvivedi.

²²⁴ French, "The Theosophical Masters," 3.

Table 5: The steps of initiation according to Blavatsky. By the author.

The Steps of initiation in <i>The Voice of the Silence</i>	
The three qualities	1) Patience. 2) Perseverance. 3) Accepting the woes of birth. All three are connected to karmic “justice,” the idea that one “reaps” what one “sows.”
The four steps (paths)	1) <i>Srôtâpatti</i> : “he who enters in the stream.” 2) <i>Sakridagamin</i> , “he who will receive birth (only) once more.” 3) <i>Anagâmin</i> , “he who will be reincarnated no more.” 4) <i>Rahat</i> or <i>Arhat</i> . This is the highest path. An <i>Arhat</i> sees Nirvana during his life.
Keys to the portals	1) <i>DÂNA</i> , the key of charity and love immortal. 2) <i>SHÎLA</i> , the key of Harmony in word and act. 3) <i>KSHANTI</i> , patience. 4) <i>VIRAG'</i> , indifference to pleasure and to pain. 5) <i>VIRYA</i> , the dauntless energy that fights its way to the supernal TRUTH. 6) <i>DHYÂNA</i> , whose golden gate once opened leads the <i>Narjol</i> toward the realm of Sat eternal and its ceaseless contemplation. 7) <i>PRAJNA</i> , the key to which makes of a man a god, creating him a <i>Bôdhisattva</i> , son of the <i>Dhyânis</i> .
The keys to the portals as virtues and the gates (stages)	1) “Learn to part thy body from thy mind [. . .] and to live in the eternal.” 2) To “be in full accord with all that lives” and to “bear love to men as though they were thy brotherpupils.” 3) The aspirant must be able to respond “to the tuneful breath of the GREAT WORLD-SOUL.” 4) Becoming full of “charity” and “love” by insight into unity <hr/> First Gate 5) “Harmony in word and act.” The mind fully controls the body that acts without desire. This eliminates karma.

Table 5 (continued)

The Steps of initiation in *The Voice of the Silence*

Second Gate

- 6) Patience which is a result of
- 7) Virāga, “absolute indifference to the objective universe, to pleasure and to pain.”
- 8) “Kshanti,” making the body one’s “slave.”

Third Gate

- 9) Knowledge of the power of the “inner man” – mostly the thought powers.
- 10) Understanding that there is nothing else than the Self – all longings for “Maya’s gifts” perish.

Fourth Gate

- 11) Mastery over the thoughts and the soul.
- 12) “Protect thy mind from pride and satisfaction at thoughts of the great feat achieved.”
- 13) Become indifferent towards one’s own pains and sorrows but compassionate towards those of others.

Fifth Gate

- 14) Titiksha state: “becoming physically, mentally, and morally indifferent and insensible to either pleasure or pain.”

Sixth Gate: One becomes a Narjol, that is a “saint, an adept.”

- 15) [Mind and Soul] “mirror nought of Maya’s realm illusive.”

Seventh Gate

- 16) Above all: “Compassion,” which is the nature of Alaya (Atman).

“Refuse to pass into the Nirvânic state.”
 “A NEW ARHAN IS BORN.”

Meanwhile, as I have argued above, most of the Buddhist vocabulary and concepts were received via early orientalists. Several of these terms had already become well established in Theosophy as a result of Blavatsky’s use of them in her writings prior to *The Voice of the Silence*. This means that, although Blavatsky does at times refer directly to Schlagintweit, Hardy, and Edkins, these terms were already part of an incipient tradition of repetition in the Theosophical Society. Indeed, the works Blavatsky used were already hybrid texts in the sense that they were produced by Westerners in close collaboration with local informants. Hence, the elements and structures found in *The Voice of the Silence* can be described as

already hybrids in two dimensions, the first deriving from the work of the early orientalist and the second through repetition in the Theosophical tradition.

Reflecting on the work of Homi Bhabha, and especially on his idea of hybridity as a historic necessity, I have argued that this is entirely normal. Understanding hybridization as an inherent characteristic of all knowledge production implies that it is untenable to identify any “pure” “Eastern” or “pure” “Western” sources. Blavatsky’s reception of “Hinduism” in *The Voice of the Silence* is a good example of this. The most important source for her adoption of the stages of initiation was Manilal Divedi, although, as seen above, the influence was mutual, with both Blavatsky and Divedi developing their concepts of initiation in complex encounters within the global colonial discursive continuum. This mutual interaction will be discussed further in the following chapters. The *Voice of the Silence* is the product of several processes of hybridization, including translation, de- and recontextualization, and repetition. “Repetition” as a process of hybridization will be discussed in the next section in more detail, where I will suggest that it is the main characteristic of “tradition.”

I argue that *The Voice of the Silence* was the blueprint for Besant’s formulation of the stages of initiation as part of the Theosophical tradition, as the similarities, which extend down to the level of terminology, demonstrate. The Savors described by Blavatsky in her *The Voice of the Silence* have structurally similar functions to Besant’s “Paramahansas” or “Arhats” (see Chapter 8.2). Already in Blavatsky’s presentation of them, the Savors not only “quicken” their own evolution but also significantly “quicken” the evolution of mankind as a whole. The idea of quickening, then, does not originate with Besant but is already present in Blavatsky’s ideas about the masters and the steps of initiation. Those concepts constitute the principles of the Great Brotherhood. Blavatsky did not elaborate on the concept of initiation but rather choose to frame it in distinctly opaque language. She also did not provide a concrete notion of the “Quickening of Evolution” as a ladder with defined steps. I argue that Besant systematized Blavatsky’s concept in order to provide a practical guide to initiation. Besant took Blavatsky’s claims seriously: On the one hand, she sought out additional information about the path of initiation in the works mentioned by Blavatsky, mainly in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*; on the other hand, she described a path of initiation which built on Blavatsky’s ideas, making more explicit the ideas set out in a less than clear form in *The Voice of the Silence*. It will further be seen that the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* similarly develop these ideas and that the path of initiation is concretized in these works as a set of ethics and a specific manner of conduct that will eventually lead the student to Arhatship.

9.7 Results and Traces of Hybridization, “Already Hybrids,” and Tradition Through Repetition

A close reading of *The Voice of the Silence* has drawn attention to three theoretical considerations: 1) a conceptualization of the “already hybrids,” 2) the idea of “repetition” as a hybridization process that is closely linked to 3) a conceptualization of tradition.

1. As previously mentioned, Bhabha maintains that “hybridity” is an intrinsic quality of culture – and, indeed, of everything else – and a “historical necessity”²²⁵ because it is only if “meaning” cannot be “totalized” that it can possibly be transferred, translated, and repeated. I have pointed towards this characteristic of “hybridity” in my discussion of the example of Spence Hardy. Every concept is “already hybrid” because it can only gain meaning in relations. As for the examples in the present chapter, these show that the concepts Blavatsky used were not simply “orientalist” or “Western,” but, rather, the products of numerous earlier interlocking processes of hybridization. Blavatsky’s usage of these concepts is another act of hybridization in which they are not simply “absorbed” into Theosophy but are embedded in numerous new and altered relations. However, as has been repeatedly noted throughout this book, this does not mean that the previous relations of these concepts are eradicated. Terms always connect to numerous spaces (see Chapter 4.4.2) and therefore they carry multifaceted connotations. In Bhabha’s words, they “resist totalization.”²²⁶

2. The basic idea of repetition was identified as a “result of the hybridization process” in Chapter 8.4. In addition, it would also make sense to understand it as a particular process of hybridization that is connected to tradition. In discussing Krech’s take on succession in Chapter 7.3, I maintained that,

succession tries to provide evidence by referring to the common (often transcendent) origin of all those in the lineage in the Theosophical Society via the master narrative. Simultaneously, it must mediate between several synchronic claims of authority and it therefore includes a range of different positions. I argue that this mediation is a form of “relationizing” and, thus, of hybridization.²²⁷

Concepts are repeated within a certain reference group while maintaining an “original” meaning that is understood by every member of this group. But repeating this concept in numerous contexts necessarily hybridizes it. Hence the

²²⁵ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 31–55.

²²⁶ Bhabha, “DissemiNation,” 314.

²²⁷ This book, 133.

use of concepts within a tradition – be this from one day to another, or in asynchronous situations over longer periods or in numerous spaces – “hybridizes” them. Hence, I understand tradition as a process of hybridization by repetition. It differs from de- and recontextualization in that it describes a more specific process within one reference group (See also overview of the “parts of hybridization,” Chapter 4.6).

IV The Stages of Initiation In-between “Hinduism” and Theosophical Evolutionism

The Ancient Wisdom, The Path of Discipleship, and In the Outer Court were important starting points for the following investigation into the possible sources of the elements and structures, both Theosophical and Indian, that crystallized in Annie Besant's early Theosophy. These three works provide an exhaustive account of Besant's concept of the "Quickening of Evolution" and the stages of initiation. The three books have been read closely, with particular attention paid to all references to and quotations from other works. In total, some fifty references to other Theosophical books can be found in these three texts, for the most part to the writing of Blavatsky. Ten of these are references to or direct quotes from the first volume of *The Secret Doctrine*, accompanied by a single quote from the second volume and about five references to the third. The third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* was edited by Besant. Further research may well reveal that much of the content of the third volume of *The Secret Doctrine* was in fact written by Besant herself, although any such supposition must remain speculative for now. In addition to Besant's references to *The Secret Doctrine*, about seven references to and quotes from *The Voice of the Silence* appear in our three texts. There are also a number of references to Alfred Percy Sinnett's works (one to *The Occult World* and three to *The System to Which we Belong*), three references to works by Charles Webster Leadbeater, three to George Robert Stow Mead, and six references to other Theosophists, among them T. Subba Row and Mohini Mohun Chatterji.

Alongside this seemingly large number of references to Theosophical writings stand more than a hundred references to non-Theosophical texts. These references can be categorized into five groups: those to 1) Indian religions, 2) other Asian religions, mainly to the Chinese and Zoroastrian religious traditions, 3) Judeo-Christian tradition, 4) European Philosophy, mainly Neoplatonists, and 5) European science. References to South Asian scriptures are by far the largest group, with more than sixty references to Indian scriptures, especially to the *Upaniṣads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*.

During my research into Annie Besant's early Theosophical thought, a close examination of all the references to and quotations from other works has led me to conclude that the South Asian scriptures and Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence* were the major sources for elements and structures that were de- and recontextualized, as well as translated into, her concept of the "Quickening of Evolution." Analyzing these references in relation to Indian Theosophists such as Rama Misra Shastree, Manilal Dvivedi, and T. Subba Row will show that Dvivedi played a crucial role in the formation of the Theosophical conception of initiation, especially as it appears in the oeuvres of Blavatsky and Besant. Furthermore, consideration of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* also helps to cast light on the importance of the references to the Indian scriptures. These works provide points of reference for

the encounters within the Indian Middle Class and the subsequent movements of elements and structures in multifaceted hybridization processes, some of which will be analyzed in more detail below.¹ The references mentioned, as well as the elements and structures which resurface in Annie Besant’s early Theosophy and in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*, can be understood as traces of hybridizations. In this section I will follow these traces.

1 This does not mean that the other references are irrelevant and that there are no influences from Christianity, Kabbalah, Western Science, etc., in Besant’s writings, but to discuss these influences in more depth would require a separate monograph. For the time being, a proper treatment of this topic must, thus, remain a research desideratum. What I attempt to do here is to map out the hybridization processes involved in the formation of the concept of initiation as it appears in Annie Besant’s writings.

10 The Reception of “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society: Encounters in the Indian Middle Class



Figure 5: Theosophical Convention. Unfortunately, many of the people are unknown to us. The little information given on the back of the picture is also unclear. Olcott is clearly visible in the center of the picture. To his right sits T. Subba Row, and the man two seats to Olcott's left is most likely Alfred Cooper-Oakley. One row behind, on the far right of the picture, stands Tookaram Tatya with glasses, turban, and mustache. In the center, all in white, one recognizes Charles Webster Leadbeater. It is noticeable that there are no women in the picture. Blavatsky's absence is not surprising, however, since the picture was taken after she left India in March 1885 and never returned. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Adyar, December 1885. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai.)

The main narrative concerning the influence of Indian thought on Theosophy has it that Blavatsky and Olcott were mainly interested in Buddhism and that it was Besant who brought “Hinduism” into the picture.² This development is often highlighted by reference to Olcott's engagement in Ceylon and to the

² This is especially true for Prothero, *The White Buddhist*. This work promotes the idea that Olcott was almost exclusively concerned with Buddhism. Blavatsky is presented along similar

episode in which Blavatsky and Olcott took *pansil*,³ understood as a de facto conversion to Buddhism. This narrative is then read against the background of the Theosophical Mahatmas. These figures are thought to dwell in the mountains of the Himalayas, a location that was equated with Tibet and, therefore, with Mahayana Buddhism. Johnson presents a slightly different picture in his *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*. He identifies the first generation of Indian Theosophists, most prominently Mohini Chatterji, Babaji, Damodar Mavalankar and T. Subba Row, as critically important for the Theosophical Society. However, his focus lies on their relation to the Theosophical masters rather than on their influence on the conception of “Hinduism” within the Theosophical Society and their contributions to the Theosophical world view.⁴ Recently, Bergunder has also identified the early debate on “Hinduism” in *The Theosophist* as a formative phase for Theosophical engagement with “Hinduism.”⁵ Figures 4 and 5 of the Theosophical conventions of 1884 and 1885 also indicate that Blavatsky and Olcott were in close contact with many – mostly Hindu – Indian Theosophists.

By focusing on Besant’s reception of the earlier uptake in the Theosophical Society of Advaita Vedānta, and on how she integrates this with her concept of the “Quickening of Evolution,” the present chapter attempts to draw a more complex picture.⁶ It will be argued that the uptake of “Hinduism,” and especially Advaita Vedānta, played a crucial role in the formation of the Theosophical world view. This influence can already be seen prior to the founders moving to India, but it intensified after they settled there. The formation of the Theosophical world view was a complex process, with various Christian, Jewish, Neoplatonic, and many other non-Indian traditions of thought playing important roles alongside the Indian traditions. The Theosophical Society’s uptake of the *Upaniṣads*, as well as of other South Asian scriptures, especially those of the (Advaita) Vedānta tradition, began very early on. In the present chapter we will see a) that a specific idea of “Hinduism” emerged in this discursive field, and b) that this reception of “Hinduism” played a key role in the formation of concepts of stages of initiation, both in Theosophy in general and in Besant’s writings in particular.

lines in Prothero’s work. However, he also mentions the connection to “Hinduism.” Similarly, Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 243.

3 Lubelsky, *Celestial India*, 101.

4 Johnson, *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*, 17–69.

5 Michael Bergunder, “The Early Turn of the Theosophical Society to ‘Advaita Vedanta’ and ‘Hinduism’ in 1882–1883: A Story of Global Religious Entanglements in Colonial British India,” (forthcoming).

6 The role of Hindu thought in Blavatsky’s concept of evolution is discussed in Nanda, “Madame Blavatsky’s Children”. She is mostly concerned with the Theosophical influence on the “Neo-Hinduist” movements.

10.1 “Buddhism” versus “Hinduism”: Early Encounters with “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society

This section will draw attention to the early engagement with Hindu thought in the Theosophical Society. Consideration of this engagement will show that the Theosophical Society was neither “Buddhist” nor “Hinduist,” but rather was embedded in numerous hybrid fields of encounters.

For instance, Olcott claimed that the Theosophical Society’s motto, “There is no religion higher than truth,”⁷ was a phrase that had its origins in the *Upaniṣads*⁸ and was then adopted by the Maharaja of Benares before being taken up, with his permission, as the motto of the Society. The whole paragraph in which this claim is made is an interesting example of Olcott’s reception of Hindu thought. He quotes several South Asian scriptures (*Manusmṛti*, *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *Upaniṣads*, etc.) before ending with the question: “Is there anything more noble in any other Scripture?”⁹ This is an instructive instance of Olcott’s interest in Hindu tradition that has often been overlooked in the current research on the Theosophical movement.

When Olcott was in Benares in 1885, he held a lecture on the *darśanas*. He says of himself: “I gave a summary digest of the Six Schools of Indian Philosophy, and which caused an orthodox Hindu gentleman to call on me next day and say that I had now brought the orthodox community to realize that our Society was not a mere Buddhist propaganda.”¹⁰ It is interesting to note that there was already at this time an impression that the early Theosophists were primarily advocating Buddhism. It is argued by many scholars that the Theosophical founders exhibited distinct approaches towards “Hinduism” and Buddhism. As Brettfield and Zander have argued, Olcott presented Buddhism as a philosophy while at the same time employing a religious strategy, his *Buddhist Catechism*, to teach it. The contents of the *Catechism*, or rather the plural *Catechisms*, cast

7 Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 4.

8 Olcott does not give the exact passage, but he most likely refers to Mund. 3.6: “Truth conquers alone, not falsehood.” Eduard H. H. Röer, “The Muṇḍaka Upanishad of the Athara Veda,” in Tatyá, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, 661. As Bergunder maintains, it is likely that the phrase was adopted from the *Mahābhārata*. See Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth,” 415.

9 Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society*, 3 vols. 3 (London, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; Theosophist Office, 1904), Third Series, 1883–1887, 272–73.

10 Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 280–81.

light on the gradual development of Olcott’s learning about Buddhism and the repeated changes in his presentation of Buddhist thought that flowed from this.¹¹ Although Brettfield and Zander’s article is an important pioneering work in this respect, a thorough analysis of the *Catechisms* remains a research desideratum. Buddhism was understood by Olcott and Blavatsky as a philosophy rather than as a religion and, as such, they could take *pansil* without departing from their non-sectarian stance. The understanding of “Hinduism” was rather different, with the early encounter of the Theosophists with the Arya Samaj and the controversies with Dayananda Sarasvati probably fueling this distinct approach. As I argue in this section, the narrative of distinct approaches being taken towards “Hinduism” and Buddhism must be reframed to take account of the significant uptake of Hindu ideas in the Society. This process started as early as the 1880s and was mediated by numerous Indian Theosophists.

It will be seen below that the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and the *Bhāṣya* (commentaries) of Śaṅkara and his disciples, as well as other Indian scriptures, were received in the Theosophical Society. These are the core scriptures of Advaita Vedānta, so it is not surprising that they were widely known within Theosophy, although this reception has not yet been documented in the scholarship. I argue that Besant did not establish a new tradition of “Hinduized” Theosophy, but that she rather continued in the footsteps of a pre-existing Theosophical tradition. In the remainder of this chapter, and in those that follow, I will show a) that the interest in Hindu scriptures began at least as early the first issues of *The Theosophist*, b) that knowledge about these scriptures was mediated by Indian Theosophists’ intimate knowledge of the scriptures and the source languages, as well as by the writings of European (and also Indian) Orientalists, and c) the *Upaniṣads*, as Śaṅkara interpreted them – or rather on a 19th century reinterpretation of Śaṅkara’s interpretation – were central to Besant’s concept of initiation, which stands at the core of her larger project of the “Quickening of Evolution.”

10.2 Mapping Out a Field of Encounters: The Already Hybrid *Upaniṣads*

This section identifies another context in which the discursive field of the Theosophical Society was embedded within and points towards the shared spaces in the global colonial discursive continuum. The first subsection will discuss some of the translations of the *Upaniṣads* that were available around 1900. In the

¹¹ Brettfield and Zander, “Henry Steel Olcott”.

final subsection, I will argue that Annie Besant used in her writings a specific translation that was well known in the Theosophical Society.

Most of the references made to Indian scriptures in Besant's writings are to the *Upaniṣads* and to the *Bhagavadgītā*, a propensity which points towards an identification of Indian religion with (Advaita) Vedānta. Besant includes references to five early *Upaniṣads* and to one of the minor *Upaniṣads*. These are the *Shvetāshvataropaniṣad*, *Mundakopaniṣad*, *Kathopaniṣad*, *Brihadāranyakopaniṣad*, and the *Chhandogypopaniṣad*. The minor *Upaniṣad* to which she refers is the *Ānanda Lahiri*, one of the Sanyāsi *Upaniṣads*. In early scholarship on the texts, the word *Upaniṣad* was often explained as meaning sitting down near a teacher in order to receive the "secret knowledge" contained in the scriptures.¹² This description could well be applied to the ideas about initiation found in Theosophy.

The major *Upaniṣads* were translated by Max Müller in the *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. I and Vol. XV, in 1879 and in 1884, respectively. These were probably the best-known translations into English at the time. However, Müller's translations of the early *Upaniṣads* were not the first into European languages. Anquetil-Duperron had translated the *Upaniṣads* from the Persian into Latin at the turn of the century, publishing his work in 1801 and 1802. It was this early translation that Schopenhauer used as the basis for his knowledge of Indian philosophy. Rammohun Roy (1772–1833, translations between 1816 to 1819) also translated a number of *Upaniṣads* into several Indian languages and into English.¹³ Among the first translations by "Western" scholars directly from Sanskrit into English are the those of Edward Röer (1805–1866, translation 1853) and Edward Byles Cowell (1826–1903, translation 1861) in the *Bibliotheca Indica*, in which the translations of Rajendralal Mitra (1822–1891, translation 1862) were also published.¹⁴ Another seminal work was Paul Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, published in 1897.¹⁵ Several

¹² Paul Deussen, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy: With an Appendix on the Philosophy of the Vedānta in Its Relations to Occidental Metaphysics* (Berlin: Karl Curtius, 1907), 21–22.

¹³ Friedrich Max Müller, *The Upanishads: Part 1*, The Sacred Books of the East Vol. 1 (Oxford, London: Clarendon Press; Macmillan & Co, 1879), The Khândogya-Upanishad, The Talavakâra-Upanishad, The Aitereya-Āranyaka, The Kaushîtaki-Brâhmana-Upanishad, and the Vâgasaneyi-Samhitâ-Upanishad, lvii–lxv. Müller's introduction to the *Upaniṣads* is deserving of its own extensive analysis, since he discusses the *Upaniṣads*, their philosophical value, Schopenhauer's uptake of the texts, the meaning of the words, and so on. However, as will be shown below, Müller's translations were not consulted – or at least were not explicitly used in her writings – by Besant, so his understanding of the *Upaniṣads* falls outside the scope of the present book.

¹⁴ Müller, *The Upanishads*, lxxxiv.

¹⁵ Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*, 50. Windisch's *Geschichte* is still an informative work, containing many details about the history of Indology, and especially the German context. There was also a second volume, published in 1920.

other partial translations were published, as well as a vast number of commentaries, articles, and editions, among the most comprehensive of which were probably Albrecht Weber’s *Indische Studien*.

A number of translations and commentaries by Theosophists, and/or published in Theosophical journals or by one of the many publishing houses of the Theosophical Society, appeared in the latter part of the 19th century. The articles on the *Upaniṣads* in Theosophical journals are numerous and a discussion of the reception of the *Upaniṣads* within the Society could easily fill a monograph on its own. In the following, a number of these publications will be examined in order to identify those that were relevant for Besant’s writings.

One such translation is that from 1896 by Jagadīsha Chandra Chaṭṭopādhyāya, published in two volumes by the Theosophical Publishing Society with “a Preamble and Arguments” by G. R. S. Mead. Another is Charles Johnston’s 1897 *From the Upanishads*, which includes translations of the “Katha Upanishad,” the “Prashna Upanishad,” and the “Chhandogya Upanishad.” Neither of these publications can have been used by Besant in either *In the Outer Court* or *The Path of Discipleship*, because her two works are based on lectures she gave in 1895, in August (*Outer Court*) and in December (*Path*). However, Johnston’s translations were available earlier in the form in which they were published in 1893 and 1894, in the Theosophical journal *Lucifer*. Their publication in this journal suggests that Annie Besant was familiar with them, since she was, along with G. R. S. Mead, the co-editor of *Lucifer* at the time. Other translations of the *Upaniṣads* by Johnston were also published in *The Irish Theosophist* in 1892 and 1893. In addition, Johnston published extensively on the *Upaniṣads* in *The Path*, *The Oriental Department Papers*, *Theology*, and *The Theosophist*. The quantity of Johnston’s papers on the topic suggests that he was the society’s main *Upaniṣad* expert in the 1890s. This supposition receives further support if we consider that the many translations of the *Upaniṣads* and Śaṅkara’s comments on the *Upaniṣads* found in *The Oriental Department Papers* should probably also be identified as Johnston’s work, as I argue elsewhere.¹⁶

Despite Johnston’s voluminous writings on the texts, and Besant’s presumed familiarity with some of his work, it seems that her main encounter with the *Upaniṣads* took place through her reading of another translation. In 1891, a

16 For a discussion of Johnston’s work on the *Upaniṣads*, see Yves Mühlematter, “Charles Johnston’s Interpretation of Yoga: Theosophy, Consciousness, and Spiritual Progress,” in *Yoga and Sacred Texts*, ed. Caroline Vander Stichele and Susanne Scholz (London, New York: Routledge, forthcoming).

book, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, edited by Tookaram Tatya and with a foreword by Manilal Dvivedi, was published by the Bombay Theosophical Publishing Fund. This volume contained translations of the early *Upaniṣads* by three notable scholars: Edward Röer, Edward Byles Cowell, and Rajendralal Mitra. In one of her works, Annie Besant explicitly refers to the translations by Röer. Her spelling of the titles of the *Upaniṣads*, such as “Chhandogya,”¹⁷ also suggests that Besant consulted this translation, which transliterates the Sanskrit in the same way.

The following short biographies indicate the multiple hybridization processes which manifested in *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*. This publication connects numerous discursive fields, simultaneously bringing the already hybrid translations from Röer, Cowell, and Mitra together and recontextualizing them in an anthology introduced by Manilal Dvivedi. On the one hand, Röer’s background as a German scholar built on German Romanticism, Protestantism, and the specific school of Indology established by Bopp in Berlin. Cowell was a trained Oxford scholar whose background was in Anglicanism and English Indology under Wilson and Müller (Müller himself was a paradigmatic case of an actor who connected numerous discourses). In the biographies of both scholars we can detect a closeness to the Christian mission and a high esteem for Christianity. Both also lived in India for a significant part of their lives and mastered several Indian languages.

Mitra’s background was different. He was raised and educated in India and probably experienced a Hindu religious socialization. He was largely interested in European culture, mastered several European languages, and was well versed in European history and other subjects, although he also advocated a pan-Indian Hindu nation. These three scholars knew each other due to the connections forged by a British society for research into Indian religion and philosophy. The structure of the Royal Asiatic Society can be seen as an agent of hybridization here as it connected several actors and their works. These three scholars belonged to an earlier generation of Indologists when compared to Manilal Dvivedi and Tookaram Tatya, who took up their work and published it in *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, thus repeating it in another context. Calcutta provided a shared space in which these multifaceted processes of hybridization could take place.

17 Müller, for example, transliterates “Khândogya-Upanishad.” See Müller, *The Upanishads*.

Hans Heinrich Eduard Röer (1805–1866)

Röer was born in 1805 in Braunschweig and educated in Königsberg. He studied philosophy and *habilitierte* in 1833 in Berlin. Through the influence of the work of Franz Bopp (see also 6.3) and his colleagues, who established Indology as a thriving discipline at the University of Berlin, Röer became more and more interested in Indian literature. Initially, he planned to go to India as a missionary, but joined the “ostindische Compagnie”¹⁸ instead, moving to Calcutta in 1839 to take up his post. There he became a member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, and later its secretary (1847). Röer published several translations in the Society’s journal and founded the series *Bibliotheca Indica*, of which he was the chief editor from 1847 onwards. Röer published most of his translations in this series, including his translations of the *Upaniṣads* together with Śaṅkara’s commentaries. In 1861 Röer had to return to Germany due to health issues. He settled in Braunschweig, where he worked on several publications before his death in 1866.¹⁹

Edward Byles Cowell (1826–1903)

Edward Byles Cowell was born in Ipswich in 1826. It is reported that Edward was interested in studying from an early age. He attended grammar school at the age of eight and turned to Oriental literature when he was fifteen. In the local library, he stumbled across William Jones’ *Persian Grammar* and his translation of the Śakuntalā story.²⁰ Soon after, he also became interested in Sanskrit via Wilson’s *Sanskrit Grammar*. He then learned Persian and (probably) Arabic under a retired officer, Major Hockley, who had been stationed in Bombay for many years. A year later, Cowell wrote his first articles for the *Asiatic Journal*.

18 It is not entirely clear to which “Compagnie” Klatt refers here. However, given his chosen rendering as “Compagnie,” he most likely refers to the Dutch *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*.

19 Johannes Klatt, “Röer, Hans Heinrich Eduard,” *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Band 29*, 1889.

20 The Story of Śakuntalā is a poem by Kālidāsa, one of the most famous poets of classical Sanskrit literature. The Story is also included in the Mahābhārata. Śakuntalā grows up in the forest with a hermit who is her foster father, but she is originally of royal blood. One day, a young king comes along and the two fall in love with each other. He returns to his castle, leaving her pregnant, and when she goes to the palace to see him he does not recognize her as a result of a spell. In the end, the king regains his memory and honors Śakuntalā and his child. The poem was first translated by William Jones in 1789, with his translation inspiring many writers of the time, among them Goethe, who read the story in a German retranslation of Jones’ English translation. Will J. Johnson, *The Recognition of Śakuntalā: A Play in Seven Acts* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

(continued)

When his father died that same year, Cowell entered his trade and was trained to become a merchant. He nevertheless maintained his interest in oriental, as well as classical, languages. During this period, Cowell was introduced to the intelligentsia of the time, including Horace Hayman Wilson, Thomas Carlyle, and Edward Fitzgerald, with all of whom he corresponded frequently during his lifetime. When his brother was old enough in 1850 to steer the family business, Edward went to Oxford, where he studied at the University for six years. There he came into close contact with “Jowett, Morfill, Max Müller, and Theodor Aufrecht.”²¹ He learned Sanskrit in Wilson’s classes. Already as an undergraduate, he worked on cataloging the oriental manuscripts of the Bodleian Library and published his first translations.

After leaving Oxford, Cowell was appointed Professor of English at the Presidency College in Calcutta, where he founded the “Vernacular Literature Society.” The aim of the society was to provide reliable translations of English literature in Indian languages. By 1857, Cowell had become more interested in missionary work and initiated a series of bible readings at his home. In 1858, after having learned “Hindustani and Bengali” he became the principal of the Calcutta Sanskrit College. In this position, he devoted many hours to the mastery of Sanskrit and published several works in the *Bibliotheca Indica*, among them his translations of the “Kauṣītaki” and the “Maitrī” *Upaniṣads*. Due to health issues, Cowell left India in 1864 and took a position as “examiner in Oriental subjects to the Civil Service Commission.” In 1867 he was appointed as the first Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Cambridge, a position he retained until his death in 1903. During his time at Cambridge, Cowell pursued many interests, studied new subjects, and translated works from many different classical and modern languages. He was a member of many honorary clubs and societies and the winner of the first gold medal of the Royal Asiatic Society.²² Cowell’s knowledge of languages and the sheer quantity of his translations and articles of and about Sanskrit literature is impressive. As a Cambridge professor, he was an influential figure in early Oriental studies. However, it is clear

²¹ William T. Frederick, “Cowell, Edward Byles,” in *The Dictionary of National Biography: Supplement*, ed. Sidney Lee Vol. I Abbey-Eyre (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press; Humphrey Milford, 1927), 427.

²² Frederick, “Cowell, Edward Byles,” 427–30.

(continued)

from his letters that he was also a strong advocate for the Christian faith and that missionary work was highly important to him.²³

**Rajendralal Mitra
(1822–1891)**

Rajendralal Mitra was born in 1822 in Calcutta. His father, a learned scholar of Sanskrit, Bengali, Urdu, and Hindi, was from an important and wealthy family with a long pedigree. Unfortunately, Mitra's grandfather had spent almost all of the family's wealth, so there was little money to be had when he was a child. Mitra was never formally educated but engaged himself in the study of various subjects, including European classical languages. He was appointed as secretary and librarian of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1846. Through his post in the Society, Mitra came into contact with the writings of all the famous European scholars of the age and was well acquainted with the European members of the Society in Calcutta.²⁴ He was later, in 1885, to become the Society's first Indian president.²⁵ In the course of his life, he published a number of articles, translations, and books in the *Bibliotheca Indica* and in many other respected journals, writing in both Bangla and English. He also issued vernacular magazines under the auspices of the Vernacular Literature Society. However, this was just one part of his engagement with vernacular education and the education of young Indians in general.

Mitra played an important role in the Bengal Renaissance, while simultaneously being accepted by the European intelligentsia and even awarded prizes and honors, such as membership in the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. Rajendralal died in 1891.²⁶ One main topic of his work is the superiority of the Aryan civilization, a theme that is connected with a glorification of Hindu identity in opposition to Islam. However, this Hindu identity seems not to have been conceived in opposition to the British Empire as he admired the British Imperial Darbar and compared it to the royal presentations that appear in the *Mahabharata*.²⁷

23 For more information, and many reprints of Cowell's letters, see George Cowell, *Life & Letters of Edward Byles Cowell* (London, New York: Macmillan & Co; The Macmillan Company, 1904). This biography is still the only monograph dedicated to E. B. Cowell. There is no critical publication concerned with Cowell's life and work; such a study remains a research desideratum.

24 Shyamali Sur, "Rajendralal Mitra as a Historian: A Revaluation," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 35 (1974): 371.

25 Abu Imam, "Mitra, Raja Rajendralal," accessed March 13, 2019, http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Mitra,_Raja_Rajendralal.

26 Imam, "Mitra, Raja Rajendralal".

27 Sur, "Rajendralal Mitra as a Historian," 373–75.

10.3 The Already Hybrid *Upaniṣads* in Annie Besant's Work

As we have seen, it is likely that Besant used the translations of the *Upaniṣads* that were published in *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*. In this section, I will take a closer look at this work. The preface to the volume was written by Manilal Dvivedi, and is, for the most part, a presentation of an Advaita Vedānta interpretation of the *Upaniṣads*. Dvivedi defended the *Upaniṣads* against the “prejudice and preconception [directed against] the Philosophy of the Upaniṣads”²⁸ by the orientalisists.

He was primarily concerned with the position of a certain “Mr. Gough.”²⁹ “Mr. Gough” was Archibald Edward Gough, a trained scholar of Sanskrit who worked at several institutions in India, including Benares College, Muir Central College, Allahabad, and a number of others. Gough was responsible for the entry on “Vedanta” in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and published *Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysics* in 1881, the book to which Dvivedi refers. Gough’s work also included an early translation of the major *Upaniṣads*. Dvivedi reported that Gough wrote “that there is little that is spiritual in all this, and that this empty intellectual conception void of spirituality is the highest product the Indian mind is capable of.”³⁰ Gough continued by claiming that the *Upaniṣads* are “a very early attempt, on the part of thinkers of a rude age and race, to form a cosmological theory. The real movement of philosophic thought begins, it is true, not in India, but in Ionia; but some degree of interest may still be expected to attach to the procedure of the ancient Indian cosmologists.”³¹

Referring to Hegel’s devastating verdict regarding Indian philosophy, Gough went on to say that the *Upaniṣads* present “the pantheistic view of things in a naively poetical expression, and at the same time in its coarsest form.”³² Although Gough also exhibited some admiration for Indian philosophy in his preface, he concluded: “India had little intellectual wealth for exportation to the Alexandrian emporium.”³³ Gough’s racial bias is apparent. He understood the *Upaniṣads* as “an exhibition of the thoughts of thinkers of a lower race, of a people of stationary culture, whose intellectual growth stands almost apart from the

28 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “Preface,” in Tatya, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, i.

29 Conjeeveram H. Rao, “Gough, Archibald Edward,” in *The Indian Biographical Dictionary*, ed. Conjeeveram H. Rao (Madras: Pillar & Co., 1915).

30 Dvivedi, “Preface,” i.

31 Archibald Edward Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysic: As Exhibited in a Series of Articles Contributed to the Calcutta Review*, Trübner’s Oriental Series vol. 32 (London: Trübner & Co., 1882), v.

32 Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysic*, v–vi.

33 Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysic*, xii.

general movement of human intelligence.”³⁴ Indeed, it must be noted, Gough continues, that “in treating of Indian philosophy, a writer has to deal with thoughts of a lower order than the thoughts of the everyday life of Europe.”³⁵ For Gough, the translation from Sanskrit into English, “from a lower to a higher language, is a process of elevation.”³⁶

It would be interesting to follow Gough’s Eurocentric and racist argumentation in detail, as it provides interesting documentary evidence of an actor who connected several discursive fields within the global colonial discursive continuum. However, to attempt such a project would require more material on Gough’s life, his religious socialization, his ideas on Indian education, and the like than is currently available. Bringing these materials together would probably paint a complex picture of a man caught between fascination and admiration for Indian culture, on the one hand, and a racist colonial agenda, on the other. Gough’s work is, in many respects, “already hybrid.”

In referring to Gough, Dvivedi was responding to a strong exponent of the orientalist bias. Nonetheless, Dvivedi also notes that “even the great Max Müller, the greatest of Oriental scholars and the professed follower and worshiper of Kant, solemnly asserts in his Hibbert’s [!] Lectures that the *advaita* is that stage in the development of the human mind which, will lead to the philosophical (?)³⁷ ideal taught by Christianity!”³⁸ Dvivedi’s preface is therefore an interesting example of an Indian response to orientalist scholarship. This can be read as a relationalization in Dvivedi’s work and therefore an attempt to claim hegemony, a response to colonial power that will be discussed further in Chapter 11. Dvivedi defended the *Upaniṣads* by referring to the “esoteric truths which were taught through the Upaniṣads to the select few.”³⁹ According to Dvivedi, this knowledge forms the true meaning of the Vedas and is, thus, “the end of the Veda (Vedanta).”⁴⁰

This framing of *The Twelve Principal Upanishads* provides an interesting example of relations established by actors in multiple encounters. It is also indicative of the already hybrid *Upaniṣads* on which Besant built her interpretation of “Hinduism.” As the next section will show, it is plausible that *The Twelve Principal Upanishads* formed the template for Besant’s reception of the *Upaniṣads*.

34 Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysic*, 2.

35 Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysic*, 4.

36 Gough, *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysic*, 5.

37 The question mark in brackets is included in Dvivedi’s preface, although why it appears here is unclear. Perhaps Dvivedi doubted that there was any “real” philosophy in Christianity.

38 Dvivedi, “Preface,” i.

39 Dvivedi, “Preface,” ii.

40 Dvivedi, “Preface,” ii.

10.4 Translations of the *Upaniṣads* Found in Besant's Work

When we compare the paragraphs of the *Upaniṣads* cited by Besant with the same paragraphs of the translations in *The Twelve Principal Upanishads* (see Table 6), we find that they are very close to each other, although they do differ in some regards. If we further compare Besant's text to the other translations published around the turn of the century, we can see that the resemblance of the paragraphs in Besant to the translations in *The Twelve Principal Upanishads* is much closer. This similarity conclusively shows that Besant based her reading of the *Upaniṣads* on these translations, as can be demonstrated by looking in more detail at three paragraphs quoted by Besant.

Table 6: Comparison Translation of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1. By the author.

Besant	<i>The Twelve Principal Upanishads</i>	Müller
<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> 3.14.1		
"Man is a creature of reflection; what he reflects upon, that he becomes; therefore reflect upon Brahman [. . .]" ⁴¹	"Man is a creature of reflection, whatever he reflects upon in this life, he becomes the same hereafter; therefore should he reflect (upon Brahma)." ⁴²	"Now man is a creature of will. According to what his will is in this world, so will he be when he has departed this life. Let him therefore have this will and belief." ⁴³
<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> 6.12.3		
"Thou art Brahman,' 'Thou art That'? so the Buddhists repeat also: 'Thou art Buddha'." ⁴⁴	"Mind it, my child, that particle which is the soul of all, that is Truth – it is the Universal Soul. O Svetaketu, Thou art that." ⁴⁵	"Believe it, my son. That which is the subtile essence, in it all that exists has its self. It is the True. It is the Self, and thou, O Svetaketu, art it." ⁴⁶

⁴¹ Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 84.

⁴² Raja R. Mitra, "The Chan'dogya Upanishad," in Tatyā, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, 537.

⁴³ Müller, *The Upanishads*, 48.

⁴⁴ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 65.

⁴⁵ Mitra, "The Chan'dogya Upanishad," 596.

⁴⁶ Müller, *The Upanishads*, 104.

Table 6 (continued)

Besant	<i>The Twelve Principal Upanishads</i>	Müller
<i>Kaṭha Upaniṣad</i> 2.20		
“When he is free from grief, it is then in the tranquillity of the senses that he beholds the majesty of the Soul.” ⁴⁷	“He, who is free from desire and without grief, beholds by the tranquillity of his senses that majesty of the soul.” ⁴⁸	“A man who is free from desires and free from grief, sees the majesty of the Self by the grace of the Creator [In footnote: The commentator translates ‘through the tranquillity of the senses,’ i.e. dhātuprasādāt, taking prasāda in the technical sense of amprasāda. As to kratu, desire, or rather, will, see Brih. Âr. IV, 4,5.].” ⁴⁹

We can see that the proximity of the passages in Besant and *The Twelve Principal Upanishads* is striking. When compared to Müller’s translation there are significant differences. In *Chândogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1, the term “reflection” is used by Mitra and Besant. In Müller’s translation, on the other hand, the term “will” has a different connotation. This is also important for Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution,” because meditation is understood by her as a “reflecting” on something.⁵⁰ Similarly, the role played by the “ideal” in the preliminary steps is to be an object of reflection.⁵¹ For *Chândogya Upaniṣad* 6.12.3, the difference is subtle. Another blueprint for Besant’s version of this passage was probably Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence*, as both phrases, “Thou art That” and “Thou art Buddha” can be found there. For *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.20, Besant’s rendering is close to both of the earlier translations, but all three differ slightly in their rendering.

⁴⁷ Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 64.

⁴⁸ Eduard H. H. Röer, “The Kaṭha Upanishad,” in Tatya, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, 424.

⁴⁹ Friedrich Max Müller, *The Upanishads: Part II*, The Sacred Books of the East Vol. XV (Oxford, London: Clarendon Press; Henry Frowde, 1884), The Katha-Upanishad, the Mundaka-Upanishad, the Taittirīyaka-Upanishad, the Brihadāranyaka-Upanishad, the Svetāsvatara-Upanishad, the Prasāna-Upanishad, the Maitrāyana-Brāhmaṇa-Upanishad, 11.

⁵⁰ See e.g. Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 177–78.

⁵¹ See e.g. Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 64.

These observations lead me to maintain that Besant used the translations in *The Twelve Principal Upanishads* as her models. This view is backed by a review of this edition of the *Upaniṣads* that was published in *Lucifer* in 1892. This article was written anonymously, which is often an indication in Theosophical journals that it was written by the editor or one of several co-editors. In the case of *Lucifer* in 1892, these positions were held by G. R. S. Mead and Annie Besant. Even if it was Mead who wrote this review, it is very likely that Besant, as co-editor, was familiar with it and supported the opinion expressed therein.

We learn in the review that the translations were republished by “the courtesy of the Asiatic Society.” Although the reviewer regrets that the editor chose to use older translations and that “new translation and an intelligible modern commentary, by some advanced student of the Yoga” were included, he or she notes that:

Nevertheless, the publisher has laid us under a debt of gratitude by placing within our reach these scattered versions at a moderate price, which is all the more acceptable in the face of the high prices demanded for the two volumes of the ‘Sacred Books of the East’, in which Professor Max Muller has succeeded in evaporating the spirit of the Upanishads and leaving nothing but the dry bones, neatly labelled and varnished with the size of a scientific philology which is entirely absent in the originals. We do not want the fossil remnants of the past when the living soul still exists.⁵²

This passage gives a telling description of the attitude towards Müller’s translation of some in the Theosophical Society. Given the high probability that Besant used the translations in the volume edited by Tatya, it can be assumed that Besant’s interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* was not only influenced by the translations of Röer, Mitra, and Cowell, but that she also read Dvivedi’s preface and the introductions to the translations. This is another instance of the discursive field in which Besant formulated her concept of the “Quickening of Evolution.” The already hybrid *Upaniṣads* translations she used in her work form part of the global colonial discursive continuum. They were hybridized through translation and then re- and decontextualized in Besant’s work, but they were also already hybrids before their translation because they were part of a long tradition of repetition. In the next section, I will examine the discursive field in the Theosophical Society more closely by looking at the early reception of “Hinduism” in the pages of *The Theosophist*.

52 Anon, “The Twelve Principal Upanishads,” *Lucifer* IX, no. 54 (1892): 511.

10.5 The Early Reception of “Hinduism” in *The Theosophist*: Indian Theosophists as “Experts” on South Asian Religions

In Chapter 5, the “Indian Middle Class” was discussed. One of the key features of that middle class in the 19th and 20th centuries was a well-connected publishing industry. Journals and newspapers were an important part of the daily life of this middle class and provided possibilities for public debates which enabled numerous encounters. As argued above, the middle class was not Indian in ethnicity, but rather geographically, meaning that Indians and non-Indians alike should be included in this field of encounters. The Theosophical Society can be understood as a mediating structure in this field. It not only provided infrastructure, such as its journals, above all *The Theosophist*, but also encouraged its Indian and Non-Indian members to engage actively in India’s (colonial) public life. In the following, the reception of “Hinduism” in the pages of the early issues of *The Theosophist* will be discussed. This will a) map out the specific discursive field in which the ideas of “Hinduism” and the concept of stages of initiation in the Theosophical Society emerged, and b) draw close attention to the discursive dynamics, that is, the strategies of relationizing that prevailed in this field.

In the discussion below, many explanations about Sanskrit terms and Hindu concepts are given in footnotes in order not to disturb the flow of the text too much. The explanations are given as an aid to the reader if she or he should stumble across unfamiliar terms, rather than to provide authoritative interpretations of them. Some of the articles discussed below include numerous Sanskrit terms and were written in a very dense style, so it has not been possible to explain every last concept in the footnotes.

10.5.1 Who is the Audience? An Instance of Debating Advaita Vedānta in the Pages of *The Theosophist*

In the first and second volumes of *The Theosophist*, we find a series of articles by Rama Misra Shastree, “Professor of Sankhya [at] Benares College”⁵³ and a

⁵³ Rama M. Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayan, Sec’y,” *The Theosophist* 1, no. 8 (1880): 202.

member of the “Society of Benares Pandits.”⁵⁴ His articles were originally written in Hindi (or probably in Sanskrit)⁵⁵ and were translated by Pandit Surya Narayan. The series was titled *The Vedanta Philosophy*. However, it was no mere introduction to Vedānta, but rather a discussion of some specifics of Advaita Vedānta. It thus takes for granted that the reader will be familiar with a) the Devanagari script and b) a number of specific concepts and terms, such as *mānas*, *ātman*, *indriya*, *sanchit*, *agami*, and *prārabdha karma*.

The first part of the series discusses the relation between *jiva* and *brahman*. *Jiva* is defined as:

that state of the One Animate Being, which consists in the unconsciousness of His real nature. In that state He possesses qualities, in virtue of which He is called a doer, an enjoyer, and a possessor of limited knowledge of things; and the Supreme Being, having as it were brought *Maya*, the instrument of His disguises, under His yoke, is the only possessor of the qualities contrary to those we have ascribed to *Jiva*.⁵⁶

We see that the author presupposes that his audience is familiar with the discussions in the Vedānta tradition about the “doer” and the “enjoyer,”⁵⁷ and the stages of consciousness that are connected with cosmological spheres and anthropological levels.

Shastree further discusses how the *jiva* might attain *moksha*. He explains that when “*Jiva* [is] brought back to the right path through an adviser [and it] recognises his native form. Having been thus released from the troubles he has endured on account of his actions, he obtains salvation or the everlasting happiness.”⁵⁸ Then there is “unity of *Brahma* and *Jiva*, [. . .] or everlasting freedom for the latter (upon his obtaining knowledge of his real nature with the aid of an able adviser).”⁵⁹ It is interesting to read that “the aid of an able adviser” is

⁵⁴ Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 201.

⁵⁵ Dodson claims that the article was originally written in Sanskrit especially for the Theosophical Society. However, he simply refers to the article itself and gives no further references to support his claim. The article states that it was translated for publication in the pages of *The Theosophist*, but it does not say in what language it was originally written or that it was especially written for the Society. In my opinion, it may well have been written in Sanskrit, because the Pandits often communicated and held presentations in Sanskrit, as Dodson shows, but it is unlikely that it was especially written for the Theosophical Society. I give my arguments for this claim below. Cf. Michael S. Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 180.

⁵⁶ Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 201.

⁵⁷ Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 60–61.

⁵⁸ Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 201.

⁵⁹ Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 201–2.

needed for gaining *moksha*. The idea of the help of teachers is, of course, not alien to vedānta thought.⁶⁰ This was highlighted in the writings of Śaṅkara in particular.⁶¹ Nonetheless this idea also fits perfectly into Theosophical thinking (see also Chapter 8).

Shastree further discusses why “the wise (ज्ञानी) [who] break loose from the transmigration of the soul”⁶² still undergo troubles in life. This is explained by referring to

three kinds of actions – the *Sanchit*, the *Agami* and the *Pravdha*.⁶³ The *Sanchit* actions lie buried in the hearts of man without giving vent to the effects produced. The *Agami* actions are those which remain to be finished or those which are being done, while the *Pravdha* action is the result of our future actions terminating in bringing into light our present existence.⁶⁴

Again, this is interesting because it refers to a specific problem that was widely discussed among Advaita Vedāntists. The main question that is discussed concerning *prārabdha* karma is why bodies continue to exist after liberation. Several answers are given, one of which is that there is still *karma* that is working, which must be worked out. This is the *prārabdha karma*, which is the “currently manifesting” karma.⁶⁵

60 Several *Upaniṣads* which are important for Advaita Vedānta are arranged as teacher-student conversations. The teacher is also a source for valid knowledge, as the right knowledge is transmitted through the *guru-śiṣya paramparā*. Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 62–63.

61 First, Śaṅkara is often presented as the perfect teacher, who was in turn sent by his teacher to teach students all around India. Secondly, Śaṅkara wrote the *Upadeśasāhasrī*, a small treatise in which he elaborates a teaching method. Eliot Deutsch and Rohit Dalvi, *The Essential Vedānta: A New Source Book of Advaita Vedānta*, Treasures of the World’s Religions Series (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004), 161–63.

62 Shastree, “The Vedānta Philosophy,” 202.

63 As suggested above, “pravdha” is most probably *prārabdha*. This would suggest the usage of the term in Shastri’s article. Why he uses this rather unusual transliteration is unclear. It may be that the translator of the text transliterated “v” for “b,” since these letters are similar in the Devanagari script. In any case, he did not transliterate the length of the letters using diacritics, which explains the short “a” instead of a long “ā” in “pravdha.”

64 Shastree, “The Vedānta Philosophy,” 202.

65 Andrew O. Fort, *Jivanmukti in Transformation: Embodied Liberation in Advaita and Neo-Vedānta* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998), 8–9.

The second article discusses “Purushārtha (human effort)⁶⁶ [which] overwhelms the result of the Prāravdha actions.”⁶⁷ The author explains that human beings are under threat from four troubles in life.

The first group includes the various sorts of diseases with which a man is attacked; the second come in the form of some desire or object, anger, thought, and the like; the third sort of trouble which is experienced by *Jiva* is set on foot by the agency of material beings, as, for instance, serpents, tigers, and various other hurtful creatures; and the fourth or last, is that which is brought about by the agency of spiritual beings.⁶⁸

The main precaution to be taken against these troubles is to “promptly take in hand the attainment of the knowledge of those things only which may extirpate his troubles and leave no room for their genus to grow again.”⁶⁹ This “attainment of the knowledge” is described as the “distinction between the spiritual (आत्मा) and non-spiritual (अनात्मा).”⁷⁰ In its implication, this description of the “attainment of knowledge” is very close to the first stage of “discrimination” included in the stages of initiation by Blavatsky (Chapter 9), Dvedivi (Chapter 11), and Besant (Chapter 8). What this means is that only the real understanding of things, the giving up of any misconceptions of reality, may render these troubles ineffective. This is especially true when the real nature of *jiva* is understood.⁷¹

The third article is directed towards those who act as if they were “as pure and holy as *brahma*”⁷² but “are not well grounded in the subject.”⁷³ This criticism was directed towards apparently incorrect notions about the bodily practices that were performed to attain *brahman*. This seems to have been a critique

66 The term is commonly understood as “the four ‘aims of humanity,’ or *puruṣārthas*, namely, virtue, wealth, pleasure, and liberation, [. . .]” Although often presented as a distinctive feature of “Hinduism,” this view was also contested. See Donald R. J. Davis, “Being Hindu or Being Human: A Reappraisal of the *Puruṣārthas*,” *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 1–3, no. 8 (2004): 1. Shastree interprets the *puruṣārthas* with a different nuance as “human effort.”

67 Rama M. Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayen, Sec’y,” *The Theosophist* I, no. 11 (1880): 287.

68 Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 287.

69 Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 287.

70 Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 287.

71 Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 287.

72 Rama M. Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayen, Sec’y,” *The Theosophist* II, no. 3 (1880): 55.

73 Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 55.

of ascetics and *haṭhayoga*, in contrast to the *rājayoga*, with the article promoting (*rāja*)*yoga* without mentioning it.⁷⁴ The author writes:

As an advice to the *Vedantis*, we would say that unless they bring the ‘*mana*,’ the eleventh organ into subjection, the seat of all acts – virtuous or sinful – there is no royal road to obtain salvation, and so to put an end to the troubles of this world. Uttering the phrase “ब्रह्माहं”⁷⁵ (I am Brahma) would never suffice to chalk out the path for *mukti* or everlasting freedom.⁷⁶

This passage is followed by a description of eight yoga practices, called *yama*, *niyama*, *āsana*, *prāṇāyāma*, *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇa*, *dhyāna*, and *samādhi*.⁷⁷ Following this eightfold yoga will lead the practitioner to be “perfectly initiated in sounding the backward as well as the forward abyss of time and at the same time in attaining the true knowledge of all mysterious things in the universe.”⁷⁸ We can see that (*rāja*)*yoga* is presented here as a means for initiation into higher knowledge.

The last article in the series deals with the distinction between temporary happiness and “the highest happiness (परमानन्द).”⁷⁹ Temporary happiness is connected to the fulfillment of human passions and desires. Therefore, “until the fumes of his passion subside and the image of his *Atma* is reflected with full vigour in his heart, he is never brought home, but attributes his pleasure to

⁷⁴ If we understand *rājayoga* as practice of mind control, it can be deduced that Shastree refers to *rājayoga*. The distinction between *rājayoga* and *haṭhayoga* was a well-known and widely discussed topic at the time. Its importance for the Theosophical Society will be discussed below in more detail. See Peter Schreiner, “Yoga: Rāja Yoga,” in Jacobsen et al., *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.

⁷⁵ *Brahmāhaṇ*.

⁷⁶ Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 55.

⁷⁷ The Sanskrit names of these stages are here transliterated from the Devanagari script given in a footnote in the article. These stages of yoga are presented in the *Yogasūtra* of Patañjali. This work is often considered to be the basis of “Yoga,” at least as a system of practices which shall ultimately lead to liberation. In “modern” interpretations, the term “Yoga” is often used in the sense of “union.” The *Yogasūtra* is a work belonging to the Śāṅkhya tradition and is therefore rooted in a dualistic world view. Nonetheless, it proved to be compatible with various systems of thought, including Advaita Vedānta (cf. Knut A. Jacobsen, “Introduction: Yoga Traditions,” in *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*, ed. Knut A. Jacobsen, Numen Book Series 110 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005), 1–27). For the usage of these terms and the uptake of yoga in the Theosophical Society in general, see Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 253–423.

⁷⁸ Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 55.

⁷⁹ Rama M. Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayen, Sec’y,” *The Theosophist* II, no. 4 (1880): 83.

the indulgence only.”⁸⁰ Desires are identified as the main obstacles here and the control of mind as the means to overcome these obstacles, but “it is wisdom alone (ज्ञान) that exalts man, without which he is more degraded even than the animals of the lowest order.”⁸¹

The stress on the concepts of *jñāna* and *paramānananda* is specific to this article. Both of these notions are important in Advaita Vedānta, as well as being common in Śāṃkhya. They can be read as demarcating Mīmāṃsā traditions which focus on the pursuit of rituals, especially Vedic sacrifices.⁸² This is interesting because Benares was (and still is) known as a center of the Mīmāṃsā tradition. This suggests that the article emerged from encounters with the Indian Middle Class, which did not necessarily represent the Brahmanical establishment, who we would typically associate in the context of Benares with the Mīmāṃsā tradition. As we will see, the concept of the highest happiness (*paramānananda*) is an important feature of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, which were the textbooks of the Central Hindu College in Benares.

This series of articles provides an interesting example of the early reception of Indian thought, especially Advaita Vedānta, in the Theosophical Society. I argue that the articles were most likely not written for a “Western” audience. This is suggested by three of their characteristics: a) they were not originally written in English, b) the Devanagari script is often included without transliteration or translation, and c) they make reference to concepts and debates current within the Vedāntin community. These points suggest that the articles were not directed at Theosophists but rather at sections of the Benares Vedāntin community. If this is correct, then it illustrates a certain attitude towards Indian thought in the early years of the Theosophical Society. As Sharpe notes, “during the first decade of Theosophical work in India the Society’s leaders were wisely reluctant to set themselves up as authorities on Indian religion.”⁸³ In discussing this claim, he also includes a paragraph of an editorial from *The Theosophist*, published in August 1882, in which Blavatsky explicitly states that she and Olcott are not interested in claiming authority on matters of Indian philosophy and science but in encouraging learned Indians to write about the subject. The native Indians were seen as the experts and any contact that could be

⁸⁰ Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 83.

⁸¹ *Paramānananda*, Shastree, “The Vedanta Philosophy,” 83.

⁸² Cf. Johannes Bronkhorst, “Vedānta as Mīmāṃsā,” in *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst, Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference vol. 10.3 (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007), 1–91.

⁸³ Eric John Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā: Western Images of the Bhagavadgītā* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 1985), A Bicentenary Survey, 89–90.

established with them, and any information that could be gathered, was to be welcomed. As mentioned in 10.1 above, this tendency shifted somewhat in the years around 1890, a shift that will be discussed in more detail below. The Theosophical Society and their small publishing industry provided a structure for Indian members of the Indian Middle Class to engage not only in the formation of an idea of “Hinduism” in and beyond the Theosophical Society, but also in the wider global colonial discursive continuum.⁸⁴

10.5.2 The Pandits of the Benares Sanskrit College: Theosophy Between Sectarianism and Universalism

The early articles in *The Theosophist* took up a much older debate that was still ongoing when Blavatsky and Olcott arrived in India. This was a dispute between the Pandits of the Benares Sanskrit College, founded in 1791, and the British administrators of the institution. This dispute revolved around the question of whether the Sanskrit College should adopt a “Western” method of philology or base its work on the traditional Sanskrit learning.⁸⁵ Initially, this debate was primarily discussed in the pages of *The Pandit*, the journal of the College, but the establishment of *The Theosophist* provided a new outlet for the disputants. This debate, and the related articles in *The Theosophist*, serves as an instructive example of Indian members of the Indian Middle Class actively engaging in the colonial discourse. Babu Pramadas Mitra, who wrote several articles in *The Theosophist*, was one of the prominent exponents of these Indians present in Benares. He was Professor of Sanskrit at the Benares Sanskrit College and a strong defender of the traditional Sanskrit learning. In addition, he was also well versed in European scholarship.⁸⁶ Mitra was one of the chief

⁸⁴ Similar conclusions could be drawn from the relationship between the Theosophical Society and the Arya Samaj, on which see, e.g., Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 302–31.

⁸⁵ Vasudha Dalmia, “Sanskrit Scholars and Pandits of the Old School: The Benares Sanskrit College and the Constitution of Authority in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24, no. 4 (1996): 321–22.

⁸⁶ Vasudha Dalmia discusses the debate between Babu Pramadas Mitra and George Thibaut. It is interesting that Mitra argued against Thibaut by applying European terminology. Thibaut’s main argument was that traditional Sanskrit scholarship lacks the European critical method of textual analysis. Mitra, on the other hand, was strongly opposed to the universalist claims of the European scholars and defended traditional Sanskrit scholarship for its importance to the maintenance of a living culture. He understood the critical method as an important addition to traditional Sanskrit learning, but highlighted the value of the texts in themselves (cf. Dalmia, “Sanskrit Scholars and Pandits of the Old School,” 321–37). In a

local informants and contact persons for Olcott and Blavatsky in their early engagement with “Hinduism” in Benares. Olcott, in particular, sought to forge contacts with the local pandits and the Maharaja, as well as with George Thibaut, at the time the principal of the Benares Sanskrit College. Mediated by Mitra, Olcott signed a treaty, most likely in 1880, with a long list of Pandits and with Thibaut.⁸⁷ The aim of this treaty was to foster an alliance between the Pandits, the German scholar, and the Theosophical Society to work for “the interest of Sanskrit Literature and Vedic Philosophy and Science [which] will be eminently promoted by a brotherly union of all friends of Aryan learning throughout the world.”⁸⁸ This alliance, especially with the involvement of George Thibaut, is an interesting instance of the early activities of the Theosophical Society in Benares and illustrates well the field of encounters present in the Indian Middle Class. The Theosophical Society provided a structure that facilitated discourse between several parties, not only in their journals, but as this treaty shows, also in close interaction with each other.

Olcott seems to have had a close relationship with Thibaut and Mitra, calling them both “friends.”⁸⁹ The Theosophical Society connected several spaces in such a way that a discursive field was able to emerge in which interactions and engagements between numerous Indian and non-Indian actors initiated multifaceted processes of hybridization. Theosophical journals, and *The Theosophist* in particular, played pivotal roles in bringing this about. The discursive dynamics outlined in the following section were an important part of the milieu in which Besant immersed herself when she came to Benares. Her first contacts there were most certainly mediated by Olcott, with

comment in *Old Diary Leaves*, Olcott says about Thibaut that he was a “most agreeable man, deeply versed in Sanskrit, yet without pretence or pomposity: in short, a real specimen of the German litterateur[!].” On the same page Olcott mentions a gathering of several people at Benares, among whom were Thibaut and Blavatsky: “Doctor Thibaut, the College Sanskrit Pandits, Babu Pramádá Dásá Mitra, Swami Dyânand, Mr. Ram Rao, one of S’Yami’s disciples, Damodar, Mrs. Gordon, H.P.B., myself, and others.” Interestingly, Babu Pramádá Dásá Mitra is written differently here than in another passage, where Olcott writes Babu Prâmada Dâsa Mitra (120). There is thus a possibility that these are two different individuals (Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society*, 3 vols. 2 (London, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Theosophist Office, 1900), Second Series, 1878–1883, 130–31). However, I think it more likely that this difference arises from inconsistencies in transliteration and editing.

87 Unfortunately, Olcott only rarely gives the dates. But the last year mentioned is 1880, hence it is plausible that this event took place in the same year. Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 124–28.

88 Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 124–25.

89 Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 272.

whom she visited the city for the first time, most likely in 1893, during Besant’s first trip to India.⁹⁰ Olcott had prepared the ground for Besant’s arrival and had arranged a lecture tour for her throughout India and Ceylon.⁹¹ Future scholarship will, I believe, have much to say on this formative journey and on Besant’s relation to Olcott. Much of the present narrative about the Theosophical Society is based on a supposed opposition between the first and the second generations of the Theosophical Society, and between Olcott (equated with Buddhism) and Besant (equated with “Hinduism”), in particular. According to this narrative, Besant’s decision to settle in Benares is seen as a choice made in opposition to Olcott.⁹² However, it should not be forgotten that it was Olcott who convinced Besant to come to India and he who organized her arrival. It is entirely plausible to suppose that he may even have advised her to settle in Benares as the official representative of the Theosophical Society. While the “truth” of the matter may be impossible to recover, more thorough research has the potential to provide a more detailed, and therefore more comprehensive, picture, although for the time being this must remain a research desideratum. Be this as it may, Babu Pramada-das Mitra is explicitly mentioned as one of the “friends of mine at Benares”⁹³ in Besant’s translation of the *Bhagavad Gita* from 1895, and this in itself strongly suggests that she was following along a path laid down by Olcott, rather than blazing a new trail.

In an article published in the very first issue of *The Theosophist*, Mitra discusses the relation between *brahman*, *Īśvara*, and *māyā*. His primary “opponent” in this context was Archibald Edward Gough (see Chapter 10.6.2), who was also employed at the Benares Sanskrit College from 1868 to 1878. Mitra’s main point is that *brahman* is an unchangeable entity which is not subject to any progress or development. He presented this view of *brahman* as being in opposition to Gough’s idea that *brahman* could be equated to the transcendentalist notion of a progressively perfecting idea which manifests in the world.⁹⁴ The January 1880 issue of *The Theosophist* carried a response to Mitra’s article. Sri Paravastra Venkata Rangacharia criticized Mitra’s views by referring to the problem of *avidyā* and its relation to *brahman*,⁹⁵ drawing attention to the

90 Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 272–79.

91 Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 15–19.

92 See, e.g., Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 277–92.

93 Annie Besant, *The Bhagavad Gītā, or: The Lord’s Song* (London, Benares, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Theosophist Office, 1895), xii.

94 Pramada D. Mitra, “Brahma Iswara and Maya,” *The Theosophist* I, no. 1 (1879): 13–18.

95 The problem is that if there is *avidyā* then this would suggest that there is something different from *brahman*. But if *avidyā* belongs to *brahman* he could not be omniscient. And if *avidyā*

several commentaries (*bhāṣyas*) of Śaṅkara and his disciples, and concluding: “Before, therefore, the Theosophists extend their researches to one and all of the above specified Bhashyas, and discover by which of them these mighty problems are dearly solved, it is too premature to uphold the doctrine laid down by Pramada Dasa Mittra.”⁹⁶ The “Note by the Editor” that follows the article responds by saying that, “the Theosophists *not* having as yet, studied all these Bhasyas, have no intention to uphold any particular sectarian school. They leave this to the pandits, for whose especial benefit, among others, this journal was founded.”⁹⁷ This note was in turn followed by a reply by Mitra. In his response, Mitra discusses the problem of *avidya* in relation to the two realities put forward by Śaṅkara and defends his positions by claiming that the problem of *avidya* only arises in the realm of relative existence, but above that only *brahman* exists and, therefore, the question is of no importance in the absolute realm. He concludes:

By confounding Avidyā (ignorance) with the soul, P.V.R. [Paravastu Venkata Rangacharia] supposes that according to Śaṅkara, beatitude consists in the annihilation of the soul, whilst on the contrary it is the obtaining the realization of the true self. Nothing can be farther from Śaṅkara’s teaching than that beatitude lies in annihilation. The mistake arises from the difficulty of conceiving Being above the consciousness (*buddhi*) with which we identify ourselves.⁹⁸

In summary, the commentary from the editors of *The Theosophist* shows the ambivalent stance taken by Theosophists towards Indian religion. On the one hand, they promoted it, while, on the other, they consciously tried not to advocate “any particular sectarian school.” This approach should be understood in connection with the Theosophist claim to universalism and the idea that all religions are based on the same fundamental truths, a topic that will resurface when we consider the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* in Chapter 13. In contrast to the Theosophical stance, when we look at Mitra’s argumentation we see that he took a specifically Advaita Vedānta stance and defended it against the criticism of his opponent. He quotes Śaṅkara as the main authority and attributes “ignorance” to his opponent. The argument that Śaṅkara’s idea of “beatitude”

does not, then it could not be overcome, and knowledge of *brahman* would hence not be possible. This is a paradox which was also widely discussed in the Vedānta tradition. However, Śaṅkara does not seem to be much concerned with it, because it would be of no importance once *avidyā* is overcome. On the problem of *avidyā*, see Daniel H. H. Ingalls, “Śaṅkara on the Question: Whose Is Avidyā?,” *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 3, No. 1 (1953).

⁹⁶ Venkata P. Rangacharia, “Brahma, Iswara and Maya,” *The Theosophist* I, no. 4 (1880): 88.

⁹⁷ Rangacharia, “Brahma, Iswara and Maya,” 88.

⁹⁸ Rangacharia, “Brahma, Iswara and Maya,” 89.

is the opposite of “annihilation” can be read as a response to a common topic in the Orientalist writings of the time. Ideas of Moksha and Nirvana were often described as “annihilation,” which was then negatively contrasted with the Christian belief in an afterlife spent in paradise.⁹⁹ In addition, he refers to Herbert Spencer, who “clearly distinguishes the Absolute and the Relative in our minds.”¹⁰⁰

This is an instance of relationalization through which Mitra aimed at a double-sided effect: 1) he could connect his statements to the colonial discourses, and 2) by doing so he could claim authority and superiority for his thought. Mitra’s response to the article from 1879 is an example of de- and recontextualization within the global colonial discursive continuum. The demarcation between “translation” and “re- and decontextualization” introduced above seems to become fluid in this instance. This issue will be addressed in 10.5 below.

10.5.3 Experts on “Hinduism” and Experts on all “Occult” Matters

During the same period, a series of articles by Kashinath Trimbak Telang on the life of Śaṅkara was published in *The Theosophist*. Telang is an interesting figure who was engaged in several scholarly fields, and translated the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Anugītā* for *The Sacred Books of the East* series.¹⁰¹ His series of articles for *The Theosophist* is particularly notable because the editors of the journal chose to comment on some parts of the article. For example, Telang relates to the episode from Śaṅkara’s hagiography in which Sarasvati asked him “*a question on the science of love.*”¹⁰² However, Śaṅkara did not know anything about the matter, since he had been a renouncer all his life. As a result of this question, he left his previous life and went in search of an answer. When he came across the corpse of a king named Amarkara, he entered his body and “learned practically all that pertained to the science and art of Love, and fitted himself to answer the query of the cunning wife of Mandana [Sarasvati in disguise].”¹⁰³ The editors commented on this episode with the following remark:

99 Cf., e.g. Monier Monier-Williams, *Hinduism*, Non-Christian Religions Systems (London, New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; Pott, Young, & Co., 1878), 83–84.; Horace Hayman Wilson, *Essays and Lectures Chiefly on the Religion of the Hindus: Miscellaneous Essays and Lectures*, Works by the Late Horace Hayman Wilson II (London: Trübner & Co., 1862), 113–14.

100 Rangacharia, “Brahma, Iswara and Maya,” 89.

101 Bergunder, “Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert,” 197–99.

102 Kāshināth T. Telang, “Śaṅkaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic,” *The Theosophist* I, no. 3 (1879): 72.

103 Kāshināth T. Telang, “The Life of Sankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic,” *The Theosophist* I, no. 4 (1880): 89.

The power of the Yogi to quit his own body and enter and animate that of another person, though affirmed by Patânjali and included among the Siddhis of Krishna, is discredited by Europeanized young Indians. Naturally enough, since, as Western biologists deny a soul to man, it is an unthinkable proposition to them that the Yogi’s soul should be able to enter another’s body. That such an unreasoning infidelity should prevail among the pupils of European schools, is quite reason enough why an effort should be made to revive in India those schools of Psychology in which the Aryan youth were theoretically and practically taught the occult laws of Man and Nature. We, who, have at least some trifling acquaintance with modern science, do not hesitate to affirm our belief that temporary transmigration of souls is possible. We may even go so far as to say that the phenomenon [!] has been experimentally proven to us in New York, among other places. [. . .] We urge our readers to first study Aryan literature, and then get from personal experience the corroborative evidence.¹⁰⁴

This comment is an instance of the editors positioning themselves as authorities when it comes to “occult” matters. In this early phase of the reception of Indian thought, they were not willing to pass comment on Indian philosophy, but they did take a clear stance when it came to the “occult.” We know that Telang continued his contacts with the Theosophists after the publication of these articles.¹⁰⁵ It would be interesting to know what he thought about these editorial comments, although, at present, we have no record of his views on this topic. Be this as it may, we can see that Śaṅkara was introduced to a Theosophical readership from very early on as “one of the greatest men who have appeared in India.”¹⁰⁶ In addition, he was presented by the editors of *The Theosophist* as “an initiate”¹⁰⁷ who was in possession of the *siddhis*. The early presentation of Indian philosophy and religion within the pages of the journals of the Theosophical Society was dominated by native Indians which were not necessarily members of the Theosophical Society. The comments on Telang’s article, however, indicate a shift in the representation of Indian religion and philosophy, a shift that can also be detected in Olcott’s presentation of the Indian *darśanas* and that will be elaborated further below. What we see in this change is the European Theosophists beginning to speak *for* Indians and to present Indian philosophy and religion as part of their own Theosophical thought. I have discussed these developments elsewhere in the context of the uptake of the *Bhagavadgītā* within the Theosophical Society.¹⁰⁸ Although my earlier argument may have been correct in detecting this tendency, it will be

104 Telang, “The Life of Sankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic,” 89 [Editor’s footnote (2)].

105 Bergunder, “Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert,” 197–99.

106 Telang, “Śankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic,” 71.

107 Telang, “The Life of Sankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic,” 89.

108 Mühlematter, “Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge”.

seen that the constellation was even more complex, as the following article by Alfred Cooper-Oakley illustrates.

10.5.4 Experts on “Hinduism” and Experts on all “Occult” Matters 2.0

Already in the early years of the Theosophical Society, the “Western” members talked and lectured about Indian religion and philosophy, although they were often supported in doing so by Indian members. This joint approach points towards interactions between Indian and Non-Indian members of the Theosophical Society which induced processes of hybridization. An interesting incident in this respect took place with the publication of an article by Alfred Cooper-Oakley, *The Vedanta*, in the ninth issue of *The Theosophist*. The article was not directly attributed to the author, but was described, rather, as a “Lecture read by the Secretary before the Convention of the Theosophical Society, December 1887.”¹⁰⁹ A. J. Cooper-Oakley was one of the secretaries that year, alongside C. W. Leadbeater.¹¹⁰ However, it seems that Cooper-Oakley was in charge of the official duties. This can be deduced by the fact that he read the report of the “Asiatic Branches” of the Theosophical Society at the “Twelfth convention and anniversary of the Theosophical Society at the Head-Quarters, Adyar, Madras, December 27th–29th, 1887.”¹¹¹ In the report, Cooper-Oakley mentions twenty-six branches of the Theosophical Society in India. Their work ranged from weekly meetings and discussion groups on various topics, often the *Bhagavadgītā* in connection with Row’s lectures (see Chapter 12.8), to mesmeric healing, homeopathic

109 Alfred J. Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta: A Lecture Read by the Secretary Before the Convention of the Theosophical Society, December 1887. The Quotations from and References to Sanskrit Works Have Been Supplied by Pandit N. Bhashyacharya,” *The Theosophist* IX, no. 103 (1888): 411.

110 Josephine Ransom, *A Short History of the Theosophical Society* (Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1989), 225. Hence it is also possible that the article is based on a lecture by C. W. Leadbeater. Tillet also names both Cooper-Oakley and Leadbeater as the secretaries in those years, stating that this double secretaryship was a result of the resignation of Blavatsky in the wake of the Coulomb affair, but he, too, provides no conclusive information on the issue of authorship: “Amongst the eight members were two Europeans, Mr Cooper-Oakley, and Leadbeater, who acted as secretary. The Committee operated for several months, but eventually faded away” (Gregory Tillet, *The Elder Brother: A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater* (London, Boston, Melbourne, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982), 45). Tillet also notes that Leadbeater and Cooper-Oakley did not get along well. Nevertheless, both men seem to have been chelas of T. Subba Row. Tillet, *The Elder Brother*, 48.

111 Alfred J. Cooper-Oakley, “Secretary’s Report of Asiatic Branches,” *Supplement to the Theosophist* IX, no. 100 (1888): xiv.

medicine, and general social work. Cooper-Oakley mentions many Indian Theosophists who translated books, both Theosophical and non-Theosophical and both Indian and non-Indian, into Indian vernaculars.¹¹² This broad scope well illustrates the ambiguity of the Theosophical movement, with a deeper examination of the Indian branches of the Theosophical Society remaining an important research desideratum.

The lecture on the Vedānta was prepared together with Pandit N. Bhashyacharya. We do not know much about Bhashyacharya other than that he was a Pandit for the Adyar Library and that he was well versed in Sanskrit.¹¹³ As the title suggests, Cooper-Oakley discussed the Vedānta systems in his lecture. He was aware that Vedānta did not only mean Advaita Vedānta, and he also discussed other Vedānta schools. Nonetheless, Śaṅkara was his main authority. He explained that Vedānta means “‘the end of the Vedas.’ This ‘end’ – the furthest point to which our speculation can rise – is the Supreme Spirit.” Besides “the Bhagavad Gita [. . .] the Vedanta Sutras or Brahma Sutras,”¹¹⁴ he unsurprisingly identifies the *Upaniṣads* as a main source for the Vedānta. He explains:

In the Upanishads this [knowledge about the determination of the Supreme Spirit] is said to be *rahasya*, from *raha*, secret: *rahasya*, occult knowledge or science. The word Upanishad is derived from *upa*, near, and *nishad*, he who stands; that is, he who stands nearer the Supreme Spirit. The scriptures that teach what may be known about the Supreme Spirit are called Upanishads.¹¹⁵

Explaining the meaning of the word “*upaniṣad*,” Cooper-Oakley put forward an original idea. The “occult knowledge” was identified by Cooper-Oakley with the knowledge about the relation between *ātman* and *brahman*.

When Parabrahm takes on its manifested state, it does so by the evolution of a centre of energy called Iswara, the Atma, or as Mr. Subba Row has conveniently named it, the Logos.¹¹⁶ The second of these names – Atma – is peculiarly characteristic. It furnishes, one might almost say, a key to the Vedanta.¹¹⁷

During the lecture, the differences between the manifest and the unmanifest were discussed and equated with the enduring and the vanishing – reality and

112 Cooper-Oakley, “Secretary’s Report of Asiatic Branches,” XIX–XXV.

113 Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves*, 391.

114 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 411.

115 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 412.

116 See Tallapragada Subba Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita: To Help Students in Studying Its Philosophy* (Bombay: Theosophical Publication Fund, 1888), V. Row’s concepts relating to the Logos will be discussed in more detail below, see Chapter 12.

117 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 414.

illusion – which results from the multiplying between *ātman*, *brahma*, and *prakṛti*. Cooper-Oakley explains that “from a metaphysical point of view the Prakṛiti is sometimes called Avidya – ignorance, or maya – illusion. This is because it has not, like the Atma, any real existence.”¹¹⁸ Atma was characterized as possessing the “power to call into existence innumerable centers of energy, which are like reflections of itself, in Prakṛiti, which form to themselves bodies or upadhis.”¹¹⁹ This development of centers is called “evolution” by Cooper-Oakley. “The atma is further said to carry within itself the plan of the whole cosmos [. . .] and according to this plan the whole system of evolution proceeds.”¹²⁰ These ideas bear a striking resemblance to Besant’s ideas about the evolution of the cosmos, in which Shiva as one part of the Trimurti has the capacity to form the universe according to his mind-power.¹²¹ In referring to the Advaita Vedānta system, Cooper-Oakley discusses the “Jivatma” as one of these centers that were brought into existence by *ātman*. He explains that “the Jivatma is a reflection of the Paramatma. The difference between them is that the Jivatma is said to be bound, whereas the Paramatma is said to be free. Or we may say that the consciousness of the Paramatma is unlimited, while that of the Jivatma is limited.”¹²² The main quality that differentiates between *brahman*, *paramatma* (which is equated with Subba Row’s notion of Logos, on which see Chapter 12), and *atma* and *jivatma* is, thus, according to Cooper-Oakley, the capacity of consciousness. Therefore,

the Jivatma has to raise its own consciousness through successive stages, each higher than the last, until its consciousness becoming at length identical with the consciousness of the Paramatma, the two become united, the Jivatma becomes the Paramatma. The theory involved may briefly [be] said to be this. Any given stage of existence has a conscious-

118 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 415.

119 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 414–15. *Upādhi* is “a limiting condition (*upādhi*) wrongly superimposed on the *ātman*,” see Bartley, “Vedānta,” and can therefore be understood as a delusion or a disguise of the real nature of *ātman*. It was included in this sense by Monier-Williams in his dictionary. Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Enlarged with Special Reference to Greek, Latin, Gothic, German, Anglo-Saxon, and Other Cognate Indo-European Languages* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872), 213. *Upadhi* in this rendering became a common term in Theosophy for referring to a “body.” See Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary* (London, New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892), 353.

120 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 415.

121 Besant, *Reincarnation*, 30–31. See also Chapters 12 and 13.

122 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 416.

ness of its own, and above that stage are higher stages of existence with corresponding states of consciousness.¹²³

Because the expansion of the consciousness is the means for uniting with *brahman*, “all initiations and all occult training have as their object the enabling [of] men by realising the higher planes of consciousness to rise higher and higher towards union with the supreme Atma.”¹²⁴ Again, this idea of the “union with the supreme Atma” by an expansion of consciousness is very close to Besant’s ideas about the forming of bridges between the bodies on the different planes of existence.¹²⁵ It also fits well with Besant’s definition of initiation.¹²⁶

Having discussed the expansion of consciousness as the means by which to achieve union, Cooper-Oakley goes on to explore several systems of moral conduct for the attainment of moksha that were propounded by the different schools of Vedānta. Turning to Advaita Vedānta, he writes:

We are called upon not merely to assent to truth, but to *live* the truth. Before a person is fit to receive this knowledge at all, four preliminary conditions are requisite. These are (1) *Viveka*, the power of discriminating the real from the unreal. This is to be attained not only by study but by meditation and reasoning. [. . .] (2) *Vairagyam*. Freedom from desire, passion and all earthly longings. (3) *Shat sampati*, of which there are six divisions: (i) control over the mind, (ii) control over the senses, (iii) ceasing to care for worldly things, (iv) endurance as of pleasure and pain, heat and cold and all the pairs of opposites, (v) confidence in the teachings of the guru, (vi) tranquillity of mind. (4) *Mumuksha* or desire for liberation.¹²⁷

This paragraph comes tantalizingly close to Besant’s idea of the preconditions that must be fulfilled before initiation.¹²⁸

This article is an outstanding example of the dynamics that can be detected during the early years of the Theosophical Society in India. First, we can note that all “quotations from and references to Sanskrit works have been supplied by Pandit N. Bhashyacharya.”¹²⁹ This suggests that Bhashyacharya wrote a large part of the article, since the references to Indian scriptures are so numerous that, when stripped away, only very little remains. Indeed, this last part seems to be Cooper-Oakley’s main contribution to the article. The references provided by Bhashyacharya throughout the article are combined with ideas of

123 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 416.

124 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 416.

125 See, e.g., Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, 105.

126 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 91. See also Chapter 8.2.

127 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 419.

128 See Chapter 8.2.

129 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 411.

self-improvement and evolution. In addition, they are connected to a moral code which explains good behavior as behavior that accords with the universal law.¹³⁰ We will see that this idea was adopted by Besant.

10.6 Preliminary Conclusion: Benares, Calcutta, and *The Theosophist* as Spaces of Encounters

This chapter started by arguing that the early Theosophists, namely Olcott and Blavatsky, were more invested in “Hinduism” than the common narrative about the Theosophical Society has it. Several examples were then discussed which served to shift that narrative to a certain extent. Beginning with Olcott, I noted that he not only lectured on the Hindu *darśanas* but was also engaged in agreeing a treaty between several Pandits, George Thibaut, and the Theosophical Society to support the promotion of Sanskrit learning. The Benares Sanskrit College was of great importance in this respect. Two instances in which Professors of the College, Mitra and Shastree, wrote about “Hinduism” in *The Theosophist* were also considered. Both articles formed part of a larger debate between the Pandits of the college and their English colleagues. Olcott’s initiative to create the treaty and have it signed by the participants can be understood in the same context. Thibaut was employed at the Benares Sanskrit College and was one of the English exponents against whom the critique of the Indian Pandits was directed. However, their main “opponent” was not Thibaut but Gough, who was criticized not only by Mitra but also by Dvivedi. This illustrates well how the Theosophical Society was embedded in the the Indian Middle Class and how several discursive fields overlapped therein. However, the overlap was not simply between “Western” and “Eastern” discourses; the article by Rangacharia illustrates that Indian discourses also overlapped in the Theosophical Society. A similar point arises from consideration of Shastree’s article, which addressed the Benares Vedānta community rather than Theosophists. This article can also be read as part of a debate between Vedānta and Pūrvamīmāṃsā traditions, although it seems that the orthodox brahmins were not much invested in these debates at the time – at least not in pages of *The Theosophist*. What can nevertheless be noted is that the early Hindu informants of the Theosophical Society presented here advocated Advaita Vedānta.

The introduction to *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, in which Dvivedi argues against Gough, is another instance of the overlapping discursive fields in

130 Cooper-Oakley, “The Vedanta,” 420–22.

the Indian Middle Class. I suggest that this introduction and Mitra's article in response to Gough can be understood as an instances in which Dvivedi and Mitra claimed hegemony by employing a strategy of relationalization. They argued against Gough by using European categories and they epistemologically hierarchized "Hinduism" and "European Philosophy" by claiming that "Hinduism" was more philosophical and had a deeper understanding of the "truth." Through this evaluative process of hybridization, Dvivedi and Mitra claimed hegemonic positions for themselves. Indeed, as we will see, in the case of Dvivedi the processes of hybridization were even more complex (see Chapter 11).

The articles by Shastree and Mitra, and the introduction by Dvivedi, point to an early reception of "Hinduism" within the Theosophical Society that was based on the accounts of the Indian "experts," as Olcott and Blavatsky understood them. This reception was complemented by the accounts of Orientalists such as Thibaut, Röer, and Cowell. Olcott and Blavatsky were personally acquainted with Thibaut while the translations of the *Upaniṣads* by Cowell and Röer were included in *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, edited by Tatya. As discussed above, this publication is a paradigmatic example of the overlapping discursive fields in the Theosophical Society. Not only did two Indian members of the Theosophical Society, Dvivedi and Tatya, introduce and publish the work, but it also included translations by "Westerners" and one by Rajendralal Mitra, who was both an Indian scholar and the first Indian president of the Calcutta Branch of Britain's Royal Asiatic Society. Besant probably based most of her early reception of the *Upaniṣads* on this publication, a noteworthy instance of "already hybrids" which were then further de- and recontextualized in Besant's work and consequently repeated in the Theosophical tradition.

The idea of the "Indian" expert gradually shifted in the Theosophical Society. The article by Telang illustrates well that Olcott and Blavatsky initially only claimed expertise in occult matters, while Olcott's later lecture on the six Indian philosophical systems points to a shift in this distinction between the "Hindu" sphere of expertise and the "occult." Cooper-Oakley's article is an instance in which a "Westerner" represented "Hinduism" and claimed not only "occult" but also "Hindu" expertise. In the next section, these findings will be brought together and included in the analytical instrument that is being abductively developed in this book.

10.7 The Indian Middle Class in the Global Colonial Discursive Continuum

In this section, several of the ideas provided by the analytical tool will be reevaluated. It seems necessary to discuss the questions of whether “hybridization” is intentional and whether it can be understood as a deliberate strategy, as is suggested by the cases of Mitra and Dvivedi. Another issue that is worth considering again is the description of the global colonial discursive continuum. This term remains vague and does not have much analytical value beyond the claim that *everything* is connected. I will thus attempt to elaborate on this idea in order to provide a terminology that describes the possible overlaps in that continuum. The third issue concerns the terminology surrounding “encounters.” Next, I turn to the idea of the “already hybrids” before, finally, discussing the notion of the Indian Middle Class.

10.7.1 Relationalization as Intentional Hybridization?

Bhabha’s approach to the question of intentionality is ambivalent. As already discussed in 3.2.5, above, with a specific emphasis on the “already hybrids,” hybridity and mimicry are treated by Bhabha as intentional, but also as non-intentional in relation to hybridity as “historical necessity” and to mimicry as an “effect.” He explains in *The Commitment to Theory* that the “Third Space” is a precondition for “hybridity” and that meaning can only be produced by a passage through the “Third Space” in which the sign, the signified, and the producer of the sign are related to one another and likewise separated. The signified can never be present in the sign, just as the sign is not the signified and both are disconnected from the producer of the sign as soon as the sign is produced. This process must be unconscious and cannot be totalized. “Content” and “context” are necessarily intertwined but are also necessarily separated as a result of their iterability.¹³¹ Taking this claim as my starting point, I argue that “hybridization” can never be intentional because it refers to an unconscious uncontrollable process. It seems that Bhabha is struggling with this problem when he writes that the “liminal moment of identification – eluding resemblance – produces a subversive strategy of subaltern agency that negotiates its own authority through a process of iterative ‘unpicking’ and incommensurable, insurgent relinking.”¹³² The word “strategy” implies intentionality, but at the same time this “strategy” is

¹³¹ Bhabha, “The Commitment to Theory,” 53–54.

¹³² Bhabha, “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,” 265.

produced in a moment of “liminality” that undermines every fixation, every possibility of control. Bhabha insists that this liminal moment of identification “requires direction and contingent closure.”¹³³ This paradox is also included in Bhabha’s idea of mimicry. Mimicry is an “intentional” act of adopting the colonial way of life including language, clothes and so on but it is constantly accompanied by an unintentional moment of “slippage.”¹³⁴ Drawing from Butler’s differentiation between intentional parts of speech acts and unintentional parts (or effects),¹³⁵ I propose to understand relationalization as the intentional part of the hybridization process and hybridization itself, in the sense of the establishment of “relations” or “in-betweens,” as the unintentional effects which cannot be controlled. I further suggest that we should understand all of the “processes of hybridization” as consisting of intentional and unintentional parts. In each process, “traces of hybridization” manifest and “results” are forged. In the cases of “translation” and “de- and recontextualization,” it seems that the goal is to close the discourse, albeit to a lesser degree than in the case of “relationalizations.” By contrast, “relationalization” is a direct attempt to claim a position of hegemony. The texts by Mitra and Dvivedi discussed above are instructive instances of this mode of hybridization. In the following, I will therefore talk of “relationalization” when describing a process of hybridization that aims at the establishment of non-inclusive hierarchical relationizings. “Relationizing(s)” is, then, reserved for descriptions of the establishment of traces of hybridization.

10.7.2 The Global Colonial Discursive Continuum: Overlapping, Entangled, and Connected Discursive Fields

Earlier in this chapter, two difficulties emerged when considering the Pandits of the Benares Sanskrit College and *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*. 1) These examples suggested that there were several ongoing discourses in which the Theosophists engaged when they came to Benares. These were arguments between “Westerners” (Gough, Thibaut), on the one side, and “Easterners” (Mitra, Dvivedi), on the other, and also arguments among “Easterners” themselves (Mitra, Rangacharia). The main difficulty in considering these debates is to find terms which convey ideas of self-containment as well as openness. Discourses are not closed or fixed but are potentially interconnected to each other. This is what is connoted

133 Bhabha, “The Postcolonial and the Postmodern,” 265.

134 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 129.

135 Judith Butler, *Hass spricht: Zur Politik des Performativen* [Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative] (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 1998), 22–24.

by the formulation “the global colonial discursive continuum,” as was discussed in more detail in 4.5. In the earlier chapters of this book, it became apparent that the idea of “connections” is an important element in any description of “hybridization,” and this notion will now be used to refer to the overlapping of discursive fields. The metaphor of a “field” still, I think, works as a way of describing both the relative self-containment and the connectedness of a discourse in some specific context. A field may have a fence (hegemonic positions) that demarcates it from, but is still connected via the soil, etc. to other fields. A metaphor is of course never complete, since it is a model of thinking and cannot represent the “actual” thought, and the field metaphor is no exception. One of the main limitations of the metaphor is the spatial dimension of a “field,” which is only directly connected to those neighboring fields to which it stands in spatial proximity, while the “discursive fields” are understood as being interconnected, potentially at least, to all other fields (although geographical, and thematic, proximity increases the chance that the connections will actually be realized). Connections may be realized in encounters, whether these are encounters between actors or encounters between an actor and a text. Hence, in the following I will talk about “connected (discursive) fields” when describing the contact between different discursive fields.

10.7.3 Structures and Encounters

The terms 1) “structure” and 2) “encounter” are related to each other. 1) In several instances I have written above that the Theosophical Society was a, or provided a, “mediating structure.” In these structures, actors engage with each other or with texts that were produced by other actors while using the infrastructure of the structure. This infrastructure describes a “space” in which encounters may happen. “Spaces” are not the loci where “hybridization” takes place but rather where encounters happen which then trigger “processes of hybridization.” These loci have so far been identified as a) mediums and b) infrastructures. I would now like to reintroduce the term c) “context” to describe actual geographical places, such as Benares and Calcutta, which were previously described as the spaces in which encounters took place. 2) Encounters were described above using the term “interaction.” It seems that this term fits well with the idea of mutual agency as both of the “agents of encounters” engage in the encounter. Contact is in this respect a precondition. There is no “interaction” without “contact” (See also, overview of the “parts of hybridization,” Chapter 4.6).

Two of the terms elaborated above, the “Indian Middle Class” and the “already hybrids,” proved to be useful tools a) for describing the discursive fields

in which the Theosophical Society was embedded in India and b) for pointing towards previous hybridization processes. The concept of the Indian Middle Class has not been included in the overview in Chapter 4.6. However, it would fit between the “abstract” and the “actual” spaces of encounters, as it summarizes numerous “actual” spaces and “discursive fields” but is not as abstract as is the “global colonial discursive continuum.” The idea of the “already hybrid” also prevents any looking towards an “original” meaning. This was briefly illustrated in 10.2.1 through a discussion of the idea of Orientalism and Indology – and indeed academia *in toto* – as a tradition of repetition. This is, of course, inconvenient for those who self-identify as “scholars” insofar as being a “scholar” means producing “true” knowledge. However, I think this view of the “already hybrid” does indeed point to the central problem of scholarly work: there is no evidence, only interpretation. These concepts will be applied in the following to analyze the writings of Manilal Dvivedi. His work and his role as an actor provide instructive examples of multifaceted encounters in which numerous connections were realized.

11 Manilal Dvivedi, the Forgotten “Expert” on “Hinduism”

Manilal Dvivedi (see Figure 6) has not received a great deal of attention from “Western” scholars, and more often than not appears as no more than a footnote in publications on Theosophy.¹³⁶ The only author who hints at Dvivedi’s importance for the Theosophical Society is Emmet Coleman in his article, *The Sources of Madame Blavatsky’s Writings* (see Chapter 9). Dvivedi’s involvement in the Theosophical Society is only briefly considered by Thaker and is avoided entirely by Suhrud, his major biographers. Suhrud does not include a single article published by Dvivedi in *The Theosophist* or any other Theosophical journal in his survey of his subject’s works. Thaker mentions some of Dvivedi’s writings that were published in Theosophical journals but does not analyze them in any detail. It is surprising that Dvivedi has received so little attention since he was doubtless an influential figure in the Gujarati elite, a driving force in India’s independence movement, played an important role in the development of Gujarati education, was an influential poet and litterateur, and was also, among many other things, a notable politician. For the discussion in the present chapter, however, what matters is that Dvivedi joined the Theosophical Society in 1882 and remained an active member until his death. I argue that his writings played a pivotal role in the uptake of “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society and that his *Rāja-Yoga* should be considered as one of the most important books for Adyar Theosophy.

It is striking that Dvivedi is not mentioned by Olcott in his *Old Diary Leaves* nor by Ransom in her *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*. Olcott evidently knew Dvivedi and was convinced that Dvivedi was a respectable scholar. Not only did Olcott ask Dvivedi to publish and translate the *Maṇḍukyopaniṣad*,¹³⁷ but he also corresponded with him, as was documented in *The Theosophist* (see below). In addition, at the “Fifteenth Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society,” a letter by Dvivedi was read to the public. Olcott officiated

136 Dvivedi is absent in Joscelyn Godwin’s *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, as well as in Isaac Lubelsky’s *Celestial India* and all other publications on the Theosophical Society consulted for this book. He is only mentioned by Michael Bergunder in connection with the *Bhagavadgītā* edition of Wilkin’s translation by Tatyā (Bergunder, “Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert,” 201) and in a comment by Gandhi. There we read that Gandhi read Dvivedi alongside Vivekananda with friends in South Africa. Bergunder, “Experiments with Theosophical Truth,” 408.

137 See Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, *The Māndūkyopaniṣad: With Gaudapāda’s Kārikās and the Bhāṣya of Śāṅkara* (Bombay: The Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1894), Translated into English by Manilal N. Dvivedi, Preface.



Figure 6: Manilal Dvivedi (1858–1898). (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Not dated. Wikimedia Commons accessed February 13, 2021. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Manilal_Nabhubhai_Dwivedi.jpg).

over the convention.¹³⁸ Whether Olcott regarded Dvivedi as a friend, as Dvivedi claims in the preface to the *Maṇḍukyopaniṣad*, cannot be determined, but Olcott certainly knew Dvivedi. Beyond this, the fact that Olcott trusted him with the translation and publication of the afore-mentioned *Upaniṣad* shows that Olcott respected Dvivedi as scholar. His works were well known in the Theosophical Society and beyond, as is shown by the positive reviews in the pages of theosophical journals of all of Dvivedi’s major publications.¹³⁹

138 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “Fifteenth Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society: At the Head-Quarters, Adyar, Madras, December 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1890,” *Lucifer* VII, no. 42 (1891); “Letter from the Learned Indian Sankrit Author, Professor Dvivedi”.

139 Anon, “Raja-Yoga,” *Lucifer* VII, no. 41 (1891); Anon, “The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali,” *Lucifer* VII, no. 42 (1891): 509–12; Anon, “Monism or Advaitism?,” *Lucifer* VIII, no. 43 (1891); Anon, “The Ma’ndu’kyopanishad with Gaudapa’da’s Ka’rika’s and the Bha’shya of S’ankara,” *The Theosophist* XVI, no. 2 (1894).

Dvivedi’s major monograph in English, *Monism or Advaitism?*, was supposedly written in just a few days. Two years after the publication of the first edition, it was reviewed in *Lucifer*. The reviewer applauded the publication and wrote, “Professor Dvivedi’s books should be referred to by our Western theosophical writers and lecturers for the learned support they give to the system we are so busily engaged in constructing in the West.”¹⁴⁰ Dvivedi was treated as an expert on Indian thought. The reviewer added:

our brother Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, in publishing his excellent text book of the Advaita philosophy and science, is doing yeoman service for that ‘Reformation’ which is needed not only in the West but also in the East itself. The difference is that whereas the West has to learn the lesson for the first time, the East has to ‘regain the memory it has lost’.¹⁴¹

The message of *Monism or Advaitism?* was well-received in the Theosophical Society. Besant, as the co-editor of *Lucifer*, most likely knew the book and it seems that she read Dvivedi’s publications frequently in 1891. In addition to the two reviews just mentioned, this is suggested by a third on Dvivedi’s *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali* and by an article by Dvivedi, all of which appeared in *Lucifer* in 1891.

In 1895, *The Imitation of S’ankara* was published (Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, *The Imitation of S’ankara: Being a Collection of Several Texts Bearing on the Advaita* (Bombay, London: Pandit Jyestaram Mukundji; George Redway, 1895)). It is composed of two parts: an introduction and a rather lengthy section with translations, as the subtitle of the work leads the reader to expect (“Being a Collection of Several Texts Bearing on the Advaita”). This work was reviewed by G. R. S. Mead in *The Theosophist*. The tone of the review is less positive than those in *Lucifer*. Mead wrote that Dvivedi included many translations, “[. . .] but no reference is added beyond the general title of the work from which the text is selected. This is a grave fault” (George R. S. Mead, “The Imitation of Shankara,” *Lucifer* XVIII, no. 103 (1896): 83). He also criticized the title of the book, on the grounds that using a title similar to “Thomas à Kempis[’]” (Mead, “The Imitation of Shankara,” 83) *Imitation of Jesus* would suggest that Śaṅkara had the same qualities as Jesus had, which he did not, in Mead’s view. “Shaṅkara, no doubt, was a saintly man and a religious teacher, but he was mainly a commentator. His work was mainly commentary and philosophical exposition, and his distinct teaching does not come under the head of Shruti or revelation” (Mead, “The Imitation of Shankara,” 83). Dvivedi most likely did not appreciate this comment. Mead concluded, “the whole is completed by useful indexes and a glossary, and prefaced by an introduction in praise of Advaita-vāda, called by the author the ‘Absolute Philosophy’” (Mead, “The Imitation of Shankara,” 83). Mead surely did not approve the praise of the “Advaita-vāda,” as he tended rather towards a “Western” oriented Theosophy than to an “Eastern” version, for which he also criticized Annie Besant in later years. George R. S. Mead, “Reviews and Notices: Mrs. Besant’s ‘Gītā’ Lectures,” *The Theosophical Review* Vol. XXXIX, no. 230 (1906): 188.

140 Anon, “Monism or Advaitism?,” 76.

141 Anon, “Monism or Advaitism?,” 76.

In the following, Dvivedi's *Rāja-Yoga* will be the main topic of discussion. I argue that this work was key to the formation of the concept of the stages of initiation discussed in connection with Besant's *The Path of Discipleship* (Chapter 8) and Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence* (Chapter 9). As Dvivedi's writings have not yet been considered in depth in the scholarship on Theosophy, several of his early articles in *The Theosophist* will also be discussed, together with a selection of his other works in English. It will be seen that his writings were deeply rooted in Theosophical thought. I argue that he translated his understanding of Advaita Vedānta and his ideas on *rājayoga* into Theosophy and that he also recontextualized "Hinduism" in the light of his Theosophical learning. A range of discourses spanning European academia, the Indian independence movement, especially in its the Gujarati context, and Theosophy were connected in Dvivedi's writings. As an Indian "expert" on "Hinduism," he presented a particular understanding of "Hinduism" as Advaita Vedāntic *rājayoga* and elaborated this in relation to Theosophy, as will be discussed below. First, though, it will be useful to provide a biographical sketch of Dvivedi's life, as these events provide a background against which some of his writings become more intelligible.

11.1 A Biography In Between Mesmerism, Theosophy, Sexual Abuse, Academic Success, and Constant Illness

The biographical information on Manilal Dvivedi (1858–1898) in this section is drawn from the two major publications on him: Dhirubhai Thaker's biography and a chapter in Tridip Suhrud's PhD thesis, *Narrations of a Nation*. These two biographies are the most important sources for Dvivedi's Gujarati writings because they include English translations, and provide overviews and summaries, of Dvivedi's writings in Gujarati. Both of his biographers describe Dvivedi's youth as a constant oscillation between strict learning and sexual exploration.¹⁴² Thaker even speaks of "a sort of obsession for sex."¹⁴³ The two writers base their accounts on Dvivedi's autobiography. While Dvivedi had intended his autobiography to be published immediately following his death, it did not in fact appear until 1979, as the friend to whom he entrusted the responsibility

¹⁴² Dhirubhai Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi, Makers of Indian Literature* (New Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay: Sahitya Akademi, 1983), 14–20; Tridip Suhrud, "Narrations of a Nation: Explorations Through Intellectual Biographies" (PhD. Diss, Gujarat University, 1999), 104–7.

¹⁴³ Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 17.

chose to hold it back.¹⁴⁴ While the complete text is only available in Gujarati, partial translations into English are given by Suhrud. The reasons for the late publishing are various, but it seems that the sexual escapades Dvivedi describes, and especially the homoerotic episodes of his youth, were not thought to be appropriate for public consumption. Dvivedi’s life was full of turbulence, and he seems to have frequently regretted his sexual adventures, which caused him to suffer psychologically as he perceived them as tokens of his failure to live up to his own ideals. His visits to prostitutes during his time in Bombay left him with a case of syphilis, from which he suffered until his death.¹⁴⁵ The struggle between desire, ideal, illness, and constant work appears as an ever-present feature of Dvivedi’s life. Read through a “Theosophical filter,” Dvivedi’s autobiography can be interpreted as the life of a chela who is approaching liberation, and it may be that he had a Theosophical audience in mind when he wrote it. However, any such suggestion must remain speculative.

Dvivedi was born into a middle-class family. His father never acquired a formal education and did not place great value on schooling. As a result, he did not support his son’s interest in higher education. Dvivedi was educated first in the vernacular school and then attended the higher classes of the Government Gujarati school. With the support of his teachers, he attempted to pass the matriculation exams in 1876 but failed to score sufficiently high marks in Sanskrit. On his second attempt, however, he not only succeeded but was awarded a scholarship. This led to his father permitting him to go to Bombay in order to attend Elphinstone College (Figure 7). At the age of thirteen, Dvivedi had been married to a four-year-old girl named Mahalaxmi. The marriage was never happy and Dvivedi was often angry with his wife because he thought she was of bad character. After completing his B.A., Dvivedi remained in Bombay from 1881 to 1885, where he lived for some of that time with his wife. However, the household was never a happy one and she repeatedly left to stay at her parents’ home. The descriptions in his autobiography draw a picture of cruel abuse on the part of Dvivedi. Dvivedi himself attributed the failure of his marriage to what he perceived to be his wife’s inability to take responsibility for her actions.¹⁴⁶ Because his father insisted that he should earn a wage, Dvivedi did not study for a higher academic degree. However, he found work in the educational system and continued to study and to write throughout his life.¹⁴⁷

144 Suhrud, “Narrations of a Nation,” 104.

145 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 19.

146 Suhrud, “Narrations of a Nation,” 104–13.

147 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 17.



Figure 7: Elphinstone College in the late 19th century, around the time Dvivedi attended. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Not dated. Wikimedia Commons accessed February 13, 2021. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Elphinstone_College_and_Sasoon_Library.jpg).

In 1885, Dvivedi was appointed Professor of Sanskrit at the Sanakdas College, Bhavangar (Figure 8).¹⁴⁸ During his lifetime, he repeatedly fell ill and was often unable to attend to his official duties, although he always continued to write and to publish. In 1888, his illness forced him to leave his position and he retired with a full Government pension. During his time in Bhavangar, Dvivedi taught numerous students who were to become influential figures in the Indian independence movement and later in post-independence India, among them M. K. Gandhi.¹⁴⁹ When he died in 1898 he left behind a huge corpus of monographs, articles, poems, and translations.¹⁵⁰ No less than seventeen articles, letters, and translations were published in Theosophical journals, and a number of others seem to have been composed with a Theosophical audience in mind.

¹⁴⁸ Suhrud, “Narrations of a Nation,” 110.

¹⁴⁹ Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 24–25.

¹⁵⁰ For a bibliography of Dvivedi’s works, see Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 87–91.



Figure 8: Sanakdas College at the end of the 19th century. This is the college where Dvivedi was appointed professor and where he taught M. K. Gandhi. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Not dated. Wikimedia Commons accessed February 13, 2021. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shamaldas_College_Bhavnagar.jpg).

His voluminous writings led to Dvivedi being recognized in the “West” as a distinguished scholar. The publication of *Rāja-Yoga* in 1885 was received positively. It was hailed by Edwin Arnold, in particular, who was close to the Theosophical society, as well as receiving the applause of one “Dr. Buhler,”¹⁵¹ most likely Georg Bühler (1837–1898).¹⁵² Bühler invited Dvivedi to the Oriental Congress in 1886 in Vienna. Although Dvivedi did not attend, the invitation itself shows how well received *Rāja-Yoga* was in “Western” indological circles. Dvivedi’s other major monograph, *Monism or Advaitism?*, was the enlarged version of an earlier article, *The Advaita philosophy of Śaṅkara*, which had been published in 1888 in the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*. When the monograph was published the following year, it was applauded by some notable figures in the “West.” Thaker writes: “His English books made him well-known among European

¹⁵¹ Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 20.

¹⁵² For more information on Bühler, see Moriz Winternitz, “Bühler, Johann Georg,” in *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, ed. Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 47 (1903), 339–48.

scholars. Dr. Roast, Dr. Buhler, Herbert Spencer, William Hunter and several other scholars wrote letters of compliments to him.”¹⁵³

Dvivedi’s translations were also well received, as can be seen from a review by the well-known German scholar Hermann Jacobi (1850–1937)¹⁵⁴ of a translation of the *Tarakakaumudī* published in 1886. Jacobi expressed therein his appreciation for the work of Dvivedi and acknowledged him as a scholar who was well versed in both Sanskrit literature and European thought.¹⁵⁵ To this he added that Dvivedi’s publication was an important aid and that he would recommend it to students of Sanskrit.¹⁵⁶ Jacobi’s great esteem for Dvivedi’s work is clear, and he even expressed his hopes that more such works would be published in the future.¹⁵⁷ Nor was the high regard for Dvivedi a fleeting matter. As late as 1920, Windisch was still mentioning Dvivedi’s translation of the *Tarakakaumudī* as the standard translation of the work.¹⁵⁸

In 1882, Manilal Dvivedi joined the Gujarati Social Union, a club for graduate students in Bombay. There he met trained mesmerist Karsandas Narottamas Bhagodia. At the time, there was a vibrant mesmerist scene in India,¹⁵⁹ of which Bhagodia was part, and from him Dvivedi learned the key techniques and began to practice as a mesmerist himself.¹⁶⁰ Dvivedi’s interest in mesmerism was long

153 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 29. Thaker often does not include references in his biography of Dvivedi, as is the case here. It is thus often impossible to verify his claims. Nonetheless, it seems that Dvivedi’s writings were – although perhaps not to the extent Thaker would have us believe – well known in the academy, as the review by Hermann Jacobi suggests (see below).

154 For more information on Jacobi, see Helmuth von Glasenapp, “Hermann Jacobi,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938): 1–14.

155 “Durch die gute und gewissenhafte Herausgabe derselben [der *Tarakakaumudī*] hat M. N. Dvivedi vollen Anspruch auf unsern Dank. Grösser aber noch ist das Verdienst, welches er sich durch seine erklärenden Anmerkungen (48 Seiten Noten zu 22 Seiten Text) erworben hat. Selbst tief eingedrungen in das System und wohlbelesen in der einschlägigen Litteratur, sowie nicht unbekannt mit der abendländischen Logik, sind seine Erläuterungen stets äusserst willkommen” Hermann Jacobi, Laugākshi Bhāskara, and Manilal N. Dvivedi, “Review: The *Tarakakaumudī*, Being an Introduction to the Principles of the Vaiśeṣhika and the Nyāya Philosophies,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 1 (1887): 77.

156 “Ein vorzügliches Hilfsmittel zur gründlichen Einführung in das Studium der Nyāya-Vaiśeṣhika-Philosophie, das ich angelegentlichst jungen Sanskritisten [. . .] empfehle.” Jacobi, Bhāskara and Dvivedi, “Review,” 78.

157 Jacobi, Bhāskara and Dvivedi, “Review,” 77–78.

158 Ernst Windisch, *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*, Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde 1. Band, 1. Heft B. (Berlin, Leipzig: Vereinigung Wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1920), Zweiter Teil, 303.

159 Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 321.

160 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 19.

lasting and he wrote a well-received book on the topic in Gujarati.¹⁶¹ After encountering some difficulties in his early attempts to practice mesmerism, Dvivedi wrote a letter to Olcott asking for advice, and this was published in *The Theosophist* in 1883.¹⁶² Dvivedi described the great success he had had in mesmerizing his subject, “a male friend of mine,” an experience that led him to become “a firm devotee of spiritualism and mesmerism.” However, he claimed that after some time he had lost control over his subject during the mesmeric trance and his subject had experienced certain horrifying episodes. He thus wrote to Olcott to ask for help in this “very essential scientific matter.”¹⁶³

Dvivedi viewed Olcott as an expert in mesmerism, a perception that is unsurprising given that Olcott had promoted mesmerism in India and Ceylon, and had actively practiced mesmeric healing in Ceylon.¹⁶⁴ Olcott’s response pointed to the dangers of mesmerism and indicated that inexperienced mesmerists should be very careful in employing the technique. However, it did not include any practical advice. He wrote:

The best advice to give under the circumstances, and to all beginners, is that they do not attempt to throw their subjects into the clairvoyant condition before being thoroughly confident that they have such self-command, coolness, and available resources of knowledge of mesmeric science as to be prepared for every possible emergency. The true mesmerist is one whose self-control never deserts him during an experiment, even though the ceiling falls upon his head!¹⁶⁵

Dvivedi was not disillusioned by this response but wrote another letter, this time to Blavatsky, in which he requested a meeting with the Himalayan masters in order to become their disciple.¹⁶⁶ The letter was partially printed in *The Theosophist*, this time including Dvivedi’s name. Dvivedi wrote that the purpose of his letter is “of no small importance, no insignificant spiritual merit – the saving of a *soul*.”¹⁶⁷ He wrote that a “short history of my *religion* (as I would call the philosophical development of my intelligence) will form a fit prelude to

161 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 22.

162 Thaker does not tell us why he thinks that the letter was written by Dvivedi (Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 22). The letter as printed in *The Theosophist* is attributed to “A.B.C.” but the descriptions therein fit the vita of Dvivedi, making it plausible that he was the author. A.B.C. and Henry S. Olcott, “The Perils of Dabbling in Mesmerism,” *The Theosophist* 4, no. 47 (1883): 280.

163 A.B.C. and Olcott, “The Perils of Dabbling in Mesmerism,” 280.

164 Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 321; Prothero, *The White Buddhist*, 23–24.

165 A.B.C. and Olcott, “The Perils of Dabbling in Mesmerism,” 281.

166 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 24.

167 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “The ‘saving of Another Hindu Soul,’” *The Theosophist* 5, no. 49 (1883): 25.

what follows.”¹⁶⁸ This history went from the daily worship of his house deva during his childhood to an understanding of religion as “a moral code of laws, waving all belief in anything beyond morality and matter.”¹⁶⁹ He explained that, when he came to Bombay, this belief had been contested by some his colleagues, who thought that all religion was superstition. Dvivedi, however, did not agree. As he explained:

My mind soon grew disappointed with the speculations of the West not unoften diametrically opposed to the teachings of my Shastras. Failing to solve as Prof. Tyndall acknowledges ‘the ultimate mystery,’¹⁷⁰ I turned to the study of my Shastras. Thanks to my Sanskrit knowledge, I was able in a brief space of time to master the principles of the six principal schools of Sanskrit Philosophy (the two Nyayas, the two Sankhyas, the two Mimnansas.) The teachings of Shankara Charya went home to my mind, and I adopted the Vedanta as my future religion. I was then able to understand to some extent the teachings of Plato and especially the Alexandrian Neoplatonists.¹⁷¹

In the quotation above, Dvivedi relates “Hinduism,” especially Śāṅkara, to the Neoplatonist tradition, a common topos in the Theosophical Society. This kind of equalizing relationizing can be identified in several of Dvivedi’s works (see below). When he came into contact with mesmerism during that time, he was convinced of “the existence of *spirit*; and of the *ākās* of the Brahma Sutras and the Upanishads.”¹⁷² He thus carried out “a review of *Yoga*, *Sankhya* and *Vedanta*, and became thoroughly reconciled to the teachings of the first and the last chiefly by the help of several articles in the Nos. of the ‘*Theosophist*,’ the whole

168 Dvivedi, “The ‘saving of Another Hindu Soul’,” 25.

169 Dvivedi, “The ‘saving of Another Hindu Soul’,” 25.

170 Dvivedi refers here to John Tyndall (1820–1893). The quotation given by Dvivedi can be found in Tyndall’s *The Scientific Use of the Imagination*. John Tyndall, *The Scientific Use of the Imagination: A Discourse Delivered Before the British Association at Liverpool on Friday Evening, 16th September 1870* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870), 40. Tyndall reacts therein to an ongoing tendency in the Victorian scientific community to accept “imagination” as a legitimate method of scientific investigation. For a further discussion of this point, and of Tyndall’s position in particular, see Daniel Brown, “John Tyndall and ‘The Scientific Use of the Imagination,’” in *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists: Style, Science and Nonsense*, ed. Daniel Brown, Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 83 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). Tyndall was well received in the Theosophical Society. Already in *Isis Unveiled*, Blavatsky quoted the same passage to point out the shortcomings of modern science. Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 419. It is likely that Dvivedi was familiar with this passage from *Isis Unveiled*.

171 Dvivedi, “The ‘saving of Another Hindu Soul’,” 26.

172 Dvivedi, “The ‘saving of Another Hindu Soul’,” 26.

of which I now made a subject of constant study.”¹⁷³ In consequence, he had “come to sympathise fully with the Theosophical movement and its work.”¹⁷⁴

Dvivedi’s vita serves as an instructive example in which the Theosophical Society provided a structure through which Dvivedi encountered not only Theosophy but also “Hinduism.” He learned about “*Yoga, Sankhya* and *Vedanta*” in the pages of *The Theosophist*. Dvivedi as “Indian scholar” relied on *The Theosophist* as a source of information on “Hinduism,” and in turn became an expert on “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society and beyond. Multifaceted processes of translation, de- and recontextualization, and relationalization were triggered through these encounters. These processes will be sketched and analyzed in the following.

In the next section, Dvivedi’s translation of the *Vākya suddhā* will be analyzed. The resemblance of his translation to certain Theosophical ideas is instructive. It will be argued that Dvivedi used language which was part of the Theosophical tradition for his translation, which is to say that the *Vākya suddhā* was translated and recontextualized at the same time. In turn, this translation could be read by Theosophists as a proof of the Theosophical idea that the ancient knowledge was preserved in India.

11.2 Dvivedi’s Translation of the *Vākya Suddhā*

The small text called *Vākya Suddhā*, often also known as the *Dṛg Dṛśya Viveka*, was the first of Manilal Dvivedi’s translations to appear in *The Theosophist*. The authorship of the text is unclear, with the work commonly being ascribed to one of three writers: Bhārati Tirtha, Sankaracharya, or Vidyāranya. Swami Nikhilanda¹⁷⁵ suggests that Bhārati Tirtha wrote the text.¹⁷⁶ In this case it would have been composed some time between 1328 and 1380 A.D. This would place the text in the Advaita tradition, in the direct lineage of Śaṅkara, as Bhārati Tirtha was the Jagadguru of Sringeri math, one of the original monasteries founded by Śaṅkara, according to the tradition. Nikhilanda mentions “Telugu, Malayalam, English, Sanskrit and

173 Dvivedi, “The ‘saving of Another Hindu Soul’,” 26.

174 Dvivedi, “The ‘saving of Another Hindu Soul’,” 26.

175 Swami Nikhilananda was a member of the Ramakrishna Order and a direct disciple of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. He founded the New York City branch of the order in 1933. Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York, “Swami Nikhilananda,” accessed July 19, 2019, <https://www.ramakrishna.org/sn.htm>.

176 Swami Nikhilananda, *Drg-Drsya Viveka: An Inquiry into the Nature of the ‘seer’ and the ‘seen’* (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Asrama, 1931), Text, with English Translation and Notes, xiv.

Bengali editions¹⁷⁷ of the text, which he consulted for his translation, although he does not supply any further references to these editions.¹⁷⁸ However, it is likely that the English edition he mentions was that of Manilal Dvivedi.¹⁷⁹

Dvivedi's rendering was published in *The Theosophist* in 1885 and later in an anthology edited by Tookaram Tatya. The two editions do not differ much. The most striking divergence is that the subtitle *The Eternal Atman (Spirit)* is omitted in the later edition.¹⁸⁰ The translation of the *Dṛg Dṛśya Viveka* was also included in Dvivedi's *Rāja-Yoga* as one of the two translations which he claimed were sufficient to explain the Advaita system. However, the translation that appears in the second edition of *Rāja-Yoga*, published in 1890, differs significantly from that in the 1885 edition. This later edition will be discussed and briefly compared to the earlier version below.

The following presentation will be based on the edition published in *The Theosophist*. The text treats the nature of *ātman* and its relation to the world, and takes as its starting point the differentiation between “*objects of perception* (दृश्य [dṛśya])”¹⁸¹ and the “*subjects of perception* (दृष्ट [dṛṣṭa]).”¹⁸² The main gist is that the subjects of perception remain unaltered by the objects of perception and that only the objects are subject to change. The ultimate subject of perception is *ātman* and therefore changeless. “The *Atman* cannot be assumed to be the *object* of any further perception; for such; a theory would involve us in confusion *ad infinitum*. [. . .] The *Atman* therefore shines by its own lustre and illumines all other objects of perception.”¹⁸³ Therefore “that, which does not

177 Nikhilananda, *Drg-Drsya Viveka*, xvi.

178 Nikhilananda, *Drg-Drsya Viveka*, xiv–xvi.

179 My thanks to Peter Thomi for his kind advice and his permission to make use of his library, which contains a first edition of Dvivedi's *Rāja-Yoga*. He also suggested that Dvivedi's translation of the *Dṛg Dṛśya Viveka* was most likely the first translation into English. No other earlier English translation is known to either Thomi or I. It thus seems plausible that Dvivedi's text was the (or at least one of the) blueprint(s) for Nikhilananda's translation.

180 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “Shrī-Vakyasudhā,” in Tatya, *A Compendium of the Raja Yoga Philosophy*, 69.

181 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha: The Eternal Atman (Spirit),” *The Theosophist* 6, no. 64 (1885): 79; Translated, with Notes, by Manilal N. Dvivedi, F.T.S.

182 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79.

183 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79.

shine by its own light, is subject to transformation, as *Ahankāra*¹⁸⁴(egoism).¹⁸⁵ This means that there is a difference between *Ahankāra*, which is illusory, and *Atman*, which is real. As *Atman* is the supreme subject, it is “thus proved to be *Paramatman*. It is the one implied by त्वम् [tvam] in the *Sruti* तत्त्वमसिः [tattvamasih] and is one with the परब्रह्म [parabrahma] implied by in the same.”¹⁸⁶ If *Atman* is *brahman*, then the question would arise as to why there is *Ahankāra* which believes itself to be the subject. This comes about because a “reflection of the *Atman* in *Buddhi* enkindles it (makes the substantially *material Buddhi* believe itself to be entire *spirit*). This *Buddhi* is of two sorts: *Ahankāra* and *Antaskarana*. (The *doer*, the *subject* of all action is *Ahankāra*; and the *Antaskarana* or *Manas* is its instrument.)”¹⁸⁷ The explanation here fits well with the Theosophical idea of the human constitution and was also recontextualized therein by Dvivedi, who included an editor’s note from an earlier issue of *The Theosophist* as a footnote in his own translation. “‘Antaskarana,’ the footnote reads ‘is the path of communion between soul and body, entirely disconnected with the former; existing with, belonging to, and dying with the body.’ – *Editor’s note, Theosophist, Vol.IV, No.11, p. 268.*”¹⁸⁸ The connection of *ātman* to *Buddhi-Manas* and the *Ahankāra* is further elaborated and explained.

When *Ahankāra* merges into original ignorance, sleep is induced, and the physical body (स्थूलदेह [sthūladeha]), which appeared with spirit by its identification with *Ahankāra* in the waking state, becomes as it were lifeless. When *Ahankāra* is half awake, the state produced in the astral body (लिङ्गदेह [liṅgadeha]¹⁸⁹) is the one called dream; and when it is wide awake, the state produced is sleeplessness or waking. (Thus all कर्म is dependent on *Ahankāra* which, when quite absent as in sleep, gives rise to none.)¹⁹⁰

The footnote that followed this paragraph can be read as an instance of relationalization. There one reads:

184 *Ahankāra* is translated by Monier-Williams as “conception of one’s individuality, self-consciousness,” Monier-Williams and Leumann, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 124. Rambachan renders it as “I-thought” or “I-notion” and gives it as a synonym for *ahamvṛtti*. Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 60–61.

185 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79.

186 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79.

187 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79.

188 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79. The article Dvivedi refers to was written anonymously. See Anon, “The Real and the Unreal,” *The Theosophist* 4, no. 47 (1883).

189 If strictly followed, the Sanskrit text would be transliterated as liṅgadeha. However, while in nineteenth-century publications the *Anusvāra* was often used in a way that was similar to its usage in Hindi nowadays, to substitute nasal letters, it could also sometimes be used to substitute any letter, which makes it hard to decipher it correctly from time to time.

190 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79–80.

‘The Vedantic philosophy teaches as much as Occult philosophy that our *Monad*, during its life on earth as a triad (7th, 6th, and 5th principles), has, besides the condition of pure intelligence, three conditions; viz. waking, dreaming and *sushupti* – a state of dreamless sleep – from the stand-point of terrestrial conception; of real actual soul-life from the occult stand-point. While man is either dreamlessly, profoundly asleep or in a trance-state, the triad (spirit, soul and the mind) enters into perfect union with the Paramatman – the Supreme Universal soul’: – *Editor’s Note, Theosophist*, Vol. IV., No.11 p. 267.¹⁹¹

Blavatsky who was most likely the author¹⁹² deployed a strategy of harmonizing relationizing: “the Vedantic philosophy teaches as much as Occult philosophy” of the structure while equalizing “the elements, the triad (spirit, soul and the mind) enters into perfect union with the Paramatman – the Supreme Universal soul.” This is an instructive example of how an actor, Blavatsky, translated the connection between the discursive fields into relations while claiming a hegemonic position. Although she did not speak for “Hinduism,” she nevertheless integrated it in “occultism.”

The translation continues by explaining that there are five attributes: “existence (सत् [sat]); intelligence (चित् [cit]); love (आनंद [ānanda]); form (रूप [rūpa]); and name (नाम [nāma]). The first three of these represent the all-pervading *Brahma*, and the last two the unreal *Jagat* (world, creation).”¹⁹³ Therefore, that which changes, form and name, is illusionary and that which does not is “real.” For this reason, “one (desirous of final absolution) should meditate on the *Satchidanand Brahma*, and should ever practise mental as well as physical concentration.” In verses 23–30, several states of “mental concentration”¹⁹⁴ are described by which “the egoism in the physical body” is “annihilated [. . .] and the *Universal Atman* being thoroughly realised, wherever the mind of the ascetic is directed, there it *naturally* loses itself into one *or* other of these *Samadhis*.”¹⁹⁵

This translation provides a striking example of several hybridization processes meshing with each other. We see here that Dvivedi translated the *Vākya Suddhā* while using already hybrid terms that were repeated in the Theosophical Society. In the following, this idea of meshing hybridization processes is taken up as it seems to describe Dvivedi’s work well.

191 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 79–80.

192 In several instances, “editor notes” were added to texts in Theosophical journals, as we see in several articles from *The Theosophist* below. The note here was most likely written by Blavatsky, as she was the editor of *The Theosophist* at the time.

193 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 80.

194 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 80.

195 Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 81.

11.3 The Uptake of Yoga in the Theosophical Society: A Story With(out) Manilal Dvivedi?

The long introduction to *Rāja-Yoga*, 55 pages compared to the 45-page-long translation, is composed of “a paper I read in the middle of 1884 before the Bombay Branch of the Theosophical Society”¹⁹⁶ and a reprint of “an introduction I was asked to prepare early in the beginning of this year, for an edition of the Bhadvad-Gitā by my friend Mr. Tookārāma Tātýá of Bombay.”¹⁹⁷ Dvivedi frequently referred to the *Bhagavadgītā* in his introduction and this probably provided the initial impulse for the wide-spread and influential engagement with the *Bhagavadgītā* within the Theosophical Society. I argue that Dvivedi thus laid the cornerstone for the subsequent interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā* as a practical guide for *rājayoga*.¹⁹⁸ Dvivedi describes the purpose of the book in the following words:

An attempt is here made to demonstrate the possibility of a universal science of ontology from the stand-point of modern physical science, and to present subsequently a brief sketch of all that A’ryan philosophy has to say on the subject. The two translations that follow complete the series by demonstrating some of the leading and important positions of the *Vedānta*, and finally by prescribing certain practical rules for the guidance, and exhaltation of the beginner.¹⁹⁹

It is interesting to note that *Rāja-Yoga* is meant to include practical advice for “beginners.” This practical advice was attributed to Vedānta, which is primarily a Vedānta that Dvivedi identifies with Śaṅkara and bases on an interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The subtitle of the book, *Being a Translation of the Vakyasudha or Dṛḡdṛśyaviveka of Bhāratitirtha and the Aparokśānubhuti of Śri Sankarāchārya*, shows that Dvivedi had a very specific tradition in mind when he wrote about *rājayoga*. The first translation of the *Dṛḡ Dṛśya Vīveka*, initially published in *The Theosophist*, has been discussed above.²⁰⁰ The translation of the *Dṛḡ Dṛśya Vīveka* found in *Rāja-Yoga* will be discussed briefly below, as it deviates from that which appeared in *The Theosophist* in some noteworthy details. The second translation included in *Rāja-Yoga* is a rendering of the *Aparokśānubhūti*. This is a

196 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

197 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

198 Symptomatically, neither Bergunder nor Sharpe discuss Dvivedi’s commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* in more detail. They both seem to overlook Dvivedi’s importance for the uptake of the *Bhagavadgītā* – and, as will be seen for several other texts – within the Theosophical Society.

199 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

200 See Chapter 11.2 for further information.

small treatise that represents a medieval tradition of Vedānta reception. Although it is traditionally attributed to Ādiśaṅkarācārya, it was most likely composed later, between the 12th and the 14th centuries B.C. The yoga described therein, especially the fifteen auxiliaries, deviates considerably from Patañjali's *Yogasūtra* and its mediaeval reception.²⁰¹ The *Aparokṣānubhūti* is probably the earliest text to use the term *rājayoga*, and it also makes a distinction between *rājayoga* and *haṭhayoga*.²⁰² This work is thus rooted in an Advaita Vedānta tradition which presupposes this distinction, which is also characteristic of the Advaita Vedānta uptake connected to *rājayoga* in the Theosophical Society.

In 1998, Karl Baier pondered on the provenance of Blavatsky's differentiation between *haṭha*- and *rājayoga*, maintaining that she could not have adopted it from Vivekānanda but not giving any conclusive answer as to an alternative source.²⁰³ In his much more comprehensive publication, *Meditation und Moderne*, which was published in 2009, Baier discusses at length the uptake of yoga practices in the Theosophical Society, identifying several distinct phases. In a very early phase, Blavatsky and Olcott attempted to find Indian yogis who were willing to teach them yoga practices. This search proved to be in vain and their connection with the Arya Samaj was not able to provide such instruction. This search was then partly satisfied through several articles written by Indian Theosophists from Bengal, who advocated tantric-oriented yoga practices. After the break with the Arya Samaj, the second phase of this uptake was marked by a critical survey of yoga practices. As Baier explains, this phase was marked by the publication of *The Elixir of Life*, an article written by Godolphin Mitford and published in *The Theosophist* in 1882. The publication of Damodar K. Mavalankar's article *Contemplation* in 1884 belongs to the same phase. Both articles rely on practices which transfer the idea of yoga into an inner sphere and emphasize the continuation of a working in the world instead of any notion of renunciation. These ideas were taken up by Blavatsky, who developed a more practical approach, connected to

201 Jason Birch, "The Meaning of Haṭha in Early Haṭhayoga," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131, no. 4 (2011): 540.

202 Jason Birch, "Rājayoga: The Reincarnations of the King of All Yogas," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013): 406–7.

203 "Blavatskys Unterscheidung zwischen Hatha- und Rāja-Yoga und die Empfehlung des letzteren sind in ihrer Herkunft unklar. Sie kann sie noch nicht von Vivekānanda übernommen haben, der erst später Rāja-Yoga mit dem Yoga des Patañjali identifizierte. Sie entspricht mit ihrer strikten Trennung auch nicht der in der Hatha-Pradīpikā getroffenen Unterscheidung. Letztere steht aber vielleicht bei Blavatskys Fassung der beiden Yoga-Arten Pate und wird von ihr im Sinne einer dualistischen Weltanschauung umgedeutet." Karl Baier, *Yoga auf dem Weg nach Westen: Beiträge zur Rezeptionsgeschichte* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1998), 127.

the *rājayoga* which formed part of the program of the Esoteric Section.²⁰⁴ Baier’s work is the most comprehensive presentation of the development of the ideas on yoga within the Theosophical Society, yet he does not mention Dvivedi once.

A detailed analysis of Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga* will show that Blavatsky most likely received her understanding of *rājayoga* from Dvivedi’s interpretation of yoga more broadly. She seems to have drawn on the same source for the stages of initiations, which were at least partly derived from Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga* (see Chapter 9, above).

11.4 Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga*

Rāja-Yoga was first published in 1885,²⁰⁵ with the second edition following in 1890. The two editions differ in more than just details. In the following, I will briefly compare the editions and will argue that some of the changes that can be observed were the result of a mutual interaction between Blavatsky and Dvivedi. In doing so, I further develop the argument laid out in Chapter 9, where we saw that there are reasons to think that Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga* was one of Blavatsky’s key blueprints in developing her ideas about the stages of initiation.

When the second edition of the translation was published in 1890, an anonymous reviewer²⁰⁶ wrote in *Lucifer* that: “It is with great pleasure that we take up our pen to notice the second edition of the interesting and lucid work of our learned brother, Professor Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, B.A.”²⁰⁷ The reviewer went on to describe Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga* as the “most valuable exposition of the Vedantic science of Raj Yog,”²⁰⁸ and to “recommend [it] most strongly [. . .] as being the best introduction so far extant to this most difficult and sublime science.”²⁰⁹ It “is clear, concise and interesting.”²¹⁰ He or she concluded,

204 Baier, *Meditation und Moderne*, 315–95.

205 Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga: Or the Practical Metaphysics of the Vedānta* (Bombay: The “Subodha-Prakasha” Printing Press, 1885), Being a Translation of the *Vakya-sudha* or *Ḍṛgdṛśyaviveka* of Bhāratitirtha and the *Aparokśānubhuti* of Śri Sankarāchārya.

206 In many cases, it is not possible to determine who the reviewers were. Nonetheless, it seems likely that either Blavatsky or Besant reviewed the work.

207 Anon, “Raja-Yoga,” 423.

208 Anon, “Raja-Yoga,” 423.

209 Anon, “Raja-Yoga,” 423.

210 Anon, “Raja-Yoga,” 424.

we have every confidence in recommending Professor Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi's *Raja Yoga*, not only to the real students of occultism in the T.S., who alone will fully understand its spirit and application, but also to every member of the T.S. who wishes to make a safe start in the dangerous paths of the Yoga philosophy.²¹¹

This review shows that Dvivedi's *Rāja-Yoga* was known and positively received in the Theosophical Society. As the article was published in *Lucifer* in 1891, when Annie Besant was already the co-editor of the journal along with Blavatsky, it is evident that she knew Dvivedi's work. It is even possible that Besant wrote the review herself.

Interest in Dvivedi's *Rāja-Yoga* was not confined to a Theosophical readership. The second edition of the work includes a review by Sir Edwin Arnold on its front page. He wrote: "Mr. Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi; Professor of Sanskrit in the Sâmalaldas College here, whose book just published on the Râja-yoga ought to become widely known in Europe, and to converse with whom has been a real privilege."²¹² As we saw above (biographical sketch), Dvivedi's work was positively received in Europe and had numerous supporters.

11.4.1 The First Part of *Rāja-Yoga*

The premises of Dvivedi's enquiry are two-fold. He holds both that our consciousness is the only tool we have to perceive the physical universe and that the perception of this universe is essentially a perception of change. However, these changes only "exist" on the lowest plane of being, as Dvivedi explains.²¹³

When considering the two editions of this text side by side, we can see that several sentences were added to the introduction to the second edition.²¹⁴ His references to the higher planes, added to the introduction of the 1890 edition, can be understood as being related to Theosophical concepts. It could be argued that Dvivedi attempted to assert his own authority by claiming to have insight into the states of being on higher planes. Changes that point towards an

211 Anon, "Raja-Yoga," 426.

212 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 2. The quote is from Edwin Arnold, *India Revisited* (London: Trübner & Co., 1886), 106.

Arnold's book was originally published in the Daily Telegraph and appeared in several editions in England and the United States in 1886.

213 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 2.

214 "As represented to our consciousness they are but a series of changes succeeding one another. Thus we are able to perceive that in fact the very laws of our consciousness necessarily compel us to look upon things constituted of a series of changes." Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 2.

engagement with Theosophy are frequent throughout the introduction. It will not be possible to identify them all here, but major changes will be noted in the footnotes to this section.

The changes made by Dvivedi to his introduction appear to have two different purposes, on the one hand connecting his concepts more closely to Theosophy while, on the other, relating them to European philosophy and science. In both cases, Dvivedi insisted on the superiority of (his) Advaita Vedānta. These changes can thus be read as an example of relationalization.

De- and Recontextualization into Theosophy: The Four “Preliminary Qualifications of a Would-Be Initiate”

In Dvivedi’s view, “change” and the “fact” that it is only perceivable in our consciousness, which is the only “reality,” is the basis for all philosophical speculation.²¹⁵ One of the major “changes” experienced by humans is death: “Yes, it is death, transformation, change, that gives us all our philosophy, all our wisdom, all our morality.”²¹⁶ Death then brings us “upon the threshold of Eternity: Death but brings us face to face with the Infinite, the Invisible and the Absolute.”²¹⁷ These two principles, “change” and the changeless “Absolute,” are the foundation of all intellectual endeavors, on Dvivedi’s view. For him, it was only the changeless that could be the ultimate object of investigation: “Once the idea of the impermanence of this phenomenal world is on a man, he is not able to shake it off: nay, it presses upon him with such force that ultimately it grows with his life and strengthens with his body.”²¹⁸ This is the moment, Dvivedi explains, at which one loses “all taste for the world and its pursuits,”²¹⁹ which is the “first of the four preliminary qualifications of a would-be initiate in the mysteries of the *Vedānta* viz; Non-attachment or *Vairāgya*.”²²⁰ Here, Dvivedi defines the goal of his treatise: initiation. His main topic throughout the book is

215 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 2. This is very close to Masson’s statement on consciousness: “On this ground of Consciousness, then, as the repository, storehouse, or conventicle of all knowledge, all philosophers take their stand – even those who end by explaining Consciousness itself as a temporary result or peculiarly exquisite juncture of the conditions which it employs itself in recalling and unravelling.” (David Masson, *Recent British Philosophy: A Review, with Criticisms*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan & Co, 1867), Including some Comments on Mr. Mill’s Answer to Sir William Hamilton, 24.) Dvivedi frequently consulted Masson’s book, as is indicated by the many references to *Recent British Philosophy* found in *Rāja-Yoga*.

216 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 3.

217 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 3.

218 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 3.

219 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 3.

220 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 3.

the pursuit of happiness, the true form of which is said to be the state of union with *brahman*, which is the aim of initiation.

It is necessary to this end that we must be able to discriminate between that which is eternal and that which is not. Thus we arrive at that preliminary stage through which every candidate for initiation into the higher mysteries of occultism has naturally to pass, viz. discrimination or *viveka* as the venerable S'ankarâchârya describes it. *Discrimination* strengthens *Non-attachment*, which sets one thinking. It naturally follows that the neophyte should devote his mind and soul to the study of the Eternal, subordinating all pursuits to the main inquiry, and putting full faith in the teachings of its science and its interpreters.²²¹

His presentation of these stages is phrased in language that can easily be connected to Theosophy. The “candidate for initiation into the higher mysteries of occultism,” for instance, can be identified with “the chela,” and the use of the term “neophyte” in the next sentence strengthens this association. Using these terms to describe the Advaita Vedānta concept of approaching the guru²²² recontextualizes it within a Theosophical framework.

So far, Dvivedi has presented two preliminary requisites for initiation: 1) *vairāgya* and 2) *viveka*. Following the advice of the “teachings of its science and its interpreters,” the candidate for initiation will reach

the third requisite or qualification of a candidate for occult truth – requisite described as *Sama and the other fire* by the masters of occultism. Having thus lighted upon the right path he ardently desires to realise the Eternal and the permanent, and thus acquires the fourth and last qualification – the desire for absolution (*Mumuk'sutâ*). These considerations are important as indicating to those who make light of initiations and occult secrets, of Adepts and their laws, of the true and real significance of the secret doctrine couched in the words of the *Advaita-jñānins*, *Buddhist Arhats*, the Jewish *Kabalists* and the *Mahomedan Sufis*.²²³

Several terms which were well established in Theosophy at the time are employed here to describe these qualifications, the four preliminary stages of initiation, which were attributed to the teachings of Śaṅkara by Dvivedi. Following in the Theosophical tradition, Dvivedi presented the preliminary stages using terminology such as “Adepts” and “occult secrets,” while describing the stages as universal principles. The stages of approaching a teacher in Vedānta are here recontextualized as universal stages of initiation. The harmonizing relationizing on the structural level and

²²¹ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

²²² Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 19–29.

²²³ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

the absorbing of the elements from Advaita Vedānta can be read as traces of the de- and recontextualization processes.

De- and Recontextualization Into European Philosophy: “A Posteriori Knowledge” and “A Priori Promptings of Internal Consciousness”

Once these stages have been passed through, “all *a posteriori* knowledge is given up as false, and full reliance is placed on the *a priori* promptings of internal consciousness,”²²⁴ Dvivedi explains. Simultaneously, the candidate becomes “conscious of a plane of existence wherein time and space have no existence and where knowledge is of the real and permanent. [. . .] True happiness begins to dawn upon the intelligence only at that stage.”²²⁵ By using the terms “a priori” and “a posteriori,” Dvivedi recontextualizes European, especially Kantian, philosophy²²⁶ into the framework of his Advaita Vedānta.

Dvivedi’s usage of these terms is closely linked to his reading of one book in particular, David Masson’s *Recent British Philosophy*. He refers to this book in several passages of *Rāja-Yoga*. Masson writes that “All that we know comes to us in what we call Mind or Consciousness.”²²⁷ This statement is almost identical to that of Dvivedi when writing about consciousness being the only “reality.” Similarly, Dvivedi identifies “consciousness” as the only instrument of perception.²²⁸ Meanwhile, in the paragraph that begins with the sentence quoted above, Masson discusses various schools of European philosophy, claiming that there are two main branches of philosophy, each of which has different opinions on “the psychological difference.”²²⁹ The question at issue here is whether there is any “a priori” knowledge or whether knowledge is always generated through experience,²³⁰ exactly the same poles as are identified by Dvivedi. Change or death, as explained above, implies “a posteriori” experience, while the “changeless” is equated with “a priori” knowledge.²³¹ These are, according to Dvivedi, the two poles of every human intellectual

224 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 7.

225 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 7. Here a whole paragraph is missing in the 1885 edition, in particular the references to Kantian terminology. Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 6.

226 D. W. Hamlyn, “A Priori and a Posteriori,” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Donald M. Borchert, 2nd ed. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006), 1:240.

227 Masson, *Recent British Philosophy*, 23.

228 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 2.

229 Masson, *Recent British Philosophy*, 23.

230 Cf. Masson, *Recent British Philosophy*, 23–38.

231 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 7–8.

endeavor: “All philosophy [. . .] begins at Death; all science truly such, is but a search after the immutable and permanent.”²³²

Discussing ancient European, principally Greek, philosophy, Dvivedi attempts to show that philosophy is “the search after *the real* and *the true*.”²³³ The culmination of this search, Dvivedi claims, can be found in “the experiences of Aryan philosophers.”²³⁴ This view can be understood as an example of relationalization, with Dvivedi employing hierarchical epistemological relationalization to claim the superiority of the “Aryan philosophers.”

Dvivedi's reception of Masson's *Recent British Philosophy* is an instructive example. It illustrates that “hybridity” in the sense of “already hybrids” is both the start and the end point for meshing processes of hybridization. Masson's book, for example, comprised an overview of numerous philosophers and brought together many different traditions of thought. The book itself is a product of a scholarly tradition. When Dvivedi based his notions about Kantian philosophy on this book, he on the one hand relied on an already hybrid while at the same time hybridizing it through a relationalization. In the following, this strategy of relationizing is traced through a multitude of passages in Dvivedi's writing.

Relationizing Advaita Vedānta to Ancient Greek and “Modern” European Philosophy

In his overview of European philosophy, Dvivedi follows, and often directly refers to, James Frederick Ferrier's *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*.²³⁵ For Ferrier, the “historian of philosophy”²³⁶ must have certain qualities if he is to successfully understand historical philosophical views. On the one hand, “he must be able to place himself in the mental circumstances in which they arose, and must observe them springing up in his own mind, just as they sprang up in the minds of those who originally propounded them.”²³⁷ On the other hand, he must understand what philosophy is. “The aim of philosophy is to raise us into the region of universal, or, as I may call it, unindividual, thinking”,²³⁸ Ferrier declares. In simple terms, “*philosophy is the pursuit of*

²³² Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 7.

²³³ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 8.

²³⁴ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 7.

²³⁵ Dvivedi frequently referred directly to Ferrier's work; cf. Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 5, 8–12, 32.

²³⁶ James Frederick Ferrier, *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*, 2 vols. Vol. I (Edinburgh, London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1866), 5.

²³⁷ Ferrier, *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*, 3.

²³⁸ Ferrier, *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*, 1.

truth.”²³⁹ “Truth” was a central concept in Theosophy: not only was the Theosophical motto connected to the idea of “truth,” but so too were claims to higher knowledge. Ferrier went on to discuss what truth is and established a distinction between relative and absolute truth. “Relative truth is what exists only for some, but not necessarily for all minds; while absolute truth is that which exists necessarily for all minds.”²⁴⁰ This is, again, compatible with the opposition between conventional “truth” and “occult truth,” which latter can only be understood fully after the initiation at which Dvivedi’s explanations aim. Ferrier goes on to say that, “in all intelligence there is, by the terms of its conception, a universal that is, an essential unity of kind, however small the point of unity may be.”²⁴¹ This excursus into Ferrier’s thinking illustrates how *Lectures on Greek Philosophy* fitted into Dvivedi’s world view and that of the Theosophical Society. The claim that universal knowledge is possible and the idea of a human constitution which contains in itself a universal part fit well with concepts of a higher knowledge and with the Theosophical idea of *ātman* as a universal principle in men. The claim of universality led Dvivedi to understand European philosophy and “A’dwaitism” to be interconnected.

It is necessary to remark, at this stage of our inquiry, that all the modern notions of European metaphysics from the materialism of Locke and Condillac, and the nihilism of Hume, to the Idealism of Berkley, and the Absolute Identity of Schelling and Hegel, which I am inclined to believe is a pure rational exposition of Aryan *A’dwaitism*, all will be found fore-shadowed, though but dimly, in the writings of these and other ancient philosophers. Even the *Sāṅkhya* of Kapila and the speculations of Jina and Buddha will find their parallel in the workings of the mind of ancient Greece.²⁴²

Although Dvivedi framed his description in a narrative which ran along the lines of a chronological hierarchization of ideas, he also employed genealogical hierarchization in his claim that “A’dwaitism” was “the solid and unique, yet the oldest progenitor of all philosophy and religion.”²⁴³ He explained that the most important advances of European philosophy and science were mediated by the East,²⁴⁴ concluding his historical survey with a summary.

(1.) That the search for the truth is as old as the world or at least as the mind of men; [. . .] even the sublime speculations of Greece had their origin in the far north-east. And that therefore the religion which adopts for its maxim ‘there is no religion higher than truth’ is

239 Ferrier, *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*, 7.

240 Ferrier, *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*, 9.

241 Ferrier, *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*, 13.

242 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 9–10.

243 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 16.

244 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 9–16.

nothing new, but only another form of the eternal contest. (2.) That the great intellectual cataclysms which have followed one another in rapid succession might have led to the disappearance of a few brilliant stars of genius – the custodians of the higher methods of inquiry – the masters or Mahâtmas of today [. . .] these might have formed, from time immemorial, the nucleus of an occult brotherhood of teachers and philosophers. (3.) That modern philosophy guided by modern physical science is breaking upon ground trod, more than once, by ancient investigators and philosophers. (4.) That the march of civilization and philosophy has steadily been from East to West – a fact corroborated by History [. . .] Sufficient argument exists for us to hope for the return of this lost child of science and philosophy to its motherland – India – an event of the possible realization of which the modern religious stir may fitly be described as the rosy forerunner.²⁴⁵

Several points are noteworthy here. First, the “East” is understood by Dvivedi to be the cradle of the highest, most ancient knowledge. Secondly, there were in all periods and all regions of the world “masters or Mahâtmas” who were initiated into “occult” knowledge. Thirdly, science is now simply rediscovering ancient truths which had long been understood in the “East.” These are all standard motifs of the Theosophical discourse. The passages quoted above are illustrations of relationalization. Dvivedi’s claim to hegemony in his *Rāja-Yoga* is underlined by a recontextualization of his statements against the framework of European philosophy and a relationizing of 1) “the modern notions,” by equalizing them with “a pure rational exposition of Aryan *A’dwaitism*,” and 2) “Aryan *A’dwaitism*,” in a genealogical/epistemological hierarchization as “foreshadowed, though but dimly” in the “mind of ancient Greece.” His strategy of relationalization is elaborated by a chronological and genealogical hierarchization in which even “the religion which adopts for its maxim ‘there is no religion higher than truth’ is nothing new, but only another form of the eternal contest.” Simultaneously, Dvivedi also claims that it was from the “East” that all civilization came and that one might hope for “the return of this lost child of science and philosophy to its motherland.” He thus positions his Advaita Vedānta at the top of the hierarchy. These statements can be read as attempts to inscribe his ideas about the superiority of Advaita Vedānta into the center of the European and Theosophical discourses. These numerous relationizings can be read as traces of multifaceted processes of hybridization. Given that *Rāja-Yoga* was so positively received by the “Western” academy, this is a striking example of colonial agency.

²⁴⁵ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 17.

Relationizing Advaita Vedānta to “Modern” Science

Turning from philosophy to science, Dvivedi discusses the “conclusions of modern science”²⁴⁶ and its supposed opposition to religion. His view, which he had already made clear in his chapter on Greek philosophy, is that there is no fundamental difference between science and religion, and that the science of the time was gradually rediscovering what Eastern religion, meaning “Advaita,” had long ago uncovered. Discussing theories drawn from “modern science,” for which he largely relies on *The Unseen Universe* by Stewart and Tait,²⁴⁷ Dvivedi declares that, “we see that recent investigations in Science tend to prove the existence of but one Element, one material cause, capable in itself of evolving the whole physical universe from it.”²⁴⁸ Once again claiming that there is nothing beyond consciousness, Dvivedi argues that science will never be able to explain consciousness itself and, in consequence, nor will it be able to explain anything outside consciousness. Dvivedi develops a system which understands thought to be the only and absolute reality, at least in the sense that it is the only source of perception. Some passages suggest that he assumed a “thing-in-itself” behind “perception,” which is synonymous with “thought” in Dvivedi’s parlance.²⁴⁹ Dvivedi explains that the principle that enables “thought” and “perception” is consciousness, which he associates with *brahman*. And given that *brahman* is the cause of consciousness, it follows, according to Dvivedi, that it must also be the only reality. With this observation he concludes his survey of “modern science” and turns back to the question of consciousness and its relation to *brahman*.

Discussing Herbert Spencer’s philosophy, mainly based on his *First Principles*, Dvivedi explains that, “he [Herbert Spencer] argues that the phenomenon of our consciousness, though it renders us alive to the existence of a ‘something beyond’ all matter and time and space, leaves us in utter ignorance as to the *nature* of this Absolute which he appropriately describes as the Unknowable.”²⁵⁰ Dvivedi goes on to cite a long paragraph of Spencer’s *First Principles* in which Spencer discusses the nature of the “Unknowable.” Dvivedi observes that “the above confession of faith sounds almost like the *neti neti* not-this, not-that of the *Upani’sads*, trying to analyse [!] *Brahma*, and we might almost hail these words of the philosopher [Herbert Spencer] as a true interpretation of the *Advaita*.”²⁵¹ He again connects his

246 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 17.

247 In two instances, Dvivedi refers directly to *The Unseen Universe*. Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 20, 27–28.

248 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 22.

249 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 21–25.

250 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 25.

251 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 26.

Advaita to European philosophy in a way that makes it appear to dovetail with Indian thought (equalizing relationizing). Nonetheless, he makes clear that there is a difference in quality between the two. “The Unknowable is more negative in its character than *Brahma*, [. . .] The Unknowable has no life, no soul in it; whereas the *Brahma* A’ryan philosophy, is all life, all *spirit*.”²⁵² He thus concludes that “European speculation has no doubt arrived at glimpses of the truth taught by A’ryan occultism, but it has failed to grasp the spirit of the latter. [. . .] the Unknowable, the *Brahma* of European science, is but a mass without life, a body without soul.”²⁵³

Dvivedi locates the fundamental difference between “the Unknowable” and “Brahma” in *sat*, claiming that “matter is the thing really unknowable, being cognised [!] only through its manifestations.”²⁵⁴ That “which cognises itself [he continued] and the unknowable is not at all unknown or even unknowable. It is the very essence of consciousness and is ever unique and one. It is the real and ever-present all-pervading Absolute.”²⁵⁵ It can be argued that Dvivedi follows a similar relationizing strategy here as was observed in the previous section. He firstly recontextualizes his ideas in the European context and then hierarchizes them epistemologically: “European speculation has no doubt arrived at glimpses of the truth taught by A’ryan occultism.”²⁵⁶ This establishes the superiority of his Advaita Vedānta and identifies it not only with philosophy (see above), but also with science and occultism, being in each case both the source and summit of these systems of thought.

Merging One’s Own Consciousness into the Consciousness of the Absolute: A Way to Ultimate Happiness and Liberation

Dvivedi upheld the possibility of rising up through several stages of one’s own consciousness to the absolute consciousness. Since one of the main attributes of *Brahma* is *sat*, Dvivedi argues, this “implies real conscious existence, a reality entirely wanting in the Unknowable of European philosophy. The unknowable is an indefinite negation; the Absolute is a finite position.”²⁵⁷ By claiming that the absolute exists in everything because *brahman* is everything, Dvivedi argues that what we can see are the “knowable effects” of the “Unknowable,”

252 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 26.

253 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 26–27.

254 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 27.

255 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 27.

256 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 26.

257 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 27.

and that these “potentialities” must therefore hint at the “positive existence” of the “Unknowable.”²⁵⁸ This provides the basis for his further investigations. “How do we explain mesmeric clairvoyance, *Samàdhi*, and the so-called spirit manifestations?” he asks. The answer is “by assuming that the whole universe is one life,”²⁵⁹ from which it follows that “the Absolute which does exist as *Brahma* [. . .] is all life or thought, pervading everything and the being of all. It is the reality in the ever changing unreality of the unknowable i.e. matter and its forms.”²⁶⁰

Against this background, Dvivedi raises the question of happiness. He explains that “happiness and misery exist only in our own mind; [. . .] when it is known that the reality of realities is nothing beside *Brahma*.”²⁶¹ He goes on to explain that “forms,” by which he means change through “space” and “time,” are only valid on the “material” plane of existence. “The plane next to the material,” he holds,

is the subtile [!] or *Suks'ma*, of which we are conscious in dreams. Time and space do not exist there, though *forms* do. But even *forms* do not [!] exist on the plane next to it viz the causal or *Kàraṇa*-plane; [. . .] The last plane is the plane of the Absolute, where the sense of being also is not present. [. . .] This plane is called the Fourth or *turya*. It is within the experience of *yogins*, ecstasies, and trance-mediums.²⁶²

In consequence, “true happiness must necessarily lie on and in the fourth plane of consciousness and existence. It is the same as being one with *Brahma*.”²⁶³

Turning to the human constitution and question of the place of human beings in evolution, Dvivedi maintains that, man stands above the rest of nature but remains connected to it by perception. It is not that the *Jiva* is more evolved in men, but that humans “descended more from Gods (*pitṛs*) than from brutes. [. . .] *Advaitism* emphatically declares that man is a copy of the eternal being, nature, and is as such above brutes and gods and everything.”²⁶⁴ In Chapter 6, we considered the debate in evolutionism concerning whether men are different to animals only in the degree of their evolution or in its quality. This statement by Dvivedi takes the side of a difference in quality and goes hand in hand with what Besant wrote on the subject. For Besant, however, men

258 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 27.

259 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 28–29.

260 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 30.

261 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 34.

262 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 34.

263 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 35.

264 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 35.

are not above the Gods but are rather on their way to becoming divine and finally transcending the world of perception.²⁶⁵

Dvivedi understood men to be the highest life form in the cosmos. However, man has one main defect in Dvivedi's view: the individualizing principle or *antahkaraṇa*.²⁶⁶ This is identified by Dvivedi as the locus of individuality and thus the main obstacle to true happiness. "*Rājayoga*" provided a means by which to overcome *antahkaraṇa* through a merging with the consciousness of the absolute: "It would appear impossible to get rid of it without destroying individuality and egoism. But this is the real end of all *yoga*; nor is it at all impossible. [. . .] *Rājayoga* consists in the permanent merging of the mind in the great All."²⁶⁷ Here we find the ultimate goal of Dvivedi's "Rāja-Yoga." This is the suppression of the *antahkaraṇa*, a feat that "will suppress the cause of pain and make experience full of that harmony and bliss which is the inevitable result of unity with nature. This is real *yoga*. This is real happiness."²⁶⁸ When this "real *yoga*" is attained, man "will live of the world and yet above it. He will be of matter and yet beyond it. He will be with change and yet without it. He will be one with the

265 There are numerous passages in which Besant speaks about becoming divine (see, e.g., Besant, "General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament," 158; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 34; Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 11). This is closely linked in her writings to the idea of merging with the divine consciousness while maintaining individuality, as I discuss elsewhere (Mühlematter, "Some will be ready to expand ere long into the consciousness of God"). The idea of transcending divinity was discussed by Besant in connection with the stages of initiation. See Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 115–16.

266 The *antahkaraṇa* is often defined in that way. It consists of the four *vṛttis*: *manas*, *buddhi*, *citta* and *ahaṃkāra*. "*Manas* is the function of deliberation or the weighing of pros and cons, *buddhi* is the function of determination and decision making, *citta* is the function of memory or recollection, and *ahaṃkāra* is the ego or 'I' thought. It is not uncommon for the terms *manas*, *buddhi*, or *citta* to be used for the entire internal organ" (Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 36). Dvivedi's description of the *antahkaraṇa* is not unlike that of Rambachan: "Those that are concerned with mere perception, and those that relate to reflection and volition. The former are called *manas*, and the latter *buddhi*. But perception also works in a two-fold manner. We perceive an object or receive a sensation, and the first act of the mind consists in giving some individuality to that object or that sensation. This process is called *chitta*. The next step lies in connecting that individuality with our personal ego. This is called *ahankāra*. Upon these follow reflection and volition i.e. *buddhi*. These four make up the whole of the *antahkaraṇa*" (Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 36). As argued above, the question is not whether or not Dvivedi explains Advaita Vedānta correctly, but in what "relations" he places his explanations. The same is true for Rambachan. Both stand in a tradition and translate and de- and recontextualize "Advaita Vedānta."

267 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 37.

268 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 37.

Cosmos, with supreme *Brahma*.”²⁶⁹ Only “in the mind and its abnormal indulgence begins all our misery; in its annihilation and proper spiritual guidance commences true knowledge which leads to eternal universal bliss.”²⁷⁰

Several of the elements in Dvivedi’s presentation of his views in the first part of his *Rāja-Yoga* are close to the Theosophical explanations given by Blavatsky, Besant, and others. Terms such as “Jiva,” “*pīṭris*,” and the “Mahātmās” were well established and part of the tradition of the Theosophical Society. Dvivedi also includes several structures that are familiar from Theosophical thought, such as the correspondences between the above and the below,²⁷¹ and recontextualizes them in his Advaita Vedānta. He simultaneously relationizes his position to “science,” “philosophy,” and “Theosophy” in order to establish the superiority of his Advaita Vedānta. In the discussion of the second part of his *Rāja-Yoga* that follows, we will see that Dvivedi also discusses the stages of initiation in accordance with this strategy of relationalization.

11.4.2 The Second Part of Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga*

The second part of the introduction to *Rāja-Yoga* was originally the foreword to Wilkins’ translation of the *Bhagavadgītā*, which had been republished by Tatyā. Consequently, Dvivedi frequently discusses Indian religion and repeatedly bases his arguments on the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, he also thoroughly discusses a number of other Indian texts here, one of which was the *Pañcadaśī*. The *Pañcadaśī* is a concise treatise elaborating some of the key concepts of Advaita Vedānta, usually attributed to the fourteenth-century writer, Vidyāraṇya.²⁷²

If one were to base one’s views on the current state of research on the Theosophical Society – and on the work of Bergunder, Sharpe, and Neufeldt on the

269 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 37.

270 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 38.

271 It is no coincidence that Faivre identifies “correspondences” as a key element of Esotericism (Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, 12–13). Rambachan explains that Advaita Vedānta also knows the differentiation between the five bodies from which *ātman* is distinct. They are formed in a complex processes of “evolution” (Rambachan’s term) in which they become interwoven through the interspersions of their material (Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 38, 122). This is a process which was also described by Besant with reference to the *koṣas* (bodies) (Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 145–46; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 218). Besant relationized these ideas to several other concepts from physics and Theosophy. I will come back to this later when I discuss Subba Row in detail. An in-depth analysis of ideas about the human constitution in the Theosophical Society remains a research desideratum.

272 Deutsch and Dalvi, *The Essential Vedānta*, 353.

role of the *Bhagavadgītā*, in particular – one would assume that the *Bhagavadgītā* was received in the Society as the central scripture of “Hinduism.” However, the example of the *Pañcadaśī* provides an instance in which the reception of Hindu scripture also embraced other texts. The *Pañcadaśī* was well known within the Theosophical Society prior to the publication of *Rāja-Yoga*. For example, in 1884 *The Theosophist* reviewed a series of booklets containing English translations of parts of the *Pañcadaśī*,²⁷³ which were published together in book form two years later in 1886.²⁷⁴ Another translation of the *Pañcadaśī*, published in 1912 by Tookaram Tatya's publishing house, illustrates the enduring interest in the text.²⁷⁵ It is likely that Dvivedi was familiar with the earliest of these publications and he may well have used it as a model for his own interpretation, and for his cosmological explanations in particular.

Brahma as All-Consciousness: *Sat*, *Chit*, and *Ānanda*; Practical Advice for Initiation

I will now offer a close reading of the second part of the introduction to Dvivedi's *Rāja-Yoga*. His point of departure is the same premise that we saw underlies the argument of the first part of the text, the claim that “All real philosophy begins [. . .] with death, we might say, *disappearance* or *change*.”²⁷⁶ Starting from this premise, Dvivedi argues that there is “a something” which enables consciousness.

This something, call it *Brahma* or anything, being the only one enlightening all phenomena must be all consciousness (*chit*) and bliss. [. . .] We may state by the way, that inasmuch as through this something we derive knowledge, and knowledge is *pleasure* (*ānanda*), this all-intelligence is all-pleasure as well. The universe then reduces itself according to this analysis into five parts *sat*, *chit*, *ānanda*; *nāma* (name), *rupa* (form).²⁷⁷

From this division follows a dichotomous ontology, with one part being imperishable and the other ever-perishable. Having established the idea of *Brahma* as the imperishable principle in the cosmos, in contrast to the perishable universe,

273 Anon, “The Panchadasi,” *The Theosophist* 5, no. 11 (1884): 277–78.

274 Nandalal Dhole, *A Hand Book of Hindu Pantheism: The Panchadasi* (Calcutta: Heeralal Dhole, 1886).

275 A humble devotee of S'rī Gopāla Krishna, *The Panchadasi* (Bombay: The Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1912).

276 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 38.

277 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 41.

which is only cognized by the human consciousness, Dvivedi attempts to examine the “relation of evolved sentient life to the universal substance.”²⁷⁸

Dvivedi was primarily concerned with providing practical advice for aspirants on the path of initiation. He thus states: “The question [!] that immediately concerns us most is the obvious one of the usefulness of all this intricate metaphysical discussion; and to it we must therefore address ourselves.”²⁷⁹ The usefulness lies in the pursuit of happiness, but “the *Vedāntin* maintains that we raise idle distinctions between happiness and misery and the like only so long as that *ignorance* which is the cause of this dream of the world, has not been suppressed.”²⁸⁰ What Dvivedi means here is that there is happiness beyond the happiness. “That absolute happiness, that complete bliss, in which not a single particle of any contrary feeling could find place is impossible, unless we *realise*, and live the life of, universal *Brahma*.”²⁸¹ Evil, or pain, is therefore illusionary and can be removed. This state of being is further described as “*Brahma-Samādhi* (unity with *Brahma*) [which] is something similar to, or beyond, dreamless sleep – viz. a kind of conscious sleep (*Turyā-Avasthā* = fourth state) a trance full of the ever-lasting consciousness of *sat*, *chit* and *ānanda*.”²⁸²

The Possibility of Unity with *brahman* and its consequences for Human Conduct: *Bhakti*, *jñāna*, and *Rāja-Yoga* as Practical Paths to Liberation

Having explained the possibility of achieving unity with the imperishable, and therefore of overcoming the illusionary state, something that would, in Dvivedi’s parlance, equate with “ultimate happiness,” he goes on to examine “the bearing of this and other A’ryan theories of happiness on human conduct.”²⁸³ Dvivedi writes: “Look upon your neighbour as your brother is the loud cry of the monotheist or deist; but the *Vedānta* rationally teaches to look upon *all* as *self*. (*ātmanvat sarva*).”²⁸⁴ In Dvivedi’s view, the idea of unity was, then, the remedy to the problem of the human condition and the one principle which should guide human conduct. “The *Vedāntic* doctrine we thus see is prolific of good results in every department of human knowledge and leads to right conduct, right action, right understanding, and right everything.”²⁸⁵ This statement is another

278 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 43.

279 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 44.

280 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 44.

281 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 45.

282 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 46.

283 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 46.

284 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 47.

285 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 48.

interesting instance of relationalization, with Dvivedi positioning his Advaita Vedānta as the highest expression of morality. As Dvivedi was concerned with the practical side of his enquiry, he focused on two possible ways of pursuing ultimate happiness. “This [Sāṅkhya Philosophy], no doubt, is an advance upon the theory of a personal God listening to our prayers and dealing out the fruits of our actions accordingly. Patanjali advances a step further and prescribes a number of rules for the guidance of the mind and the body with the same end as the *Sāṅkhyas* in view.”²⁸⁶ Here we can see a distinction between a *bhakti*²⁸⁷ approach, “the theory of a personal God listening to our prayers,” and a yogic approach, understood as *haṭhayoga* by Dvivedi. The yogic approach “culminates in *Samādhi*.”²⁸⁸ Considering *bhakti* and *jñāna*,²⁸⁹ which Dvivedi also calls “*Pariṇāmavāda*” and “*Vivartavāda*,” he claims that “One tries to reach this end by extending the mind through *devotion*, the other by dispelling *illusion* through rational analysis. [. . .] We however are inclined to look upon this distinction as rather verbal than real in its character.”²⁹⁰ *Bhakti* was, thus, seen as another legitimate way of reaching unity with the absolute.

Dvivedi then goes on to argue that “the Jñāna of the Vedānta is a combination of reason and emotion; for knowledge here is synonymons [!] with belief and *vice versa*. It is impossible to devote ourselves to what we do not *know*, as it is equally impossible to *know* without being *devoted* to what we know.”²⁹¹ Considering the different ways to “true happiness,” Dvivedi postulates that Vedānta is superior to the alternatives.

The *Vedāntic* process then of attaining this state of *Brahma* generally described as *Rajayoga* is purely mental, and deals entirely with rules for restraining the mind. S’ankarāchārya, the advocate of the *Vivartavāda*, while accepting the cosmogony of the *Sāṅkhyas* and the Yoga of Patanjali, considerably improved upon either.²⁹²

286 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 49.

287 *Bhakti* is generally understood as “devotion.” In most cases this “devotion” takes the form of rituals, singing, and dance dedicated to and directed towards deities. Vasudha Narayanan, “Bhakti,” in Jacobsen et al., *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.

288 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 49.

289 *Jñāna* can be translated as knowledge and is often interpreted as *vidyā* in opposition to *avidyā*, in parallel with the opposition between *brahman* (the real, *vidyā*) and *māyā* (illusion, *avidyā*). (Fort, *Jivanmukti in Transformation*, 5). It is also understood as a form of yoga. *Bhakti*, *jñāna*, and most importantly *karmayoga* are all discussed and compared to each other in connection with sacrifice, *yajna*, in the *Bhagavadgītā*. Malinar, *The Bhagavadgītā*, 79–84.

290 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 51.

291 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 51.

292 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 51–52.

The practice advocated by Dvivedi is thus a mental practice, *rājayoga*. Relationizing his “Vedāntic” process to other systems of “Hindu” religions, Dvivedi claims a superior position for his own.

The Stages of Initiation as Propounded by Dvivedi

Following the relationizing of his Advaita Vedānta, the practical dimensions of which he describes in terms of *rājayoga*, Dvivedi discusses the “stages of initiation” in detail.

Thus perceiving the necessity of determining the elements of happiness, we naturally arrive at that stage of Rājayoga which is called *Viveka* (discrimination). Inasmuch as happiness does not exist outside the ego or *A'tmā*, and as a further analysis of ones self leads one to see everything in and of it, a distinction more imaginary than real is drawn at the beginning for the practical guidance of the neophyte, between things which are *A'tmā*, and those that are not *A'tmā*. When the beginner thus goes on dissecting the nature of things and studying the various phases of his own *ego*, he naturally becomes saturated with a sense of universal change which pervades everything, so much so, that even the desire for the permanence of any particular state, never enters his heart. This is the second stage generally known as *Virāga* (non-attachment).²⁹³ Then follow six other subordinate steps first among which is *S'ama*. When the student is convinced of the futility of all desire, he applies himself naturally to the study of the higher psychological aspects of his changeful consciousness. As a result of this constant application he becomes estranged from the objects of sense, both subjective and objective, and directs his whole attention to a contemplation of the one uniform essence within, which he is intent upon understanding in its proper aspect (*Dama*). It follows then that if the student clearly realises the progress he is expected to have made by this time, his mind disengages itself from everything but the object he has in view. This state (*Uparati*) is followed as a corollary by the fifth called *Titiks'ā* or putting up with the so-called pleasures and pains the world with patience and without excitement. When this stage is reached, *Ahankāra* or the personality of the student begins to lose itself completely in the universal intelligence he is contemplating, and it is faith (*Sraddhā*) in his own convictions as well as in the words of advanced interpreters of science that leads to a strong and unchanging immersion (*Samādhāna*) of his faculties in *Brahma*, the principle and essence of the Cosmos. When these stages are passed, he is said to be a *mumuks'u*, one desirous of knowing the real nature of the phenomena around him.²⁹⁴ This course of training leads to the fixity of his mind which then 'stands like the jet of a lamp that burns steadily in a place protected from the slightest breeze.' While thus studying his 'ego' he reaches a stage in which his senses both objective and subjective, see nothing else but the Divine Intelligence – *Brahma* – wherever they are directed. [In footnote: *Vākyasudhā*]²⁹⁵

293 “Disgust” in the 1885 edition. Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 46.

294 “The phenomena of duality or non-Brahma, viz. *Ahankāra*, and the physical bonds; consequent [!] upon its hold” in the 1885 edition. Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 47.

295 Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 53–54.

These stages were, however, only the preliminary steps. Having taken them, it was then possible to make further progress.

The student should always and at every moment practice that intuitive habit of analysis which will reveal to him the real nature of everything he sees. The beginning is made with study, study of the books explaining these things, or of the words of teachers who initiate in these things. This is called *s'ravana*. Well digested study will lead to the habit of constantly chewing, so to speak, the conclusions arrived at, and produce the intuitive analysis just described. This is called *manana*. [. . .] These two stages correspond respectively to the *Dhāraṇā* and *Dhyāna* of Patanjali. I have already explained that all knowledge is but a modification of the mind (*vṛtti*). In *s'ravana* the *vṛtti* tries to become the thing in consideration, but in *manana* it does actually become it. But this modification of the mind is only temporary. To make it permanent, to, in fact, preclude the possibility of its being ever disturbed is the real end in view. This is called *vṛttinirodha* or *samādhi* in *yoga*; and the same result is brought about by what is called *nididhyāsa* in *vedāntic-rājayoga*.²⁹⁶

In these higher stages of *rājayoga*, the student may attain further qualities that will ultimately lead to the union with *Brahma*.

Nididhyāsa is the becoming the thing thought of, for all time, without any disturbance from other thoughts. But *nididhyāsa* too ought to ripen into that which is called *Nirvikalpa* or that state of the mind wherein there is no distracting thought; that state of perfect communion with nature wherein the All is realised in all.²⁹⁷

Dvivedi concludes his introduction by assuring his reader that the Vedānta practice of *rājayoga* is the best way to achieve union with *brahman* and therefore *mokṣa*. “It will be evident from this rough outline of the elements of *Rajayoga* [. . .] that the object which *Hathayoga* wants to accomplish is here placed within easy reach of every willing student without renunciation of the world and its responsibilities.”²⁹⁸

As we can see, the main objection against *haṭhayoga* is the renunciation of worldly duties. In opposing this supposed requirement, Dvivedi suggests instead that one should follow the path of *rājayoga*, which places the “control of mind” at its center by enabling it to simultaneously function in both the world of common perception and that of higher “truth.” Pivotal to this conception is a differentiation between the conventional self and the real self, and therefore between the physical world and the planes above. The physical world and the conventional self are bound to a *karma*-induced evolution which is the basis for the duties which must be fulfilled. On the other hand, the aim of Dvivedi's system of *rājayoga* is unity with *brahman* in such a way that, when this unity is

²⁹⁶ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 54.

²⁹⁷ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 54–55.

²⁹⁸ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 55.

established, every notion of separateness, including even the memory of a merging into *brahman*, is annihilated. With the exception of the loss of memory, the scheme Dvivedi associates with *rājayoga* bears a striking resemblance to Annie Besant’s approach to initiation (see Chapter 8.2).

11.5 Connecting the Discursive Fields: Translating *Cit* as Consciousness

As Dvivedi notes, the system of *rājayoga* “will be found described at full length in the *Bhagavad-Geetā* as well as in the two small works which follow.”²⁹⁹ These translations of the *Aparokṣānubhūti* and the *Vākya Suddhā*, which were later republished in a compendium edited by Tookaram Tatya,³⁰⁰ are not only interesting for their Theosophical context, but also as being among the first translations of these two texts into English. In this section, I will focus on the translation of the *Vākya Suddhā* as it appears in the second edition of *Rāja-Yoga*.

The translation of the *Vākya Suddhā* presented in *Rāja-Yoga* deviated in important ways from the translation found in *The Theosophist* (see Chapter 11.2 and Table 7). To begin with, the Sanskrit text in Devanagari script is completely absent from the later version. In the version published in *The Theosophist* there were also additional references in Sanskrit to further passages from the *Pañchadaśī* and the *Bhagavadgītā*. The *Pañchadaśī* was quoted considerably more frequently than was the *Bhagavadgītā*. As the main focus of my book lies on the reception of Indian thought in the Theosophical Society, and especially in Annie Besant’s early works on initiation, a detailed discussion of Dvivedi’s translations must remain a research desideratum. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the changes to the *Vākya Suddhā* extended beyond presentational issues and included significant changes in the translation itself. These are of interest because they illustrate a two-step process of 1) translation and 2) de- and recontextualization in Dvivedi’s work. For example, in the first verse we find the term “*Atman*.” In the edition from 1885, this is written as “*Atman* (spirit),”³⁰¹ whereas in the 1890 edition the brackets are omitted. More importantly, in the 1890 edition, commentaries were provided for each chapter, with the main line of exposition in

²⁹⁹ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 55.

³⁰⁰ Manilal N. Dvivedi, “Direct Cognition of the Unity of Jīva and Brahma: By S’rimat S’ankarāchārya with Notes,” in Tatya, *A Compendium of the Raja Yoga Philosophy*, 1–33; and Dvivedi, “Shrī-Vakyasudhā,” 69–82.

³⁰¹ Dvivedi, “Shrī Vākya Sudhā,” 79. The same is true for the version in the compendium by Tatya from 1888.

the commentaries following the concepts given in the introduction to *Rāja-Yoga* (discussed above). But it is not just the commentaries that reflect Dvivedi's concept of *brahman* as the absolute consciousness. So too does the translation itself. This can be seen by examining a sample verse.

Table 7: Comparison of the first and second edition of *Rāja-Yoga*. By the author.

<i>The Theosophist</i> , 1885	2 nd ed. <i>Rāja-Yoga</i> , 1890
“All intercourse implies five attributes and no more: existence (सत्); intelligence (चित्); love (आनन्द); form (रूप); and name (नाम). The first three of these represent the all-pervading <i>Brahma</i> , and the last two the unreal <i>Jagat</i> (world, creation).” ³⁰²	“All intercourse implies five attributes and no more: existence (<i>sat</i>); consciousness (<i>chit</i>); pleasure (<i>ānanda</i>); form (<i>rupa</i>); and name (<i>nāma</i>). The first three represent the all-pervading <i>Brahma</i> , the last two the unreal <i>jagat</i> (world, evolution).” ³⁰³

Three changes can be observed. 1) *Cit* was translated as “intelligence” in the earlier version and as “consciousness” in the later. 2) *Jagat* was translated as “world, creation” in the 1885 edition and as “world, evolution” in the 1890 edition. 3) In the version, the Sanskrit terms were only given in Devanagari whereas they were given in Roman script in the 1890 edition. The first two changes are of vital importance. If we look at Monier-Williams’ Sanskrit dictionary from 1872 – possibly the one Dvivedi used – we find that it suggests translating *cit* as “thought, intelligence, intellect, understanding, mind; the soul, heart.”³⁰⁴ Its absence from this list implies that the rendering of *cit* as “consciousness” was not yet an established option. Yet it was precisely this rendering that allowed Dvivedi to connect his Advaita Vedānta to 19th century philosophy and that therefore enabled him to recontextualize his “Advaitism” in the European discourse. The choice of this term can therefore be read as a discursive strategy through which Dvivedi sought to claim the universality of his philosophical position in order to establish its superiority over European philosophy. “Consciousness” was also a key term in Theosophy. As we saw above, in Besant’s writings in particular, but also in Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence*, the “expansion of consciousness” is presented as both the result of initiation and the goal of evolution. In the same manner, *jagat* was redefined as “evolution” in

³⁰² Dvivedi, “Shri Vakya Sudha,” 80. The version in the compendium by Tatya from 1888 is identical. It seems that this was a mere reprint.

³⁰³ Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, (translations) 6.

³⁰⁴ Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 323.

the later translation, which demarcated it from the theological discourse on creation and recontextualized it into the scientific discourse of evolutionism. This closeness to science is also a prominent feature of Theosophical thought.³⁰⁵ In the following section, a number of Dvivedi’s later writings will briefly be discussed. Consideration of these later texts will illustrate the way in which Dvivedi claimed a hegemonic position for his interpretation of “Advaitism” and will also show that the idea of *cit* as “consciousness” was pivotal for making this claim.

11.6 Relationalization to European Orientalism

The next two of Dvivedi’s papers to be discussed were published in a European academic context. *The Advaita philosophy of Śaṅkara* was published in the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* in 1888. Dvivedi also published another version of this article in *The Theosophist* in the same year. The two versions are almost identical, although they differ in some formalistic details. Most prominently, the Indian terminology and names as they appear in the version in the *Wiener Zeitschrift* include more diacritics than they do in the version in *The Theosophist*. In addition, several direct quotations, including translations, are given in the European academic publication.³⁰⁶ These features can probably be accounted for by assuming that Dvivedi adapted his text to conform to the scholarly standards of the academic journal in which he was publishing.

Dvivedi begins by discussing the writings of Śaṅkara. Interestingly, he describes some of Śaṅkara’s writings as “overburdened with the growth of later technicalities” and aims to give an explanation of Śaṅkara’s original teachings in a concise form by focusing on Śaṅkara’s commentaries on the *Brahmasūtras*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and the *Upaniṣads*.³⁰⁷ Dvivedi presents his interpretation of Śaṅkara’s writings as the original teaching, purified by the removal of the “later technicalities.” This approach fits well with Chatterjee’s classicist argument (on which, see Chapter 5), which maintains that Indian writers in the 19th century championed a “Hinduism” that was purified from the degeneration of modern times and restored to its earlier glory.³⁰⁸

305 Egil Asprem, “Theosophical Attitudes Towards Science: Past and Present,” in Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*.

306 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “The Advaita Philosophy of Śaṅkara,” *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 2 (1888): 95–113.

307 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “The Advaita Philosophy of Sankara,” *The Theosophist* X, no. 109 (1888): 7.

308 Chatterjee, “The Subalternity of a Nationalist Elite”. See also Chapter 5.

In the article, Dvivedi propounds a conception of “truth” that was closely connected to the idea of an evolution in which this “truth” will ultimately be unveiled. This “truth” was rooted in the clear distinction between matter, which is the basis for all pain and all illusion, and *brahman* which is the basis for all happiness and knowledge.³⁰⁹ In line with this idea, Dvivedi writes that, “Brahma is all love, which is the highest *bliss*. It is therefore described, not defined, as *sat* (existence), *chit* (knowledge), and *ananda* (bliss).”³¹⁰

As variants of the article were published in both *The Theosophist* and the *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, this provides a further example of the connections between a number of discursive fields, in this case including the European academic discourse and the discourse within the Theosophical Society. The *Zeitschrift* provided a structure in which these encounters could happen. These connections illustrate that discourses were not closed but rather complemented and influenced each other in the global colonial discursive continuum in multifaceted fields of encounters. Dvivedi’s writing also serves as an instructive example of the agency of a member of the Indian middle class (lower-case) who took part in these discourses.

Another instance of the realized connections of discourses can be found in a paper by Dvivedi that was written for the Oriental Congress in Stockholm in 1899. Dvivedi was invited to present the paper himself, with the invitation most likely mediated – again – by Georg Bühler. However, as he was unable to attend, he instead wrote a paper to be read on his behalf. It is unclear if the paper was in fact read at the congress or not. Thaker claims that it was read and that “it provoked a good deal of discussion at the Congress which resulted in drawing the attention of Western scholars to certain aspects of Hinduism and the Puranas.”³¹¹ Unfortunately, Thaker does not elaborate on his statement and does not give any further references to support his contention. In *Lucifer*, where the paper was printed in 1891, we find a somewhat different story. There we read that, “After very considerable delay our brother learnt that his paper had been unfortunately ‘misaid’. It is, however, *Lucifer’s* office to bring to light lost and hidden things, and he is rejoiced to give yet another proof of his utility in the service of fair play. – EDS.”³¹² While this might indicate that Dvivedi’s paper was read in Stockholm but that he did not have a copy available for publication due to some mischance, it could also mean that the paper was not read due to

309 Dvivedi, “The Adwaita Philosophy of Sankara,” 14–15.

310 Dvivedi, “The Adwaita Philosophy of Sankara,” 14.

311 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 46.

312 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “The Purānas: Philology Versus Symbology,” *Lucifer* VIII, no. 44 (1891): 99.

being “mislaidd” in some sense before it could reach its intended audience. If this latter is the case, then this would, of course, change the position of the paper within the global discourse. If the paper was read, then this legitimization of Dvivedi’s thought in a European context serves as an instructive instance of his agency within the academic discourse. Dvivedi’s main aim in the paper was to show that the *Purāṇas* were explanations of universal laws. He used the *Purāṇas* to show that the “Hindu” religion, meaning his Advaita Vedānta, was “scientific.” This approach illustrates well the way in which Dvivedi placed his interpretation of “Hinduism” at the top of a hierarchy of all religions and philosophies and how this view of its superiority fit into the Theosophical narrative concerning the “Ancient Wisdom Religion.”

In his paper, Dvivedi sought to refute the mainstream positions of the time regarding the interpretation of myths, especially that of Friedrich Max Müller, and in doing so advocated the use of the study of symbology over that of philology.³¹³ Rejecting the positions of contemporary scholars who employed the methodology of comparative mythology, Dvivedi writes, “As every myth has some foundation in truth, I venture to hold that underneath the tales of the *Purāṇas*, precious truths lie embedded in strata not yet reached by the delvers in Philology and Comparative Mythology.”³¹⁴

One of the central concerns of Theosophy was to compare various religious traditions in order to identify their shared universal cores. It was believed by Theosophists that the “esoteric” doctrine could be found in ancient manuscripts, especially in India. As Blavatsky put it:

The main body of the doctrines given, however, is found scattered throughout hundreds and thousands of Sanskrit MSS., some already translated-disfigured in their interpretations, as usual-others still waiting their turn Every scholar, therefore, has an opportunity of verifying the statements herein made, and of checking most of the quotations.³¹⁵

Philology was one of the approaches taken to these texts in the Theosophical Society, alongside observations by means of clairvoyance.³¹⁶ Theosophy also provided a third approach that focused on the meaning of symbols, and this approach was taken up by Dvivedi.³¹⁷ Symbology was probably the methodology used in the Theosophical Society to gain access to the “esoteric doctrines”

313 Thaker, *Manilal Dvivedi*, 46.

314 Dvivedi, “The *Purāṇas*,” 99.

315 Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 6. See also Mühlematter, “Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge”.

316 See Mühlematter, “Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge”.

317 Dvivedi, “Preface,” ii.

hidden in texts.³¹⁸ This approach was based on the idea that the real (esoteric) understanding of (foreign) texts would emerge from a consideration and comparison of the symbology they employed. The search for new approaches was structurally similar to the trend in academia that followed in the wake of historicism. This trend can be understood as a response to the vast quantity of manuscripts and translations that became available in the “West” through the expansion of the European empires as they developed into regimes of knowledge production.³¹⁹

In the Theosophical Society (and also beyond), native informants, especially Indians, played key roles in the process of the reception of Hindu thought, not least through the selection of manuscripts. This process of translation and recontextualization had an enormous impact on our “modern” understanding of “Hinduism.” Dvivedi was certainly a key figure in the uptake of Advaita Vedānta within both the Theosophical Society and academia, and he actively employed several strategies of relationalization in his writings. Similar strategies were also deployed toward his fellow Indians, as is illustrated by a debate between Dvivedi and Ramanuja Charya that took place in the pages of *The Theosophist*.³²⁰ He also took a similar stance towards Theosophy, which he understood as a tool for helping to restore the “Ancient Wisdom,” which he equated with his “Advaitism.”³²¹ Reflecting on the European Orientalist, he claimed that Theosophy merely gave the impetus to a real understanding of India’s literary heritage as a spiritual remedy for Europe’s ignorance.

The Orientalists shrug their shoulders at all this, which they probably set down as so much ‘rant’, and dispute every word of Theosophy, imagining themselves already in proud possession of all ancient wisdom and learning. I shall thank any one who can show in the average Orientalist work of twenty-five years’ standing, anything beyond distorted translations, literary quarrels, philological quibbles, childish explanations of myths, and paternal assertions of Christian superiority or supremacy over Heathen

318 See also Charles Johnston, “The Symbolism of the Upanishads,” *The Path* VIII, no. 10 (1894): 310–11 and several other writings by Charles Johnston. For more information on Charles Johnston, see Yves Mühlematter, “Johnston, Charles (1867–1931),” in Mühlematter; Zander, *Occult Roots of Religious Studies*.

319 For the expansion of the empires and the question of colonial knowledge production, see Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 1105–73. For discussions of historicism and the Theosophical reaction to the effects of historicism, see Zander, *Anthroposophie in Deutschland*, 727–81.

320 N. Ramanuja Charya, “The Doctrine of Ma’Ya’ and the Hindu Scriptures,” *The Theosophist* XV, no. 2 (1893); Manilal N. Dvivedi, “The Doctrine of Ma’ya’,” *The Theosophist* XV, no. 4 (1894).

321 Manilal N. Dvivedi, “Theosophy Is an Idea,” *The Theosophist* XVI, no. 9 (1895).

ignorance. To-day, you find even a Max Muller bend the knee to Indian philosophy, you find spiritual culture prized above everything, you find your ancient land pointed out as the storehouse and progenitor of all that the world has learnt to hold in high esteem.³²²

This is a remarkable statement. Dvivedi not only criticizes the European academy, in which he also played a part, but presents Theosophy as little more than the means by which to rediscover the “spiritual culture” of India. On this account, Theosophy merely provides an impulse to India to restore itself to its proper place in world history. It is India that will be the savior of the world, not Theosophy.³²³

11.7 Preliminary Conclusion: Translating *Cit* into Theosophy; Advaitism as the Highest Form of Philosophy

Dvivedi’s writings show a profound knowledge of Hindu scriptures. At the same time, he uses numerous terms that were established in the Theosophical Society as translations for Indian concepts. His overarching idea of the merging into the consciousness of *brahman* serves as an instructive example of a translation process. His translation of *cit* as “consciousness” made his “Advaitism,” and the stages of initiation in *Rāja-Yoga*, compatible with Theosophy. It also allowed Dvivedi to recontextualize his ideas on “Advaitism” into several “Western” discourses. In a second step, he then hierarchized these discourses through several relationizings in what can be read as a strategy of relationalization not only to European philosophy and science but also to Theosophy.

Dvivedi’s life and work provide instructive examples of multifaceted hybridization processes taking place in several fields of the global colonial discursive continuum. Dvivedi was first introduced to “Hinduism” through the pages of *The Theosophist*. He then learned Sanskrit and taught “Hinduism” at various colonial institutions. He became an expert in “Hinduism” not only in the Theosophical Society but also in European academia. As discussed above, he proclaimed “Advaita Vedānta” to be the “true” “Hinduism.” For him, Theosophy provided the impetus to initiate a “Hindu revival” that would lead to a new age. The stages

³²² Dvivedi, “Theosophy Is an Idea,” 561.

³²³ This bears some resemblance to Annie Besant’s later claims about India’s position as the savior of the world (Annie Besant, *Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad-Gītā: Four Lectures Delivered at the Thirtieth Anniversary Meeting of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, December, 1905* (Benares, London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906), 12). In Besant’s view, this was however always connected to a view of a greater history which was strongly linked to the colonial aspirations of the British Empire.

involved in approaching a teacher in Advaita Vedānta, as explained by Dvivedi in his *Rāja-Yoga*, became the blueprint for the stages of initiation that were later recontextualized by Blavatsky and Besant. Dvivedi's influence on the Theosophical Society can thus not be overestimated. Given his significance, the absence of his name in histories of the Society is striking, and may almost appear to be the result of a deliberate deletion. This might have taken place for several reasons. Above all, his active claiming for his Advaita Vedānta of a hegemonic position in the Theosophical doctrine may have led to a counter process by which his position was marginalized by other ("Western") Theosophists. Another explanation might be that the controversial elements in his personal life (which had led to the withholding of his autobiography from publication for many years) resulted in an active distancing on the part of either individual Theosophists or the organization as a whole. While there are no records of any such response, this might explain why his name does not occur in any of the "histories" of the Theosophical Society. However, this is mere speculation, and further research is needed if we are to gain a better understanding of his later (lack of) representation in both Theosophical works and in the scholarly research on Theosophy.

11.8 Dvivedi's Colonial Agency and the Meshing of Processes of Hybridization

The analytical tool developed throughout this book allows us to understand Dvivedi's works as products of colonial agency. This colonial agency manifests in the relationizings described above. His writings are also interesting examples of the connections that link a range of discursive fields. Dvivedi as an actor interacted with several texts (and actors) in contexts (Gujarat, Bombay), mediums (*The Theosophist*, the anthology published by Tatyā, Row's monographs, etc.), and structures (the Theosophical Society, the educational system, and European academy), and these interactions triggered multifaceted processes of hybridization. In the case of Dvivedi, the "multifaceted processes" become palpable. We can see that translation and de- and recontextualization mesh with relationalization and tradition. This meshing of hybridization processes can be understood as the "metaprocess" that was discussed in Chapter 4. Keeping this in mind, it is usually not sufficient to identify just one "process of hybridization" if we are to describe this meshing of hybridization processes in the plural. In the example of T. Subba Row, which will be used to further highlight the reception of "Hinduism" in the Theosophical Society, another meshing emerges.

12 T. Subba Row, the “Expert” on “Hinduism”

The textual evidence of Annie Besant’s writings discussed above makes it clear that Indian thought played a pivotal role in the formation of her Theosophy. However, the question that must be asked is through which channels of reception did Besant receive her ideas of “Hinduism”? The “channels of reception” in question are numerous and part of a group of highly diversified discursive fields, one of which was the Indian Middle Class. An important actor in this particular field was T. Subba Row (1856–1890). In the following, Subba Row’s writings on Indian thought are presented chronologically and analyzed with the goal of identifying one specific line of Annie Besant’s uptake of Indian thought.

12.1 Biographical Sketch

Subba Row (Figure 9) was born on July 6, 1856, to a Telugu speaking Brahmin family at Cocanda (today Kakinada). He was educated at the Cocanda Hindu School before passing the entrance exams for admission to the Madras Presidency College, which he attended from 1872 to 1876, when he received his B.A. He then studied for a law degree, which he was awarded no later than 1880. At about the same time, while he was working at the High Court in Bombay, Subba Row came into contact with Theosophy.³²⁴ We know that he corresponded with Blavatsky and Olcott and waited for them “at eleven o’clock in the morning of 23 April 1882 when they arrived by boat from Calcutta.”³²⁵ Two days later he became an official member of the Theosophical Society.³²⁶ After a fiercely fought debate between Blavatsky and Row in the aftermath of his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* (see below), Row withdrew from active membership some time around 1889. The narrative goes that he continued to hold Olcott and Blavatsky in high esteem and that he kept up his habit of reading *The Theosophist* and *Lucifer*.³²⁷ However, there is more to the story than this. Subba Row’s “retirement” is interpreted by Johnson as a reaction to the Hodgson report and as part of the split in the Theosophical Society that led to the secession of a group known as the Advaita Society under the

324 Sven Eek, *Dâmodar: And the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement* (Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1978), 662.

325 Nallan Chakravartulu Ramanujacharya, *A Lonely Disciple: Monograph on T. Subba Row, 1856–90*, 1st ed. (Adyar, Wheaton Ill. USA: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1993), 12.

326 Ramanujacharya, *A Lonely Disciple*, 12.

327 Eek, *Dâmodar*, 668.



Figure 9: Tallapragada Subba Row (1856–1890). (Photograph by an unknown photographer. 1879, glass plate. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre)

leadership of one “Swami Shankaracharya.”³²⁸ T. Subba Row died in 1890 of a “mysterious cutaneous disease.”³²⁹

12.2 State of the Research

The research on T. Subba Row is thin. There is currently only one monograph on him, a 1993 work by Nallan Chakravartulu Ramanujacharya.³³⁰ Sven Eek, meanwhile, provides a short overview of Subba Row’s life and thought.³³¹ In standard introductions to Theosophy, Subba Row is often only mentioned in connection with Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*. Campbell, for instance, notes that Subba Row had planned to collaborate with Blavatsky but ultimately refused to do

328 Johnson, *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*, 51.

329 Henry S. Olcott, “Death of Subba Row,” *The Theosophist* XI, no. 130 (1890): 577.

330 Ramanujacharya, *A Lonely Disciple*.

331 Eek, *Dāmodar*, 661–73.

so because “the manuscript was a hopeless jumble.”³³² A little more information is provided by Godwin, who writes that Subba Row was one of Blavatsky’s “known informants” “on esoteric Hindu teachings” and that he was “the one person known to have conversed with Blavatsky as an equal.”³³³ Chajes dedicated a whole sub-chapter to Subba Row. Unfortunately, not much new information is given therein with the exception of some hints at the possible, and highly plausible, uptake of some of Subba Row’s writing by Blavatsky.³³⁴ In the entry on Theosophy in the *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism* he is only mentioned for his “challenge to Blavatsky’s interpretation of Theosophy,”³³⁵ which is not further elaborated upon. He is completely absent in the entry on the “Theosophical Society” in *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism*.³³⁶ Despite the lack of research, T. Subba Row is commonly acknowledged to be the “Hindu expert”³³⁷ of the Theosophical Society and that he interpreted “Hinduism” in line with the Advaita Vedānta tradition has not been questioned. Eric Sharpe stands out for not using the term Advaita Vedānta, preferring “Vedantic” instead. This is, as I will explain below, much more accurate. Nevertheless, his account remains superficial when he writes: “When Subba Row goes on to say that this view ‘implies no idea of a personal God’, we may also see a combination of Vedantic and Theosophical-Gnostic ideas – Vedantic because the Real is high above the limitations of Personality and *nāmārūpa*, Theosophical for similar reasons, though with the added polemical edge of a dispute with accepted Judaeo-Christian theology.”³³⁸ This interpretation will be discussed in more detail below.

The narrative of the Advaita Vedānta interpretation of Subba Row’s thought was promoted by Jocelyn Godwin, who based his assessment on a single article, *A Personal and An Impersonal God*, from 1883. Godwin did not examine the development of Row’s ideas any further, paying no attention to his magnum opus on the *Bhagavadgītā*.³³⁹ Bergunder, by contrast, focuses specifically on Row’s interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā*. However, he seems to overlook the non-advaitic dimensions in Row’s interpretation when he writes: “The interpretation of T. Subba Row, a Telugu-Smarta Brahmin, outspokenly follows the Advaita

332 Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 40.

333 Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 351.

334 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 177–78.

335 Santucci, “Theosophical Society,” 1120.

336 Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society”.

337 In Sharpe’s words, the “Theosophical Society’s Gita expert.” Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā*, 91. Similarly Nethercot. Nethercot, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, 206.

338 Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā*, 92.

339 Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 329.

Vedanta tradition. There is no personal God or any reception of Bhakti.”³⁴⁰ The most detailed account of Subba Row’s *Bhagavadgītā* interpretation is provided by Ronald Neufeldt. Although Neufeldt summarizes Row’s position over just a few pages, he is careful with his statement about the Advaita Vedānta influence on Row’s writings. He notes that Row saw the *Bhagavadgītā* as “essentially practical, designed to give directions to humanity for spiritual guidance in the evolutionary drama in which man realizes more and more his essential immortality.”³⁴¹ He also points to the debate between Blavatsky and Row (on which see below). Neufeldt also notices Row’s tendency in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* to propound an idea of individual progression and a final merging with the Logos without losing one’s own individuality.³⁴² In this respect, Neufeldt’s account is still one of the most accurate, but it is based only on Row’s *Bhagavadgītā* commentary and does not consider his other publications. In addition, the debate between Row and Blavatsky is not discussed any further by Neufeldt, and he also does not look more deeply into Row’s explanations about his theistic concept of *brahman* and his concept of individual divinity and immortality.

The following in-depth analyses of Subba Row’s writings highlight three important dimensions of his work. 1) If one takes Advaita Vedānta to be a strict “nondualism or monism”³⁴³ which understands individuality or “I-ness” as the major obstacle to be overcome,³⁴⁴ then it can be argued that Row based his early writings on Advaita Vedānta but had deviated from this line of thought by the time he wrote his *Bhagavadgītā* commentary, at the latest. As always, the picture is much more complicated because “Advaita Vedanta” is considerably more heterogeneous than the categorization might suggest. For example, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (1540–1647 A.D.)³⁴⁵ combines theistic elements with a *bhakti* tradition

340 “Die Interpretation des Telugu-Smarta-Brahmanen T. Subba Row folgt erklärtermaßen dem Advaita Vedanta und kennt keinen persönlichen Gott oder Bhakti-Vorstellungen.” Bergunder, “Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert,” 203.

341 Ronald W. Neufeldt, “A Lesson in Allegory: Theosophical Interpretations of the Bhagavadgita,” in *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita*, ed. Robert N. Minor, SUNY Series in Religious Studies (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 13.

342 Neufeldt, “A Lesson in Allegory,” 13–15.

343 Christopher Bartley, “Vedānta: Advaita Vedānta and the Schools of Vedānta,” in Jacobsen et al., *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.

344 Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 60.

345 As with many Indian philosophers, the dates are much debated. It seems, however, that the above given date has more or less been the consensus since the late 1940s. Sulochana A. Nachane, “The Date of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī,” *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 30, 3/4 (1949): 326–31.

and a strict non-dualism in his Advaita Vedānta interpretation.³⁴⁶ It seems that Row’s interpretation tended in his later writings towards a theistic and individualized reading of “Advaita Vedānta.”

Bergunder explains that Subba Row’s interpretation was rooted in local Tamil discourse, which drew on a Shiva Siddhanta tradition rather than following a Sanskritist Advaita Vedānta reception.³⁴⁷ This would explain Row’s theistic Advaita Vedānta interpretation. Row’s knowledge of the Sanskrit discourse would have been mediated, if at all, through this local discourse. Therefore, he most likely had no knowledge of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s work.

I argue that although Subba Row was the most important Vedānta expert for the Theosophical Society, he was later silenced and expelled from the discourse on Hindu matters. Nevertheless, his individualized theistic version of “Advaita Vedānta” was vitally important for the later uptake of “Hindu” thought within the Society, and this was especially the case, so I claim, for the development of Annie Besant’s thought.

As mentioned above, Subba Row was among the early Indian informants of the Theosophical founders and contributed many articles to *The Theosophist*. The following discussion is based on several of his articles written between 1882 and 1889, as well as on his lengthy commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* written in 1886. Subba Row’s commentary of the *Bhagavadgītā* was first delivered as a series of speeches during the convention of the Theosophical Society in 1886 and then published in a revised version in *The Theosophist* in 1887.³⁴⁸ However, I refer to the version that appeared in book form in 1888, edited by Tookaram Tatya.

346 For general information on Madhusūdana Sarasvatī, see Karl H. Potter, “Madhusūdana Sarasvatī,” in *A Companion to the Philosophers*, ed. Robert L. Arrington, 1. publ. in paperback, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 16 (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001). For Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s combination of Krishna *bhakti* and Advaita, see, e.g., Lance Nelson, “Madhusūdana Sarasvatī on the ‘Hidden Meaning’ of the ‘Bhagavadgītā’: Bhakti for the Advaitin Renunciate,” *Journal of South Asian Literature* 23, no. 2 (1988): 73–89. For the Madhusūdana Sarasvatī major work *Advaitasiddhi* and its position in Indian literature, see Gianni Pellegrini, “‘Old Is Gold!’: Madhusūdana Sarasvatī’s Way of Referring to Earlier Textual Tradition,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 43, 2/3 (2015): 277–334.

347 Bergunder, “The early turn of the Theosophical Society to ‘Advaita Vedānta’ and ‘Hinduism’ in 1882–1883.”

348 Ramanujacharya, *A Lonely Disciple*, 13–14; Yves Mühlematter, “Theosophische Identität auf Verhandlungsbasis: Westliche Wurzeln theosophischer Bhagavadgītā-Interpretationen bei T. Subba Row und Annie Besant” (Masterarbeit, Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Freiburg, 20. Januar 2016), 25.

12.3 Divided Spheres of Expertise: Blavatsky’s “Chaldeo-Tibetan Esoteric Doctrine” and Row’s “Ancient Aryan Doctrine”

In 1882, an extract from a letter written by Row to H. P. Blavatsky was printed in *The Theosophist*. In this letter, Row discusses the entities that might appear in a séance. In his view, these phenomena are related to the human constitution, meaning the sevenfold principle of man. Interestingly, he discusses these principles by referring to an article Blavatsky had published in an earlier volume of *The Theosophist*. Blavatsky is represented as the expert on “the Chaldeo-Tibetan esoteric doctrines”³⁴⁹ and Subba Row as the authority on the “ancient Aryan doctrine,” which he presents as the basis for all the Indian systems of knowledge. Although these doctrines “are fundamentally identical,”³⁵⁰ Subba Row examines Blavatsky’s ideas critically. The “Aryan doctrine” is placed in a faraway past, “long before the Vedas were compiled,” and “is attributed to one mysterious personage called Maha [In footnote: The very title of the present chief of the Esoteric Himalayan Brotherhood. – Ed.]”³⁵¹ The seven principles presented by Blavatsky are described in terms of the three concepts of “Prakriti,” “Sakti,” and “Brahmam,” and their combinations.³⁵² Row does not mention the terms “Vedānta” or “Advaita” anywhere in the article. Blavatsky however mentioned them in her Appendix commenting on the letter. The differences in nomenclature for the several bodies or principles of the human condition, which are connected to nuanced concepts of evolution and often also of redemption according to several schools of thought, were negotiated fiercely within the Theosophical Society. As will be seen, this was the major issue in the conflict between Blavatsky and Row.

For our present investigation, it is important to see that Subba Row associates “seven *occult* powers with the seven principles.”³⁵³ These “occult powers”

349 Tallapragada S. Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 3, no. 4 (1882): 93.

350 Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 93.

351 The footnote given in brackets is an addition by the editor, as is indicated by the “Ed.” In this case, this means that it was added by either Henry Olcott or Helena Blavatsky. It seems much more likely that Blavatsky was responsible for the addition. Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 93.

352 Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 95. For a discussion and comparison to Blavatsky’s, and others’, ideas of the Theosophical constitution of man, see Harlass, “Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft,” 188–96.

353 Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 96.

are connected to stages of consciousness. Noting that “the mental and spiritual consciousness of the individual becomes the general consciousness of *Brahmam*³⁵⁴ when the barrier of individuality is wholly removed,”³⁵⁵ a clear goal for human progress is set. This view is similar to the claims made by Dvivedi and Besant. Comparing his “ancient Aryan doctrine” to Blavatsky’s “Chaldeo-Tibetan esoteric doctrine,” he explains:

The successive incarnations of Buddha, in fact, mean the successive transfer of this mysterious power³⁵⁶ or the impressions thereon. The transfer is only possible when the *Mahatma* [In footnote: The highest adept – Ed.] who transfers it, has completely identified himself with his seventh principle, has annihilated his *Ahankāram*³⁵⁷ and reduced it to ashes in CHIDAGNIKUNDUM³⁵⁸ and has succeeded in making his thoughts correspond with the eternal laws of nature and in becoming a co-worker, with nature.³⁵⁹

354 In his later writings, especially on the *Bhagavadgītā*, *brahman* is replaced by “the Logos” and the total removal of individuality is denied.

355 Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 96.

356 “Sakti.” Row entered into a technical discussion in his letter, in which he constantly refers to Blavatsky and several concepts of Indian philosophy. Although seemingly presented systematically, many of his explanations remained unclear because he often refers to “occult powers” or “mysterious powers,” or simply states “the entity in question.” The mysterious power referred to here was most likely what he later called “the Logos” or, more correctly, “the ray of the Logos” (see below). The term does not appear in this article, in which he uses “sakti” instead. He does not use the term “sakti” in his later writings.

357 The *ahaṅkāra* is the idea of individuality, sometimes translated as “self-consciousness.” It is the second principle evolving from prakṛiti in the Śāṅkhya philosophy (see Deutsch and Dalvi, *The Essential Vedānta*, 111–12). In Advaita Vedānta, the *ahaṅkāra* is identified as the individualizing principle which must be overcome. For the meaning of *ahaṅkāra* in the Advaita Vedānta tradition, see Bartley, “Vedānta”.

358 “*Cidagnikuṇḍa*” is a term found in the *Saundaryalaharī*, which is usually attributed to Śaṅkara (see W. Norman Brown, *The Saundaryalaharī or Flood of Beauty: Traditionally Ascribed to Śaṅkārācārya*, Harvard Oriental Series 43 (Cambridge, Mass., 1958)). It can be translated as “fireplace of knowing.” The fireplace usually refers to the place where the holy fire was kindled in which the sacrifices were transformed to become accessible to the gods. Row interprets this here as the fireplace in one’s consciousness in which one’s own thoughts are sacrificed. Row certainly knew the *Saundaryalaharī* because he also refers to it in his *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gīta* (Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gīta*, 54–55). The text was later translated by Subrahmanya Sastri and published by the Theosophical Publishing House (Śaṅkara, T. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar and S. Subrahmanya Sastri, *Saundarya-Laharī (The Ocean of Beauty) Of Śrī Saṅkara-Bhagavat-Pāda* (Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1937)). Brown explains that he does not know of any early translations of the *Saundaryalaharī* into English. He names a translation into French from 1841 by A. Troyer. For his study, Brown used the Theosophical version. There was also an earlier partial translation by John Woodroff from 1917. Brown, *The Saundaryalaharī or Flood of Beauty*, vi.

359 Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 96–97.

In the quotation above, it becomes palpable that Row is attempting to mediate between the idea of the total annihilation of the individual once *avidyā* is overcome and a notion of individuality in which the essential nature of the individual is maintained. Although the *ahaṃkāra*, which is identified as a false impression, must be annihilated, Row maintains that “the mysterious power” is transferred from one life to another. This differentiation between the *ahaṃkāra* and the transfer of power can be read as a reference to the difference between the monad and the individual physical body in Theosophical thought. The monad is the principle of reincarnation, which is eternal and therefore does not cease to be when it becomes aware of its nature. The realization of this nature leads, according to Row, to the realization of the laws of nature and therefore to “becoming a co-worker, with nature.” This is very close to the idea of the following of the “divine will” in Besant’s writings (see Chapter 8.2). The transfer of one’s consciousness to the seventh principle, or, in Row’s words, the identification with the seventh principle, is the characteristic of a Mahatma, a view that is also close to Besant’s ideas regarding the gaining of full consciousness on the highest planes of being. In this respect, the word “cit” in *cidagnikuṇḍa* is of great importance. It shows that the term “consciousness” was gradually identified with “cit,” with this term becoming a standard translation of “cit” within the Theosophical Society (see also Chapter 11.5).

In this letter, which was not originally intended for publication, Row formulates a theory of evolution that is connected to karmic necessity and human progress. Two motifs can be highlighted. 1) “Becoming a co-worker” with the “laws of nature” was set as the goal of this evolution. This is close to one of the main principles of human progress formulated by Besant in her description of the “Quickening of Evolution.” 2) The “gradually increasing velocity” of becoming an adept, which also refers to a concept of acceleration and quickening. The *ahaṃkāra*, referred to by Row as “*Ahankāram*,”³⁶⁰ is the main object of concern in Advaita Vedānta.³⁶¹

This article is an instructive example of how T. Subba Row claimed expertise on “Hindu” thought by relationizing it to Blavatsky’s Theosophy in an equalizing move. The article also provides an instance of an interaction in the field of encounters in the Indian Middle Class. The critique of Blavatsky’s views is remarkable. It is a) another instance of the early engagement with “Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society, in which every piece of information was welcomed and expertise in Hindu thought was accepted as being completely in the hands of the

360 Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 95–96.

361 Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 60–61.

early Indian informants (see also Chapter 10). It is also b) indicative of Row’s agency in this shared discursive field. By following Row’s writings chronologically, it will be possible to map out diversified connections in the global colonial discursive continuum. This approach will also illustrate how Row gradually gained more and more influence, and ultimately attained a hegemonic position on all “Hindu” matters in the Theosophical Society. However, as will be seen, challenging Blavatsky’s position in an attempt to gain hegemony over all “occult” matters eventually led to the decline of Row’s influence in the Society.

12.4 Claiming Hegemony on “Hindu” Matters: Relationalization Between Swami Paramahansa and T. Subba Row

The next volume of *The Theosophist* included an article by Swami Paramahansa.³⁶² The Swami argued that the Bible should be interpreted allegorically and that a commentary should be added to it.³⁶³ He explained that the Bible, meaning the Old and the New Testament, should be studied successively, because the New Testament contains a more developed doctrine which should only be approached “after going through the routine of the Old Testament.”³⁶⁴ The article is of paramount interest because a) the Swami suggested that certain Advaita concepts should be adopted as an eighth principle of the human constitution, against which Subba Row argued fiercely, and b) the Swami also suggested that William Oxley, who had written a commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* which was debated critically in *The Theosophist*,³⁶⁵ should write the proposed occult commentary to the Bible.

362 The Swami Paramahansa was referred to as “a Swami” in an earlier article and in the later articles he was simply called “The Swami of Almora.” He died on the 31st of December 1883 (K. C. Mookerji, “Death of the Swami of Almora,” *The Theosophist* 5, no. 5 (1884): 123). It is further reported that the Theosophists opened a fund for the late Swami (Kumud C. Mukerjee, “Fund in Honour of the Late Swami of Almora,” *The Theosophist* 5, no. 6 (1884): 49). This is interesting because of the fiercely fought argument between the Swami, Subba Row, and Blavatsky (see below). It seems that he was still held in great respect. The name “Paramahansa” can be translated as “highest swan,” and is a title for distinguished spiritual teachers. It is also a title that is included in the stages of initiation by Annie Besant.

363 Swami Paramahansa and Tallapragada S. Row, “Adwaita Philosophy,” *The Theosophist* 4, no. 5 (1883): 118.

364 Paramahansa and Row, “Adwaita Philosophy,” 118.

365 For more information on this debate, see Bergunder, “Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert,” 199–201.

Subba Row responded to the Swami’s suggestion, in a commentary printed directly below the article, not by rejecting the idea that Oxley should write such a commentary but by pointing to commentaries that were already provided in *Isis Unveiled* and *The Perfect Way*. More importantly, he asks, “why should the learned Swami of Almora insist upon the esoteric interpretation of the Bible alone without any concern for the Vedas, the *Tripitakas* and the *Upanishads*, all three far more important.”³⁶⁶ We can see both that Row takes the stance here of the expert on all things “Hindu,” and that he decidedly attributes a higher status to the Hindu scriptures than to the Bible. This hierarchical relationizing can be read as part of a strategy of relationalization. Row notes: “The statement [of the Swami] is not quite in accordance with the doctrines of Advaita philosophy.”³⁶⁷ In doing so, he declares himself to be an authority on Advaita Vedānta not just for a European audience but also in an interaction with an Indian Swami. This is the first instance in which Row claims a hegemonic position within the discourse. However, this position was based on the authority of Helena Blavatsky, because it was she who had first suggested that there was something inaccurate in Swami Paramahansa’s article and she who had told Row to investigate it and to comment on it. Blavatsky wrote:

As the subjoined letter, comes from such a learned source, we do not feel justified in commenting upon it editorially, our personal knowledge of the Advaita doctrine being unquestionably very meagre when contrasted with that of a Paramahansa. Yet we felt a strong suspicion that; whether owing to a mistranslation or an ‘original misconception’ there was an error with regard to Tadpada, called herein the 8th principle.³⁶⁸

This fits well with the early Theosophical engagement with “Hinduism” mentioned above, in which European Theosophists initially based their knowledge of “Hinduism” on their Indian fellows instead of claiming expertise for themselves in such matter (see also Chapter 10). It is also noteworthy that Blavatsky indicates her respect towards the Swami by referring to him as a “Paramahansa,” this being the title of the second to last stage of initiation in the Theosophical Society.

The Swami reacted to Subba Row’s article by criticizing him on several points in two articles that were published in 1883.³⁶⁹ Blavatsky’s reaction in the

366 Paramahansa and Row, “Advaita Philosophy,” 118.

367 Paramahansa and Row, “Advaita Philosophy,” 118.

368 Paramahansa and Row, “Advaita Philosophy,” 118.

369 The Swami of Almora, “In Re Advaita Philosophy,” *The Theosophist* 4, no. 6 (1883): 128–30; The Swami of Almora, “The Swami of Almora to His Opponents,” 4, no. 10 (1883): 246–48.

editorial notes³⁷⁰ was harsh. She wrote concerning some details regarding the nomenclature of Brahma, Parabrahma, and Maha Iswara, that “we are sorry to say to the learned Paramahansa [!] that he does not know what he is talking about. He is *no Esoteric Adwaitee* and – we close the discussion as becoming quite useless.”³⁷¹ She further asked:

Shall we believe every exponent of the Vedas, the Shastree of every sect, only because he may be an authority to those who belong to the same denomination with him, or shall we make a judicious selection, following but the dictates of our reason, which tells us that he is most right and nearer to truth, who diverges the less from logic and – Science?³⁷²

The article provides a striking example of a discursive dynamic that was common in the Orientalist engagement with “Hindu” thought, at least in the 19th century. It is also structurally analogous to the dynamics identified in 10.3.2. In the first phase, the colonialists were dependent on local informants and translators and they accepted the native intelligentsia as teachers. In the second phase, however, the local teachers were gradually expelled from the discourse³⁷³ because they were denied both access to universities and, most importantly, institutional markers of distinction such as professorships. However, this process was much more nuanced than a clean division into two phases might suggest, and there are instances in which Indians were also successful in European or American academic institutions. This is true, for example – at least to a certain extent – for Kashinath Trimbak Telang (see Chapter 10.6.3), Rajendralal Mitra (see Chapter 10.5), and for Manilal Divedi (see Chapter 11).

This discursive dynamic presents itself in a particular way in the Theosophical Society. The founders claimed a complete openness towards all religious belief systems and presented Theosophy as non-dogmatic “philosophy.” Nonetheless, they had very specific ideas about “the truth.” In the Society, the idea of this total openness stood against dogmatic claims that were directed against any “sectarian” views (see also Chapter 10.6.2). These claims can be interpreted as attempts to close the discourse in order to secure the orthodoxy of the Theosophical teachings, and the label of “sectarianism” can be understood as a relationizing. What is especially interesting here is the role played by Indian Theosophists in this discourse. It is instructive to note that Row’s reaction was even harsher than that of Blavatsky. By referring to several Indian scriptures, albeit without quoting them

370 The notes are simply signed “Ed.” It is most likely that they were added by Blavatsky, but some of the replies indicate that Subba Row is reacting directly to the Swami’s critique.

371 Swami of Almora, “The Swami of Almora to His Opponents,” 248.

372 Swami of Almora, “The Swami of Almora to His Opponents,” 248.

373 See, e.g., Dodson, *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture*, 41–61.

directly, he accused the Swami of misunderstanding Indian philosophy. The main bone of contention was whether *mūlaprakṛti*³⁷⁴ is dissolved in a pralaya³⁷⁵ or whether it is eternal. Row claimed that *mūlaprakṛti* is eternal because there is no difference between Spirit and matter. Turning directly to the Swami, Subba Row writes that “if this Mulaprakriti that I have attempted to describe is not noticed in Brahman according to the ‘practical experience of hermits,’ all that I can say is that their experience is different from the experience of Sankaracharya, Vyasa, Goudapada and several other Rishis.”³⁷⁶ Subba Row claims here to be able to reexperience what Śaṅkara had experienced. This is an interesting claim, not only for the history of Theosophy but also in the light of the history of Religious Studies. Phenomenological scholars of Religious Studies have also claimed that it is possible to “reexperience” (religious) experiences as a means of understanding and comparing (foreign or ancient) religions. In addition, he holds that Advaita Vedānta is the only source of authority for him because he thinks that,

it is unnecessary for me to say any thing about the Swamy’s views regarding Other systems of philosophy. I am only concerned with the esoteric Arhat philosophy and the Advaita philosophy as taught by Sankaracharya. The remaining quotations from the works of various authors, contained in the Swamy’s article are, in my humble opinion, irrelevant.³⁷⁷

374 Row uses both terms, *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*. For *prakṛti* he often writes *mūlaprakṛti*. By insisting on the eternal being of both *prakṛti* and *puruṣa*, Row is in line with the Śāṅkhya understanding of these categories. It is likely that Row draws his knowledge about *prakṛti* and *puruṣa* from Monier-Williams, because Monier-Williams also includes the different renderings for *prakṛti*, “*Mūla-prakṛiti*” and “*A-vyakta*” that were also used by Row. Monier-Williams further claims that the Śāṅkhya-system propounds a “doctrine of evolution.” Monier Monier-Williams, *Indian Wisdom: Or, Examples of the Religious, Philosophical, and Ethical Doctrines of the Hindus*, 2nd ed. (London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1875), With a Brief History of the Sanskrit Literature and some Account of the Past and Present Condition of India, Moral and Intellectual, 89–93. The term *Prakṛti* is composed of three parts: the root *vkṛ*, the prefix *pra-*, and the suffix *-kṛti*. The word has many different meanings and is found as a technical term, as well as commonly meaning “first,” “original,” etc. In Śāṅkhya-philosophy it is used to talk about the “ultimate material principle” in opposition to *puruṣa*, “the principle of consciousness.” “In Śāṅkhya-Yoga for the ultimate material principle as well as the eight material causal principles” (Knut A. Jacobsen, “Prakṛti,” in Jacobsen et al., *Brill’s Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*).

375 “*Pralaya*” means a disintegration of the world after “kalpa.” The idea of cyclic creation and disintegration is a distinctive feature of Indian concepts of time and ages. In a *mahāpralaya*, the whole universe is disintegrated. For a comprehensive overview, see Michaels, *Der Hinduismus*, 330–35; Erich Frauwallner, *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie: Die Philosophie des Veda und des Epos. Der Buddha und der Jina. Das Samkhya und das klassische Yoga-System* 1 (Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1953), 363–64.

376 Tallapragada S. Row, “Prakṛiti and Puruṣa,” *The Theosophist* 4, no. 10 (1883): 249.

377 Row, “Prakṛiti and Puruṣa,” 250.

By a process of hierarchically evaluative relationizing, Row excludes most of the Swami’s claims from the discourse. Despite the Theosophist’s claim to be open to any religion or philosophy, the Swami is essentially silenced for holding views that do not conform to Theosophical orthodoxies.

This exchange provides an interesting piece of evidence for the growing hegemonic position within the Theosophical Society during the early 1880s of Subba Row’s interpretation of Advaita Vedānta. It seems that Row had by this time become the expert on Advaita Vedānta matters, which were equated with “Hinduism” as a whole, especially when the “real doctrine” had to be defended.

12.5 Contesting the Divided Spheres by Equalizing Relationizing: The Letter by H.X.

That Row was gaining the status of “expert in Hinduism” in the Theosophical Society is illustrated further by two articles in *The Theosophist* from the February and March 1883 issues. In the first, Row reacts to a letter by “H.X.,” a pen name of A. O. Hume,³⁷⁸ that was published in the December 1882 issue of *The Theosophist*. The question he deals with is the being of God, that is, the question of whether there is a personal god, an impersonal god, or no God at all. It seems that the Theosophists felt the need to position themselves with regard to this question, as Subba Row points out.

The generality of the public (at least in this country [India]) are accustomed to associate every religious and social movement with some particular belief regarding the subject under consideration [meaning the question of the being of God]. [. . .] An association, like the Theosophical Society, composed of various religionists and established for the purposes of religious and scientific enquiry, is a novelty to them. Consequently, enquiries are constantly being made regarding the views of the founders of the Theosophical Society and our great Teachers of the Himavat about the questions under consideration.³⁷⁹

The Secret Doctrine would not be published for another five years and *Isis Unveiled* was more concerned with rejecting Christianity than formulating a concise doctrine. In addition, the Theosophists had not yet written exhaustively on Indian religion, although, as the answer to the Swami’s letters discussed above shows, there was already a distinct idea of what an “esoteric” understanding amounted to and what was to be excluded. Against this background, the stance

378 For a discussion of the letter by H.X., see Harlass, “Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft,” 144–48.

379 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 104.

of the Theosophical Society towards the questions identified by Row was yet to be negotiated.

The founders of the Theosophical Society insisted that Theosophy was not a doctrinal system of thought, and, as such, they understood tolerance and heterodoxy to be essential. As a result, this idea of total openness was maintained, and, indeed, some might say that it is still alive in the Society today. Although Theosophical teachings were formulated in *Isis Unveiled* (1877), *The Secret Doctrine* (1888), and works such as Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883) or *The Perfect Way* (1881) by Maitland and Kingsford, those formulating these teachings were always presented as voices in a discourse. Similarly, in his article, Row attempts to "state the general principles of the Adwaita and the Arhat doctrines on the subject under consideration and leave it to my readers to decide whether they indicate a belief in a *personal* or an *impersonal* God, or whether they amount to Atheism." Theosophy was thus presented as an offshoot of "Arhat doctrines" (Blavatsky) and "Adwaita" (Subba Row). The distinction here has shifted from "the Chaldeo-Tibetan esoteric doctrines" (Blavatsky) and "ancient Aryan doctrine" (Subba Row) in 1882 to "Arhat doctrines" (Blavatsky) and "Adwaita" (Subba Row) in 1883. But, in the end, Row leaves "it to my readers to decide whether they indicate a belief in a *personal* or an *impersonal* God, or whether they amount to Atheism."³⁸⁰

Row presents his ideas as being open to negotiation, a common topos for maintaining the notion of total openness mentioned above. His use of this topos can also be read as a strategy aimed at equalizing relationizing, since it was possible, against this background, for Row to present "Hindu" thought as being just as important to Theosophy as Blavatsky's presentation of Tibetan-Buddhist ideas. The notion of "Arhat" was generally understood in Theosophical parlance to be one who has almost attained Buddhahood³⁸¹ and who could perceive and access "Nirvana while yet on earth."³⁸² The name "Arhat," and the attributes associated with it, later came to be attributed to the adepts of the Theosophical Society. Row's presentation of "the general principles of the Adwaita and the Arhat doctrines" can be interpreted as an attempt to undermine Blavatsky's authority. The

³⁸⁰ Row, "A Personal and an Impersonal God," 104.

³⁸¹ Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled*, 291; Alfred Percy Sinnett, *Esoteric Buddhism* (London: Trübner & Co., 1883), 1–17; For the use of the term "Arhat" in later developments of scales of initiation, especially in Leadbeater's Theosophy, see French, "The Theosophical Masters," 192–193; 286–294.

³⁸² Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* Vol. II – Theology (New York, London: J.W. Bouton; Bernard Quaritch, 1877), 320.

article provides an example of the discursive dynamics prevalent in the Theosophical Society and shows how the Indian Theosophists could claim their positions of authority in this field. The narrative of complete tolerance towards all religions connected numerous discursive fields of (seemingly) egalitarian power relations. This claim was an intrinsic part of the Theosophical narrative, but the openness was de facto much narrower than the narrative would have us believe. Nevertheless, this claim opened up the possibility of mutual interaction between followers of different religions and philosophies and triggered multifaceted processes of hybridization which had the effect of laying the ground for the post-Blavatskyan development of Theosophy. “Hinduism” was to become synonymous with Advaita Vedānta.

12.6 Recontextualizing Mill by Translating *Parabrahman* and Relationizing it to (Un)Consciousness

Row begins the thematic part of his article, *A Personal and an Impersonal God*, by referring to John Stuart Mill. In the Victorian age, Mill stood as the epitome of Liberalism and the idea of progress. However, his importance for Theosophical thought ran deeper, as in various of his works he had argued that progress is based on successive stages of evolution.³⁸³ Row’s inclusion of Mill served as a marker of the compatibility of Hindu and European philosophy. Here “Mill’s philosophy” can be read in this instance as “Western” philosophy *in toto* and it is as such that it is recontextualized in Row’s Advaita Vedānta. Row explains that Mill “came to the conclusion that matter or the so called external phenomena are but the creation of our mind”³⁸⁴ and that “the very idea of a mind existing separately as an entity distinct from the states of consciousness which are supposed to inhere in it, is in his opinion illusory.”³⁸⁵ Although Mill claimed these “truths,” which were, Row maintains, in line with Advaita philosophy, he also confessed, again according Row, “that psychological analysis did not go any further, the mysterious link which connects together the train of our states of consciousness and gives rise to our Ahankaram in this condition of existence, still remains an incomprehensible mystery to Western psychologists.”³⁸⁶

383 Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, 18. See also Chapter 8.2.

384 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 104.

385 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 104.

386 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 104.

This recontextualization is followed immediately by hierarchical relationizing. The “great Adwaitee philosophers of ancient Aryavarta,”³⁸⁷ in contrast to Mill as a token for European philosophy *in toto*, had already examined these problems more deeply, Row claims. Mill, as a metonym for “Western” philosophy, is recontextualized in the context of Row’s Advaitism, and is then relationized hierarchically, pushing “Western” philosophy down the epistemological scale and likewise positioning Advaita Vedānta at the top. This move is then followed by another process of hybridization that involved translating “(un)consciousness” with “*parabrahman*,” and vice versa. Human beings, or rather liberated beings, Row continues, are able to perceive reality on seven different planes of consciousness, of which the highest is rather “a condition of perfect Unconsciousness.”³⁸⁸ These stages of consciousness and the unconscious condition are, Row explains, part of the human evolutionary cycle.

Thus we have 6 states of consciousness, either objective or subjective for the time being as the case may be, and a state of perfect unconsciousness which is the beginning and the end of all conceivable states of consciousness, corresponding to the states of differentiated matter and its original undifferentiated basis which is the beginning and the end of all Cosmic evolutions.³⁸⁹

Considering Mill’s argument about objective and subjective reality, Row claims that “the various conditions of the Ego and the Non-Ego were but the appearances of one and the same entity – the ultimate state of unconsciousness.”³⁹⁰ In “the fact that this grand universe is in reality but a huge aggregation of various states of consciousness, they will not be surprised to find that the ultimate state of unconsciousness is considered as Parabrahmam by the Adwaitees.”³⁹¹ Translation precedes another movement of relationizing. (Un)consciousness was already “considered” by the “Adwaitees,” and this can be read as identifying a second stage of epistemological relationizing. This first part of *A Personal and an Impersonal God* provides a valuable illustration of the idea of meshing advanced in 11.9.

387 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 105.

388 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 105.

389 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 105.

390 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 105.

391 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 104–5.

12.7 Translating “Adwaitism” and Relationizing it to Blavatsky’s “Arhat Doctrine”

Row begins the second part of his article by saying that “in the opinion of *Adwaitees*, the *Upanishads* and the *Brahmasūtras* fully support their views on the subject.”³⁹² He thus establishes the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtras* as primary authorities for Advaita Vedānta. This is of course what one would expect, as the *Upaniṣads* and the *Brahmasūtras* are among the most frequently cited works in the Advaita tradition, but it is striking that the *Bhagavadgītā* is not mentioned by Row in this article, given its later importance. The problem Row discusses in the first part of the article is elaborated upon in the second. He explains:

the Aryan psychologists have traced this current of mental states to its source – the eternal *Chinmatra*³⁹³ existing everywhere. When the time for evolution comes this germ of *Pragna*³⁹⁴ unfolds itself and results ultimately as *Cosmic ideation*.³⁹⁵ Cosmic ideas are the

392 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 138.

393 Monier-Williams names two passages which include the term “Chinmatra,” or rather “cinmātra.” One is the *Vedānta Sārā*, which is, as its name says, a text from the Vedānta tradition. The other text mentioned by Monier-Williams is the *Kaivalyopanishad*, which is received by the Shaiva tradition. He does not give any further information about, nor a translation of, the term. The *Vedānta Sārā* was first translated by E. Röer in 1845 (Eduard H. H. Röer, “Védānta-Sāra: Or Essence of the Védānta, an Introduction into Védānta Philosophy by Sadānanda Parivrājākāchārya,” *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* XIV, Part I (1845); Translated from the Original Sanscrit by E. Roer, Librarian to the Asiatic Society of Bengal). It seems plausible to suppose that Row takes the word from the *Vedānta Sārā* because his presentation of “Hindu” thought follows the Vedānta rather than Shaiva tradition. In addition, it seems that the text was well known within the Theosophical Society. William Ward’s translation was included in an anthology edited by Tookaram Tatya in 1888. William Ward, “Vedānt Sāra of Sadānda Swāmi,” in Tatya, *A Compendium of the Raja Yoga Philosophy*, 83–161.

394 *Pragna* – *prāṇa* can be translated as “life breath” or “respiration” (Monier-Williams and Leumann, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 705). In the Theosophical translation, it was used to convey the similar idea of the “appropriated life,” also known as the *jīva* in the body. Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man*, 16. It was sometimes counted as the second or the third principle of the human constitution. Julie Chajes (née Hall), “The Saptaparna: The Meaning and Origins of the Theosophical Septenary Constitution of Man,” *Theosophical History* XIII, no. 4 (2007): 14.

395 This idea of “cosmic ideation” fits perfectly into Monier-Williams interpretation of Plato. Monier-Williams wrote: “Plato does not always state his theory of ideas very intelligibly, and probably modified them in his later works. He seems, however, to have insisted on the doctrine that mind preceded, and gave rise to matter, or, in other words, that the whole material world proceeded from or was actually produced by the Creator according to the idea or pattern of a world existing eternally and for ever the same in his own mind. [. . .] Similarly, Plato seems to have held that the human mind has existing within it certain abstract ideas or ideal forms which precede and are visibly manifested in the actual concrete forms around us.”

conceptions of all the conditions of existence in the Cosmos existing in what may be called the universal mind (the demiurgic mind of the Western Kabalists).³⁹⁶

Evolution is understood as the unfolding of a germ according to “Cosmic ideation.” Which is the

real source of the states of consciousness in every individual. Cosmic ideation exists everywhere; but when placed under restrictions by a material *Upadhi*³⁹⁷ it results as the consciousness of the individual inhering in such *Upadhi*. Strictly speaking, an *Adwaitee* will not admit the objective existence of this material *Upadhi*. From his stand-point it is *Maya* or illusion which exists as a *necessary condition of pragna*.³⁹⁸

These *Upadhis* form the human bodies in which the “Universal mind” is encompassed. Hence the

Universal mind or Cosmic ideation becomes more and more limited and modified by the various *Upadhis* of which a human being is composed; and when the action or influence of these various *Upadhis* is successively controlled, the mind of the individual human being is placed *en rapport* with the Universal mind and his ideation is lost in cosmic ideation.³⁹⁹

Row’s comments here can be read as advice for practical body and mind control. As we have seen, Besant elaborated a similar system of techniques as a preliminary stage of initiation, and in doing so she developed ideas first formulated by Row. This passage is also one of the first instances in which terms such as “Upadhi” and “pragna,” which were to become an integral part of the Theosophical tradition, were translated into Theosophy. Row further assures the reader that “the eternal Principle is precisely the same in both the systems and they agree in

(Monier-Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, 113.) This quotation is an interesting instance of the early Indologist attitude towards India. All concepts could be compared with Greek and or Christian concepts. This idea of universalism was not uncommon in early Indologist writings (see also Chapter 9 and 10). Monier-Williams’ Plato reception is likely to have also been part of the model for Annie Besant’s concept of “physics” and the evolution of matter (see, e.g., Besant, *Reincarnation*, 30–31). A thorough analysis of these (possible) interdependencies remains a research desideratum.

396 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 138.

397 *Upādhi* was understood in the Theosophical tradition as a body belonging to the seven principles of men (Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 186). Deussen explains that the “Upādhi” is “sūkshmaṃ cañram, – in short, the whole psychological apparatus” (Deussen, *Outlines of Indian philosophy*, 59–60). Wilson holds that it refers to the “disguises of the spirit.” Cited in Monier-Williams and Leumann, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 213.

398 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 138.

399 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 138.

denying the existence of an extra-Cosmic God.”⁴⁰⁰ “Both systems” here refers to Subba Row’s “Adwaita” and Blavatsky’s “Arhat doctrines.” We can see, then, that the second part of the article can also be read as meshing. In a first step, Row translates several terms into Theosophy and he then goes on to equalize his “Advaita” with Blavatsky’s “Arhat doctrine.”

12.8 Row’s *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*: An Accelerated Way to Mokṣa

The *Discourses* are a verbatim record of a series of lectures given at the annual convention of the Theosophical Society in 1886. The lectures were first published in 1887 in *The Theosophist* and then republished the following year by Tookaram Tatyā.⁴⁰¹ Row frequently drew directly on the *Bhagavadgītā* in his talks, quoting a total of 48 verses from Chapters 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 15, as well as making general reference to Chapters 10 and 11. With fifteen direct quotes taken from it, Chapter 8 is the most prolifically cited chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* in Row’s lectures. In addition to quoting the *Bhagavadgītā*, Row also refers to the *Manusmṛti*, the *Purāṇas*, to Śaṅkara’s *Soundaryalahari*, and to Vedānta, Śāṃkhya, and Buddhist scriptures in general. He also includes references to *Light on the Path* and *Esoteric Buddhism*, to the *Idyll of the White Lotus*, and to the forthcoming *The Secret Doctrine*.

As Sharpe observes, Subba Row understood the *Bhagavadgītā* as a book of initiation.⁴⁰² Row explains that “the position of Arjuna is intended to typify that of a chela, who is called upon to face the Dweller on the Threshold. As the guru

400 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 139.

401 Mühlematter, “Theosophische Identität auf Verhandlungsbasis”. I presented a description of the content of Row’s work in my MA thesis, to which the reader can refer for further references. However, since this work was completed more than five years ago, it seems necessary to give another description here, as many aspects were overlooked by me at the time. In the paragraph presented here, I will focus less on the *Bhagavadgītā* and more on Subba Row’s ideas about evolution and individual progress as they are connected to initiation. Subba Row interprets the *Bhagavadgītā* as a guide for chelas. Many of the main ideas presented in my MA thesis, especially the “Kritik an Blavatsky,” Chapter 12, seem to remain valid. It will be necessary to discuss some other points in more depth, especially Row’s relation to the Advaita Vedānta philosophy.

402 Sharpe notes that “During the 1880s, then, we have been able to observe among Theosophists a growing interest in the Gita as a ‘book of initiations’ and a quarry of Gnostic doctrine, which needed to be interpreted not historically but allegorically if its secrets were to be unlocked.” Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā*, 93.

prepares his chela for the trials of initiation by philosophical teaching, so at this critical point Krishna proceeds to instruct Arjuna.”⁴⁰³ The reference to Bulwer Lytton's *Zanoni* is obvious here. The expression “the Dweller on the Threshold” was well-known among Theosophists and the reference here would surely have been familiar to Row's audience.⁴⁰⁴ In Row's presentation, this reference has a double-sided effect. On the one hand, it recontextualizes the *Bhagavadgītā* within the wider context of books on initiation, and in doing so connects it to occultist discursive fields of the time. On the other hand, Row translates well-known characters from the *Mahābhārata*, such as Arjuna and Krishna, into the context of Lytton's *Zanoni*, and recontextualizes both Arjuna (the chela) and Krishna (the “Dweller on the Threshold”) in a *guruparamparā* (“the guru prepares his chela”).⁴⁰⁵ These two steps relate the idea of the *guruparamparā* to the Theosophical master narrative. Here we see *expressis verbis* how Subba Row relationized “Hinduism” to “Theosophy” and how both currents became hybridized in this process of meshing.

12.8.1 Guru/Chela-Relations as a Precondition for Human Progress

The relationship between gurus and chelas had already been an issue in Row's writings in 1883, as can be seen in a comment on a letter in *The Statesman*. Here Row identifies the acceptance of a chela by his teacher as the prime prerequisite for making “abnormal progress spiritually and morally,”⁴⁰⁶ which is one of the key elements in Blavatsky's *The Voice of the Silence*, as well as in the writings of Besant and Dvivedī (see Chapters 8, 9, and 11). Row explained: “Since the Chela wants to make abnormal progress spiritually and morally, he has naturally to submit to abnormal tests. He has to become victor and trample under foot every temptation, to show himself worthy of taking his rank among the gods of true science.”⁴⁰⁷ This idea is connected to the chela's total submission to the guru.

403 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, III.

404 See Edward Bulwer Lytton, *Zanoni*, Novels of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton – Library Edition XXV (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1862), Vol. II, 5–98. For more information on Bulwer Lytton's *Zanoni*, see Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 115–30. Godwin explains that the formulation of the “Dweller on the Threshold” first appears in Lytton's *Zanoni*, but the underlying idea was already common in “occultism” at the time.

405 *Guruparamparā* means a successive tradition of teachers who teach their knowledge to their pupils. This became a characteristic of an Advaita Vedānta tradition which emerged sometime between the 7th and 13th centuries A.D. in a Tamil-speaking context. Malinar, *Hinduism*, 71.

406 Tallapragada S. Row, “Gurus and Chelas,” *Supplement to the Theosophist* 4, no. 11 (1883): 2.

407 Row, “Gurus and Chelas,” 2.

“There is no limit, we say, as to how far the Guru can go. He can do *anything* with his Chela, and the latter has to submit, or give up the SCIENCE for ever. A Guru is regarded as God. And he who has placed himself under His care had better submit, or take the consequences.”⁴⁰⁸ The first step in this process of initiation is, Row maintains, to “kill out all our passions and desires, not that they are all necessarily evil in themselves, but that their influence must be annihilated before we can establish ourselves on the higher planes.”⁴⁰⁹ This must be done under the guidance of a guru who “prepares his chela for the trials of initiation by philosophical teaching.”⁴¹⁰ This idea of the guru/chela relationship was identified by Row as the main moral teaching of the *Bhagavadgītā*.⁴¹¹

12.8.2 The Three Theosophical Principles in the Light of Subba Row’s Interpretation of the *Bhagavadgītā*

As we saw in Chapter 7, above, the teacher/student relation was a fundamental principle in the Theosophical Society, with the idea being repeated throughout the Theosophical hierarchy. As we have seen, the equation between guru and God is an important topic for Row. In his *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, he describes Krishna as an adept who taught Arjuna. In this light, Row identifies the *Bhagavadgītā* as “essentially practical in its character and teachings, like the discourses of all religious teachers who have appeared on the scene of the world to give a few practical directions to mankind for their spiritual guidance.”⁴¹² He claims that there is a philosophy behind the practical teachings, which must be examined and understood before the practical teachings can be applied in one’s life This philosophy is a

system of practical instruction for spiritual guidance [it] will have to be judged, first, with reference to the nature and condition of man and the capabilities that are locked up in him; secondly, with reference to the cosmos and the forces to which man is subject and the circumstances under which he has to progress.⁴¹³

The ideas in this quotation bear some resemblance to the last of the three objectives given for the Theosophical Society. The final objective wants “to investigate

⁴⁰⁸ Row, “Gurus and Chelas,” 2.

⁴⁰⁹ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, III.

⁴¹⁰ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, III.

⁴¹¹ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, III–V.

⁴¹² Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 2.

⁴¹³ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 3.

unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers of man” (see below). The Theosophical objectives will be discussed in this excursus, and in particular the idea of investigating the “occult” powers of humans, which seems to be a later addition.

It is unclear when these principles were formulated for the first time and when they were reworded. Paradigmatically, Lubelsky dates the initial written formulation of the three principles to 1878, seeing them as emerging in reaction to the quarrels with the Arya Samaj.⁴¹⁴ Based on Olcott's account in *Old Diary Leaves*, Lubelsky identifies the following three objectives:

1. The study of occult science;
2. The formation of a nucleus of universal brotherhood; and
3. The revival of Oriental literature and philosophy.

Olcott's account was written in 1895.⁴¹⁵ It is thus not clear whether these principles had already been formulated in 1878 or whether they were retrospectively dated back to 1878 by Olcott.

Julie Chajes also refers to the three principles, but she does not give any reference for them. She writes:

In 1896, these were reformulated to what they remain today:

- [1] to form a nucleus of the Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour;
- [2] to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science; and
- [3] to investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in man.⁴¹⁶

The earliest formulation of these principles is found in the appendix to Blavatsky's *The Key to Theosophy*, 1889. There one reads:

The simplest expression of the objects of the Society is the following: –

First. – To form the nucleus of a Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour.

Second. – To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religions and sciences.

Third. – A third object – pursued by a portion only of the members of the Society – is to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers of man.⁴¹⁷

414 Similarly, Campbell, *Ancient Wisdom Revived*, 78.

415 Henry Steel Olcott, *Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of the Theosophical Society*, 3 vols. 1 (New York, London, Madras: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd; The Proprietors of the “Theosophist,” 1895), 401.

416 Chajes (née Hall), *Recycled Lives*, 24.

417 Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy*, 308.

One of the earliest formulation by Besant of these principles is included in the first issue of the *Theosophical Manuals* published in 1892. In its annex we read:

FIRST. – To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. SECOND. – To promote the study of Aryan and other Eastern literatures, religions, philosophies and sciences, and demonstrate the importance of that study. THIRD. – To investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the psychic powers latent in man. [. . .] The acceptance of the Second and Third objects of the Society is optional with those desiring to enter, the First – Universal Brotherhood – being the only one to which it is expected all applicants will subscribe.⁴¹⁸

It is interesting that Besant only declares the first of the three to be a necessary condition for becoming a member of the Theosophical Society. A conclusive investigation of when, and to what purpose, the three Theosophical principles were formulated and written down remains a research desideratum, but Row’s lecture on the *Bhagavadgītā* suggests that these principles, in at least an unwritten form, were circulating in Theosophical circles by 1886.

12.8.3 Practical Advice and Human Progress: The Fourfold Human Constitution in Correspondence to Cosmology

I argue that Row was primarily concerned with the last of the three objectives of the Theosophical Society, which aims at the improvement of humanity on a practical level. In this vein, he explains that,

unless there is a definite aim or a goal to reach, [. . .] it will be almost impossible to say whether any particular instruction is likely to conduce to the welfare of mankind or not. Now I say these instructions can only be understood by examining [. . .] the goal towards which all evolutionary progress is tending.⁴¹⁹

In the quotation above, Row uses the phrase “evolutionary progress,” which did not appear in his earlier articles, and he attributes a distinctive goal to this progress. In addition, he combines “evolution” and the “goal” of that evolution with the idea of “instruction” which aims at the improvement of human beings. In consequence, this instruction aims at the acceleration of evolution. As we have seen, self-improvement as a means for the acceleration of evolution is of pivotal importance for Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution” (see Chapter 8). According to Row’s reading of the *Bhagavadgītā*, this “instruction” is based on a four-fold classification of the human constitution. These four

⁴¹⁸ Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man*, 83–84.

⁴¹⁹ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 4.

principles are those that are “capable of having separate existences, and [. . .] are associated with four *upadhis* which are further associated in their turn with four distinct states of consciousness.”⁴²⁰ The idea of consciousness is central to the notion of human progress in Row’s understanding of the matter. We have seen above that this idea also played a pivotal role not only in Besant’s notion of initiation but also in those of Blavatsky and Dvivedi. The term “consciousness” as it was recontextualized in the Theosophical Society came to be repeated in the Theosophical tradition. It is a culmination of the connection of several contemporary discursive fields. This was illustrated above (see Chapter 11) and will be highlighted further below.

12.8.4 The Fourfold Human Constitution and the Correspondence to Cosmology

The four principles in Row’s *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita* are defined as:

- 1) “The physical body”
- 2) “The *sukushma sarira*”
- 3) “*Karana sarira*”
- 4) “The light of the Logos”⁴²¹

Row explains that these principles only become intelligible when related to cosmology. Following the logic of analogy,⁴²² he identifies four cosmic principles, each of which relates to the human *upadhis*. These are:

- 1) “Parabrahmam”
- 2) “Mulaprakriti”
- 3) “The Logos”
- 4) “*Daivaprakriti*”⁴²³

As he explains: “*Parabrahmam* [. . .] is not ego, it is not non-ego, nor is it consciousness.”⁴²⁴ Following a traditional approach, Row “defines” Parabrahmam

⁴²⁰ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 5.

⁴²¹ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 18–19.

⁴²² This again reminds us of Faivre (Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*, 12–13). Although I would argue, drawing on my idea of tradition, that these claims are not the same, but rather part of multifaceted hybridization processes and only retrospectively homogenized – or better, relationized.

⁴²³ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 13–14.

⁴²⁴ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 7.

only ex nihilo, showing that it is devoid of any attributes.⁴²⁵ Parabrahmam is unknowable and therefore is not a suitable basis for a guide concerned with practical advice. It is not philosophical speculation that Row is interested in here, but practical advice, and this is why he dismisses Parabrahman as a subject of investigation.

The second principle, the Logos, is “the [first] ego in the cosmos, and every other ego and every other self [. . .] is but its reflection it is not unknowable as Parabrahmam [. . .] It is the one great mystery in the cosmos, with reference to which all the initiations and all the systems of philosophy have been devised.”⁴²⁶ The Logos is the “first ego,” and this is connected to an idea of differentiation, in contrast to *brahman*’s undifferentiated nature. This is why “all the initiations”⁴²⁷ can only refer to the Logos, because the Logos can be known. Row’s aim is to understand the relation of the Logos to the individual, and it is the investigation and understanding of this relation that Row understands as initiation. For this reason, he endeavors to describe the Logos in more detail. He insists that:

It [the centre of spiritual energy – the Logos] is not material or physical in its constitution, and it is not objective; it is not different in substance, as it were, or in essence, from *Parabrahmam*, and yet at the same time it is different from it in having an individualized existence. [. . .] It is often described in our books as *satchidanandam*, and by this epithet you must understand that it is *sat*, and that it is *chit* and *anandam*.⁴²⁸

Row attributes *saccidānanda* to the Logos here. This is an unusual step, as these concepts are normally associated with *brahman*, albeit only as an attitude towards *brahman*, since *brahman* itself is understood as devoid of any attributes.⁴²⁹

425 This reminds us of the *neti neti* – and many of Row’s readers and listeners probably understood the reference – of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*. *Neti neti* (not this, not this) stands for the impossibility of knowing *brahman* (Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 65), for knowing *brahman* would mean that *brahman* is not the knower and therefore not the underlying principle of everything. That which can be known in the Advaita tradition must be *māyā*; only the knower is *vidyā*. Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 55–60.

426 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 8.

427 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 8.

428 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 9.

429 Eliot Deutsch, *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1973), 9–10.

12.8.5 Excursus: Satchidanandam Instead of Saccidānanda

It is interesting to note that Row writes *satchidanandam* instead of *saccidānanda*, as the rules of sandhis would suggest.⁴³⁰ In Devanagari, *saccidānanda* is written as सच्चिदानन्द. In most examples of early Indologist publications, it is transliterated in a way that differs from that of Row, for example “Sa´c-cid-ānanda”⁴³¹ or “Sach chid ānandam.”⁴³² Wilson’s rendering might explain the transliteration of “ch” instead of “c,” which are distinguished from one another in the Devanagari script (छ for “ch” and च for “c”), although the difference is only the aspiration in their pronunciation. In addition, two further points must be remembered. 1) Sanskrit can be written in a number of different scripts, and in the case of T. Subba Row it is plausible that he used a Bengali, Telugu or Tamil edition of the *Bhagavadgītā*. The later would explain the “m” at the end of *satchidanandam*. 2) The conventions for transliteration were not as fixed as they are today, so it was not unusual to find several different renderings of the same word in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publications on Indian thought. Max Müller, for instance, suggested in his 1866 *A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners* that च् and छ should be transliterated as “ch” and “chh,” respectively.⁴³³ In a later edition of his *A Sanskrit Grammar*, he suggested transliterating the same letters as “k” and “kh.”⁴³⁴ Monier-Williams discussed the system of transliteration in his Sanskrit dictionary. His comments were directed against, among others, the transliteration adopted by Müller in *The Sacred Books of the East*.⁴³⁵ In 1890, Monier-Williams suggested a system of transliteration that was very close to

430 See §26, §27, and §39 in Adolf Friedrich Stenzler et al., *Elementarbuch der Sanskrit-Sprache: Grammatik, Texte, Wörterbuch*, 19th rev. enl. ed., De-Gruyter-Lehrbuch (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), Fortgeführt von Richard Pischel. Umgearbeitet von Karl F. Geldner. 19., durchgesehene und verbesserte Auflage von Albrecht Wezler, 9, 12.

431 Monier-Williams, *Hinduism*, 52, 195, 204.

432 Horace Hayman Wilson, *Vishṇu Purāṇa: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*, Works by the Late Horace Hayman Wilson Vol. II (London: Trübner & Co., 1865), Translated From the Original Sanskrit, and Illustrated by Notes Derived Chiefly From Other Puraṇas, 90.

433 Friedrich Max Müller, *A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners: In Devanāgarī and Roman Letters Throughout*, Handbooks for the Study of Sanskrit IV (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866), 2.

434 Friedrich Max Müller, *A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners: New and Abridged Edition Accented and Transliterated Throughout with a Chapter on Syntax and an Appendix on Classical Metres* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886), 4.

435 Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, xxii–xxxii.

the system which is often used nowadays in scholarly publications.⁴³⁶ The modern standard was introduced at the Tenth International Congress of Orientalists, held in Geneva in 1895,⁴³⁷ although this certainly does not mean that the system was adopted globally and immediately, especially in India, where there was a long tradition of transliteration into several alphabets.

Nevertheless, Row’s rendering is remarkable for our present purposes because it can be found in several Theosophical publications, and this makes it highly plausible that Row took Dvivedi as his model. This particular usage – devoid the “m” at the end – can be found, for example, in Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga*,⁴³⁸ with the rendering later appearing in Besant’s works as well,⁴³⁹ and also in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*,⁴⁴⁰ which will be the main concern of the next chapter. I suggest that the line of reception of this rendering of *satchidananda* can be traced from Dvivedi to Row and from Row onwards to the post-Blavatskyan era of the Theosophical Society.

12.8.6 The Question of the Individuality of the Logos: Theistic Advaita Vedānta as Theosophical “Hinduism”

The question of the dissolution of individuality seems to be an important issue for Row. As Neufeldt observes, Row developed a concept of individual *mokṣa*, liberation from reincarnation through the achieving of unity with *brahman* while still maintaining one’s own individuality.⁴⁴¹ This position marks a shift in Row’s conception of Advaita Vedānta. In his early writings, the individual, equated with *ahaṃkāra*, perished when it became united with the higher principle.⁴⁴² In his later writings, the individual remains an individual while attaining divinity.⁴⁴³ The

436 Monier Monier-Williams, “The Duty of English-Speaking Orientalists in Regard to United Action in Adhering Generally to Sir William Jones’s Principles of Transliteration, Especially in the Case of Indian Languages; with a Proposal for Promoting a Uniform International Method of Transliteration so Far at Least as May Be Applicable to Proper Names,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* Jul. (1890): 607–29.

437 Barbier de Meynard et al., “Tenth International Congress of Orientalists, Held at Geneva: Report of the Transliteration Committee,” *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* Oct. (1895): 879–92.

438 “*Satchidānanda*,” Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, second part, 9.

439 E.g., Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 17–18.

440 E.g., Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 72.

441 Neufeldt, “A Lesson in Allegory,” 15.

442 Row, “The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man,” 96–97.

443 Neufeldt, “A Lesson in Allegory,” 15.

attributes ascribed by Row to the Logos point to an entity which, although “not different in [. . .] essence,”⁴⁴⁴ is differentiated from *Parabrahmam*.⁴⁴⁵ If this is correct, this would indicate a specific understanding of “Hinduism” as theistic Advaita Vedānta. That this was indeed Row’s view is further suggested by his argument that the Logos is a “personal God”⁴⁴⁶ and that there exist almost innumerable Logoi in *Parabrahmam*, an argument that points to the individualistic dimension of his conception of Advaita Vedānta. Row maintains that the Logos “has consciousness and an individuality of its own. I may as well say that it is the only *personal* God [. . .] There are innumerable others. Their number is almost infinite.”⁴⁴⁷ The connection between Row’s individualizing tendency and the theistic emphasis seems to undermine the claim of non-duality.⁴⁴⁸ As mentioned above, these individual logoi are Parabrahmam in essence but have their own individuality which they maintain even in a *mahapralaya*, and this means that they are different from the mere manifestations of Parabrahmam.

Row explains that the third manifestation of Parabrahmam is “the light of the logos,” which is the principle that is in every human being. “*Parabrahmam*, after having appeared [Row explains] on the one hand as the ego, and on the other as *Mulaprakṛiti*, acts as the one energy through the *Logos*.”⁴⁴⁹ This “energy” or “Light from the Logos”⁴⁵⁰ is responsible for the consciousness within man and is the driving force of evolution working on *mūlaprakṛiti*. This force works through all the kingdoms (mineral, plant, and animal) and becomes more and more differentiated. In working through the three kingdoms, consciousness evolves and “by the time we reach man, this light becomes differentiated and forms that centre or ego that gives rise to all the mental and physical progress that we see in the process of cosmic evolution.”⁴⁵¹ In man, “this one light becomes differentiated into certain monads, and hence individuality is fixed.”⁴⁵² In this process the four

444 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 9.

445 Parabrahman refers here to the notion used by Row, instead of to *brahman* in general.

446 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 34.

447 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 9.

448 “Advaita” means “not-two.” It is important to understand that it distinctively means “not-two” and not “one.” “One” would suggest that there might be something else or that “one” is some kind of beginning, but there is no such thing in the view of Advaita Vedānta. For Advaita Vedānta, *brahman* is all there is and is, therefore, the only “reality.” Everything apart from that is mere illusion. Arvind Sharma, *Advaita Vedānta: An Introduction* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004), 3–13.

449 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 10.

450 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 11.

451 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 17.

452 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 17.

principles or bodies are formed. When instantiated in these bodies, the consciousness assumes itself to be an individual, an independent entity, but, Row claims, this is merely “delusive [. . .] because the real self is the *Logos* itself, and what is generally considered as the ego is but its reflection.”⁴⁵³ The reflections in the bodies only assume that they are independent entities. The goal, described by Row, is to transfer the consciousness upwards through the bodies in order to realize the delusive nature of bodily individuality. In other words, the goal is to expand one’s own consciousness so that it becomes co-extensive with the consciousness of the *Logos*. On first sight, this might seem to indicate the dissolution of individuality. However, as I will argue below, in Row’s conception no ultimate dissolution takes place.

12.8.7 The Karana Sarira

Row explains that there are several planes connected to the bodies of man. Row maintains that, among the human bodies, “the *karana sarira* is the most important. It is so because it is in that that the higher individuality of man exists. Birth after birth a new physical body comes into existence, and perishes when earthly life is over.”⁴⁵⁴ The *karana sarira* on the other hand is the permanent principle, which is “like so many beads strung on a thread, successive personalities are strung on this *karana sarira*, as the individual passes through incarnation after incarnation.”⁴⁵⁵ It is the place where experiences can be accumulated and thus the principle that makes progress possible. It follows from this that it is the main body that has to be developed in order for one to merge into the *Logos*.⁴⁵⁶ As noted above, this idea was also advanced by Cooper-Oakley and is a pivotal point in Besant’s concept of evolution.⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵³ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 20.

⁴⁵⁴ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 25.

⁴⁵⁵ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 25.

⁴⁵⁶ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 12–26.

⁴⁵⁷ E.g., Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, 63–64. Here she explains that the “causal body” is the body in which all experiences are stored. These experiences are then processed in *devachan* in order that they might be evolved into new faculties when one reincarnates. See also Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 170–71.

12.8.8 Voluntary Actions as *Karma*: *Bhakti* and the Purpose of Evolution

When the stage of humanity is reached in the process of evolution, Row postulates, it becomes possible for individuals to act deliberately. This is the key to any further evolution.

When once that plane of consciousness is reached in the path of progress that includes the voluntary actions of man, it will be seen that those voluntary actions not only preserve the individuality of the *karana sarira* but render it more and more definite, [. . .] So in one sense the *karana sarira* is the result of karmic impulses. It is the child, of *Karma* as it were.⁴⁵⁸

“Voluntary actions”⁴⁵⁹ – also called *karma* in Row’s writings – can influence evolution. Row maintains that there were “special rules [which] can be prescribed for his guidance that are likely to render his evolutionary progress more rapid than it would otherwise be.”⁴⁶⁰ Man should thus

wholly devote his attention and worship to the one true *Logos* accepted by every true and great religion in the world, as that alone can lead a man safely along the true moral path, and enable him to rise higher and higher, until he lives in it as an immortal being, as the manifested *Eswara* of the cosmos, and as the source, if necessary, of spiritual enlightenment to generations to come.⁴⁶¹

Row connects his theistic Advaita Vedānta to *bhakti*⁴⁶² – “devote his attention and worship” – and rules of conduct – “the true moral path.” This process culminates in one becoming “an immortal being”, an “*Eswara*,” who can be a source of help for humanity as a whole. Row maintains that “it is towards this end, which may be hastened in certain cases, that all evolution is tending.”⁴⁶³ All of these motifs relating to voluntary action were to reappear in Besant’s discussions of her similar concept of the “Quickening of Evolution.”⁴⁶⁴

458 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 27.

459 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 27.

460 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 27.

461 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 31.

462 *Bhakti* is often simply translated as “devotion.” As in every manifestation of Hindu religiosity, there are many different expressions of *bhakti* and the ritual and practices connected to it. See Narayanan, “Bhakti”. There are also writings which include *bhakti* practices in the Advaita Vedānta tradition, most famously the writings of Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī. For information on Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī’s concept of *bhakti*, see Lance Nelson, “The Ontology of ‘Bhakti’: Devotion as ‘Paramapuruṣārtha’ in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and Madhusūdāna Sarasvatī,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2004): 361–88.

463 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 31.

464 In Besant’s concept, however, becoming an Īśvara is of less importance, but the motif of self-development in order to help others is ubiquitous. See, e.g., Besant, “General Presentation

12.8.9 The Way Back to the Logos: Acceleration of Evolution and Initiation

Row argues that the *Logos* is present in human beings as light that had been emanated by it. This light tries to return to the Logos during the process of evolution. It is in this process that the *Upadhis* are perfected. Row maintains that,

all the initiations that man ever invented were invented for the purpose of giving men a clear idea of the *Logos*, to point out the goal, and to lay down rules by which it is possible to facilitate the approach to the end towards which nature is constantly working. These are the premises from which Krishna starts. Whether by express statements, or by necessary implications, all these propositions are present in this book [the *Bhagavadgītā*], and, taking his stand on these fundamental propositions, Krishna proceeds to construct his practical theory of life.⁴⁶⁵

The goal of evolution for Row is for the individual to “perceive and recognise his *Logos*,”⁴⁶⁶ and initiation is introduced as the way to reach that goal. The next step after the introduction of initiation was to attain unity with the *Logos* and become a *mukta*. As Row explains, for “every man who becomes a *Mukta* there is a union with the *Logos*. [. . .] In the generality of cases, this association of the soul with the *Logos* is only completed after death.”⁴⁶⁷

12.8.10 Union with the Logos as the Goal of Evolution: The Becoming of an Individual *Eswara*

In his third lecture, Subba Row examines the relation between Parabrahmam, Logos, and the individual in connection to the union with the Logos and the possibilities of rebirth after this union. Row elaborates his individualistic position here, claiming the eternal individuality of the Logoi residing in Parabrahma. Krishna, we read,

is a manifestation of *Parabrahmam*, as every *Logos* is. [. . .] This statement is at the bottom of all Adwaiti philosophy, but is very often misunderstood when Adwaitis say ‘*Aham*

of Theosophy to the Parliament,” 162; Annie Besant, “Theosophy and Its Practical Application,” *Lucifer* Vol. XII, no. 70 (1893): 313; Besant, *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul*, 54; Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, 34–35; Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, 106; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 47; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 188; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 10; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 48; Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 36. These passages are just a few of the many relevant examples.

⁴⁶⁵ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 32.

⁴⁶⁶ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 32.

⁴⁶⁷ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 34.

eva Parabrahmam,' they do not mean to say that this *ahañkaram* (egotism) is *Parabrahmam*, but that the only true *self* in the cosmos which is the *Logos* or *Pratyagatma*,⁴⁶⁸ is a manifestation of *Parabrahmam*.⁴⁶⁹

We can see here how Row demarcates the individual from *brahman*: The individual is a manifestation of *brahman* but is still separated from it.

The *Logos* is the main object of Row's investigation because the *Logos*, or rather the "Light" coming from the *Logos*, manifests itself in human beings. According to Row, union with the *Logos* is the goal of human evolution. However, union with the *Logos* is not union with *Parabrahmam*; *Parabrahmam* is reached through the *Logos*, but there can be no union with it. This is the key concept in Row's world view. Union with the *Logos* is the purpose of life, according to Row, and it benefits all of humanity, because "whenever any particular individual reaches the highest state of spiritual culture [. . .] there is as it were, a sort of reaction emanating from that *Logos* for the good of humanity."⁴⁷⁰ This notion is closely linked to the Theosophical idea of the Mahatmas and the work they do for the good of humanity.⁴⁷¹

So, in the case of a human being who has developed an unselfish love for humanity in himself. He unites his highest qualities with the *Logos*, and, when the time of the final union comes, generates in it an impulse to incarnate for the good of humanity. Even when it does not actually incarnate, it sends down its influence for the good of mankind. [. . .] Every Mahatma who joins his soul with the *Logos* is thus a source of immense power for the good of humanity in after generations.⁴⁷²

468 Monier-Williams translates this term as "concerning the personal soul or self" and gives the *Rāmāyaṇa* as reference (Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 675). It is a compound of *prati* + *vañc* + *ātma*. Here it could be translated as "that which concerns the true self." It is, however, unclear what exactly Row means by this and why he uses the term here. In Row's text it would make much more sense to write *pratyagātman*, which could then be translated as "the individual soul," or simply as "the individual" (Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, 675). Monier-Williams, gives among others, the *Vedantasara* and the *Kathopanisad* as references for the occurrence of *pratyagātman*. Both works are likely to be sources for Row's idea of the *pratyagātman*.

469 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 40.

470 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 47.

471 Similarly, Sharpe: "The *Gita*, then, is 'the book of the philosophy of the *Logos*'. Krishna actually is the *Logos*, descending to the plane of the soul in order to accomplish some great purpose. And spiritual development and progress actually entitled one to a union with the *Logos*, and then 'there is, as it were, a sort of reaction emanating from the *Logos* for the good of humanity' – though this does not appear to be central, when compared with personal spiritual culture." Sharpe, *The Universal Gītā*, 92. What can be seen, however is that Sharpe does not make a connection to the Theosophical Mahatmas.

472 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 50.

The ideal of helping humanity by constant self-improvement with the goal of uniting oneself with the Logos is here said again to be the summum bonum for all humans, a status that is connected to the idea of love for humanity. This union is not annihilation, Row affirms. The main point of objection for Row is the loss of individuality, since in his view individuality is pivotal to achieving a right understanding of the *Bhagavadgītā*. Union is attained by focusing on “the light of the Logos” which is “the Holy Ghost that seems to form the flesh and blood of the divine Christ.”⁴⁷³ When this union is established, the individuality of men is not lost but is, rather, enriched by the Logos and the Logos is likewise enriched by the individual with which it is united.

Row compares the union with the Logos to what he describes as the merging of several individuals of successive incarnations into the *Karana Sarira*. He admits that after being united with the Logos, the “original” individual is lost, in the sense that the former individual incorporates all the experiences of the Logos and similarly passes on its gathered experiences to the Logos. This is why, when a human being is close to union, the Logos will take a personal interest in the development of that individual. For the individual, this union feels like another combination of experiences, similar to the combination of experiences that take place between two reincarnations. “A man who is absorbed into it [the Logos] becomes an immortal, spiritual being, a real *Eswara* in the cosmos, never to be reborn, and never again to be subject to the pains and pleasure of human life.”⁴⁷⁴ In this way, Row explains, the prior individual will never incarnate again but will send out its Light and therefore be reborn within new individuals. This aspect of the process was of considerable importance to Row, because it establishes that a Logos will never perish, not even in a cosmic dissolution (*pralaya*). This means that all human beings who are absorbed into the Logos become Logoi themselves while still retaining their individuality. Although a Logos may “sleep in the bosom of *Pararahmam*”⁴⁷⁵ for a time, when it wakes again evolution starts anew.

12.8.11 Concluding Remarks and Relationizings

Turning to address his audience directly, Row concludes:

Our Society stands upon an altogether unsectarian basis; we sympathize with every religion, but not with every abuse that exists under the guise of religion; and while sympathizing

⁴⁷³ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 54.

⁴⁷⁴ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 58.

⁴⁷⁵ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 62.

with every religion and making the best efforts we can for the purpose of recovering the common foundations that underlie all religious beliefs, it ought to be the duty of every one of us to try to enlighten our own countrymen on the philosophy of religion, and endeavour to lead them back to a purer faith – a faith which, no doubt, did exist in former times, but which now lives but in name or in the pages of forgotten books.⁴⁷⁶

Row here claims the authority to speak for the Theosophical Society as a whole, for “our Society.” The identification of the Society’s “unsectarian basis” is another instance in which a claimed tolerance, based on the view that “common foundations [. . .] underlie all religious beliefs,” is presented as foundational for the Theosophical world view. Simultaneously, Row’s theistic *bhakti* Advaita Vedānta is presented as “a purer faith,” which can be read as a reference to the ancient wisdom religion. By making these points, Row relationizes his Advaita Vedānta hierarchically in relation to Theosophy and claims its superiority. This positioning also fits well with Chatterji’s classicist argument (see Chapter 5) and likewise has a nationalistic undertone connected to the colonialist topos of a civilizing mission (“enlighten our own countrymen”).

12.9 The Aftermath of Row’s *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*: Relationalization contra Row and his Resignation from the Theosophical Society

In 1887, following the publication of Row’s lectures on the *Bhagavadgītā*, a flood of articles, short notes, and comments appeared in *The Theosophist*. The protagonists in this debate, who fought fiercely against one another, were Blavatsky and Subba Row. Blavatsky criticized Row for having abandoned the sevenfold constitution of man. In two articles published during this period, Row reacted directly to Blavatsky’s critique. He writes:

Madame H. P. Blavatsky which appeared in the last issue of this Journal under the heading of ‘Classification of Principles.’ This reply was apparently intended to explain away the remarks which fell from my lips and justify the classification hitherto advocated. I feel extremely thankful to the writer for the friendly tone of criticism which she has adopted. I cannot however fail to see that the line of argument which she has followed is likely to create a wrong impression in the minds of her readers regarding my real attitude in this matter without a few words of explanation on my part.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁶ Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*.

⁴⁷⁷ Tallapragada S. Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” *The Theosophist* VIII, no. 92 (1887): 504.

Row does not accept Blavatsky’s criticism and “clarification” here. Instead, he has it that “the difference of opinion between us is not merely apparent but real. Such being the case I am fully prepared to justify my assertions.”⁴⁷⁸ He continues by referring again to Blavatsky’s article, in which she claimed the correctness of the “original teaching.” Row remarks: “Any further discussion of the subject will of course be out of the question if it is asserted that I am not at liberty to question the correctness of the so-called ‘original teachings’.”⁴⁷⁹

In his first article, Row examines with great care the different Theosophical writings on the seven-fold constitution of man, with a special focus on the *Fragments of Occult Truth*, a series of articles published in *The Theosophist* between 1881 and 1883. These articles were probably the first attempt, other than Blavatsky’s in *Isis Unveiled*, to formulate a coherent teaching for the Theosophical Society. The first of these articles was written by W. H. Terry, “our esteemed Australian Brother Theosophist.”⁴⁸⁰ In this article we find one of the first tables explaining the sevenfold constitution of man, which is contrasted with the anthropological views of the “spiritists.” Row also refers to Sinnett’s *Esoteric Buddhism* and *Man: Fragments of Forgotten History* by two *Chelas* from 1885. Since this book does not focus on the differences between the various ideas of the human constitution put forward by Theosophists, I will not discuss Row’s argumentation in greater depth. Nevertheless, this debate is an interesting instance of the discursive dynamics within the Theosophical Society (see also Chapter 10). The subject of the human constitution seems to have been one of the pillars of Theosophical teaching, and around this topic questions of heterodoxy and orthodoxy crystallized.

Row writes that Blavatsky claimed “that they must either adopt the seven-fold classification or give up their adherence ‘to the old School of Aryan and Arhat adepts.’ I am indeed very sorry that she has thought it proper to assume this uncompromising attitude.”⁴⁸¹ He argues polemically that in his “humble opinion it would be highly dangerous for the future well-being and prosperity of the Theosophical Society, if it were to evolve, so early in its career, an orthodox creed.”⁴⁸² The term “orthodox” can be read here as a discursive strategy that seeks to marginalize the other position as unnecessarily dogmatic, aligning it with the rigidly doctrinaire “Christian orthodoxy” that was often identified as one of the main opponents of Theosophy. To put it another way, application of

478 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 505.

479 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 505.

480 W. H. Terry, “Fragments of Occult Truth,” *The Theosophist* 3, no. 1 (1881): 17.

481 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 505.

482 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 505–6.

the term “orthodox” aims at an epistemological hierarchizing of Blavatsky’s position, because the “right” position is the heterodoxy that accepts all religions as true on account of their genealogical foundation in the ancient wisdom religion.

Row’s attacks on Blavatsky become rougher in tone throughout the article. For example, he replies to Blavatsky’s argument that the understanding of the seven-fold constitution was at times misled by European materialism, by arguing that, if

the classification has misled no less a person than its original exponent herself, and made her change her conceptions about the nature of the various principles from time to time, it is pretty nearly certain that the classification itself must be held responsible for all the confusion it has created.⁴⁸³

He further declares that he is “not in the least afraid that by doing so [criticizing the seven-fold constitution of man] I shall forfeit my right to follow the teachings of ‘the old school of Aryan and Arhat adepts.’”⁴⁸⁴

In his second article, Row declares that Blavatsky’s seven-fold classification “is not the real esoteric classification.”⁴⁸⁵ However, he admits that the “real” classification is indeed sevenfold, but in accordance with the sevenfold division of the Logos, the “seven main branches of the ancient Wisdom-religion.”⁴⁸⁶ He explains that the “real” concept must be “allied to seven states of matter, and to seven forms of force. These principles are harmoniously arranged between two poles, which define the limits of *human* consciousness. It is abundantly clear [. . .] that the classification we have adopted [in the Theosophical Society up to this point] does not possess these requisites.”⁴⁸⁷

He concludes his article with the following words:

It will be a mere waste of time at present to explain the real seven-fold classification. There is not the slightest chance of my being heard. Time will show whether I was justified in my criticism or not. Personally I am not in the least interested whether the members of the Theosophical Society adhere to or reject the seven-fold classification. I have no desire of having a following of my own in the Society, or starting a separate branch for enforcing my own Views on the matter.⁴⁸⁸

The debate continued within the pages of *The Theosophist*, but it seems that Row did not write another word on the controversy, or if he did it was not printed in *The Theosophist* in any case. As we have seen above, Blavatsky refers

483 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 506.

484 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 506.

485 Tallapragada S. Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” *The Theosophist* VIII, no. 95 (1887): 705.

486 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 702.

487 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 706.

488 Row, “The Constitution of the Microcosm,” 706.

to Subba Row in her *The Secret Doctrine*. Nonetheless, it seems that this debate marked the end of the close collaboration between the pair, and it might even be the reason why Subba Row withdrew his offer of assistance with regard to the correcting and editing of *The Secret Doctrine*.⁴⁸⁹

One additional article ascribed to Subba Row appeared in *The Theosophist* several years later, in 1889. At the end of the piece, we read that “the foregoing is a summary of a discussion with Mr. T. Subba Row, B. A., B. L., at the Adyar Library, on the 1st December 1888.”⁴⁹⁰ It is therefore unclear to what extent the content of the article actually represents Row’s thought. In this article, the author discusses the hierarchy of the adepts. It is claimed here that there are seven classes of adepts distinguished in accordance with the seven rays of the Logos. The two highest classes of adepts are very rarely present on earth: “Perhaps one or two adepts of these mysterious orders appear every two or three thousand years. It is probable that Buddha and Sankarâchârya come under this category.”⁴⁹¹ Members of the five lower classes are believed to dwell on earth. The article also mentions two locations, the Himalayas and Southern India, where these adepts are said to reside. The geographical locations identified here refer to the two main sources of wisdom that were mentioned throughout Row’s writings: the Arhat adepts and the Aryan adepts. He writes that, “All five classes are represented in the Himâlayan school. At present, it is unlikely that all five are represented in Southern India.”⁴⁹² Next, the author turns to the idea of avatars, writing that when one of the highest adepts reincarnates through a medium on earth, this medium becomes their avatar. Avatars of those who have already achieved the highest levels of adepthood are contrasted with those who go through the evolutionary cycles to become higher adepts themselves.

It is probable that Sankarâchârya was such an incarnation [an avatar]. He was already a great adept when he was sixteen years old; at which time he wrote his great philosophical works. It seems that Gautama Buddha was not such an incarnation, as we see in him the actual life struggle of man striving to perfection, and not the fruition of a great soul who had already reached its goal. But in Sankarâcharya we see no such struggle; this is why we say he is a divine incarnation.⁴⁹³

Again, the two schools are contrasted to each other and it seems that the Aryan school is presented as the lesser of the two, as Śaṅkara is “only” an avatar.

489 Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*, 329.

490 Tallapragada S. Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” *The Theosophist* X, no. 112 (1889): 232.

491 Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” 228.

492 Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” 228.

493 Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” 228.

After laying out the different levels of adepts and their manifestations, the paths by which these states can be reached are discussed. The author begins by identifying nine states of consciousness (Figure 10).

Jagrat.	{	Jagrat.—Waking consciousness.
		Swapna.—Dreaming.
		Sushupti.—Dreamless sleep.
Swapna.	{	Jagrat.—Waking clairvoyance.
		Swapna.—Somnambulist clairvoyance.
		Sushupti.—Kama Loka.
Sushupti.	{	Jagrat.—Devachan.
		Swapna.—Between planets.
		Sushupti.—Between Rounds.

Figure 10: Nine states of consciousness according to T. Subba Row (Row 1889, 229).

These are only the “normal” states of consciousness, however. “Above these nine stages, come the true mystical states of consciousness, to which the adepts have access.”⁴⁹⁴ According to the author, one of the main aims of becoming an adept is the expansion of consciousness beyond any regular consciousness, something that takes place when the Individuality (or the *âtma* which is used as a synonym in this article) merges into the Logos. As in Row’s *Bhagavadgîtâ* commentary, this merging is not described as an annihilation of the individual but as “an almost infinite extension of individuality.”⁴⁹⁵ However, it is not possible to properly conceive of this merging as it is beyond the grasp of those who have not attained it. Only “after the last initiation, the adept thoroughly comprehends the relation of *âtma* with the *logos*, by which he obtains immortality: [. . .] it may take him several incarnations after the last initiation before he can merge in the *logos*”⁴⁹⁶ It is claimed that there are two different paths towards this goal.

The one is the steady natural path of progress through moral effort, and practise of the virtues. A natural, coherent, and sure growth of the soul is the result, a position of firm equilibrium is reached and maintained, which cannot be overthrown or shaken by any unexpected assault. It is the normal method followed by the vast mass of humanity, and this is the course Sankarâchârya recommended to all his Sannyasis and successors. The other road is the precipitous path of occultism, through a series of initiations. Only a few specially organised and peculiar natures are fit for this path.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁹⁴ Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” 229.

⁴⁹⁵ Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” 230.

⁴⁹⁶ Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” 231.

⁴⁹⁷ Row, “The Occultism of Southern India,” 231.

The article can be read in two ways. On the one hand, it might be assumed that it was written by Subba Row, which would mean that he was willing to admit that the Aryan teacher taught a method for the masses and that there was another tradition which taught the “real” occult truth to the few. This other tradition would then be that of the adepts in the Himalayas. However, I suggest that the article should rather be read in the light of the debate outlined above. On this account, the article would represent an attempt by Olcott – Blavatsky cannot be the one who talked with Subba Row at the Adyar Library in 1888, because she had left for Europe in the aftermath of the Hodgson Report years earlier – to bring together the different positions of Row and Blavatsky. That this is the case is strongly suggested by the usage of certain specific terms, especially “âtma,” which was rarely used by Row to refer to the individual. The article can therefore be read as an instance of “Western” Theosophists attempting to speak for an Indian member of the Society. It also, on this reading, hints towards the narrative that was later reproduced within scholarship on the Theosophical Society, the story that the society championed Buddhism and rather neglected Hindu traditions. As is often the case, the “truth” is likely to be somewhere in between.

12.10 Epilogue: Death and Obituary

Subba Row died in 1890 at the age of 34 after the rapid onset of an unidentified illness. Olcott wrote an obituary in the July issue of *The Theosophist* of the same year in which he referred to Row as a close friend who had been instrumental in the settling of the founders of the Theosophical Society at Adyar. He also briefly mentioned the controversy discussed above.

A dispute – due in a measure to third parties – which widened into a breach, arose between H. P. B. and himself about certain philosophical questions, but to the last he spoke of her, to us and to his family, in the old friendly way. [. . .] His interest in our movement was unabated to the last, he read the *Theosophist* regularly and was a subscriber to H. P. B.’s *Lucifer*.⁴⁹⁸

Olcott discussed Row’s “mystical knowledge,” which he showed only “after forming a connection with the Founders of the Theosophical Society”⁴⁹⁹ He described a change undergone by Row, after which he had access to a vast fund of knowledge.

⁴⁹⁸ Olcott, “Death of Subba Row,” 576.

⁴⁹⁹ Olcott, “Death of Subba Row,” 577.

It was as though a storehouse of occult experience, long forgotten, had been suddenly opened to him; recollections of his last preceding birth came in upon him: he recognized his Guru, and thenceforward held intercourse with him and other Mahatmas; with some, personally at our Head-quarters [!], with others elsewhere and by correspondence. He told his mother that H.P.B. was a great Yogi, and that he had seen many strange phenomena in her presence. His stored up knowledge of Sanskrit literature came back to him.⁵⁰⁰

This passage gives a lucid depiction of Subba Row's position within the Theosophical Society. He was irrefutably the Society's expert on Hindu thought, but the text here also frames his rediscovery of his ancient knowledge in the context of his activities as a Theosophist. However, if one reads through Subba Row's articles in their order of publication a somewhat different story emerges. It seems, rather, that Row gradually learned more and more about Hindu religion and occultism by reading contemporary literature, including the works of the early Orientalists mentioned in his article on the date of Śaṅkara's birth⁵⁰¹ and the Theosophical literature mentioned in his articles on the constitution of man.

The debate involving Row, the Swami of Almoora, and Blavatsky illustrates how the Theosophical world view was negotiated, and provides another background against which Besant's works must be read. In particular, the idea that the evolution of humans, individually and collectively, leads to their union with the Logos and an expansion of consciousness is of pivotal interest when seeking to understand Besant's concept of initiation as the key to the "Quickening of Evolution." As discussed above, Subba Row shaped an understanding of the *Bhagavadgītā* as a practical guide, which, when followed, leads to swifter progress in human evolution. The *Bhagavadgītā* played a key role in Row's later writings. However, in his earlier writings he did not refer to the *Gītā*, but laid stress, rather, on the interpretation of the *Upaniṣads* as his main source. Row's particular interpretation of "Hinduism" as individualized theistic *bhakti* Advaita Vedānta became one of the models for what was understood as "Hinduism" in the Theosophical Society. The resultant meshing of hybridization processes is instructive with regard to further developments in the Theosophical Society, especially the uptake by Annie Besant of the "Hinduism" that had been shaped in this way, which, as will be discussed below, served as the foundation for her implementation of religious education in the Central Hindu College.

⁵⁰⁰ Olcott, "Death of Subba Row," 577–78.

⁵⁰¹ Tallapragada S. Row, "Sri Sankaracharya's Date and Doctrine: Question VIII," 4, no. 12 (1883).

12.11 Preliminary Conclusion: T. Subba Row, Blavatsky and “Ausseralltäglichkeit”; Relationalization, Power Asymmetries, and Claiming Charismatic Authority

Subba Row’s early articles (12.3.1–12.3.7) point towards multiple processes of hybridization. A translation of Hindu concepts imported his Advaita Vedānta into the center of Theosophical thought where they were then recontextualized. For example, translating “Parabrahmam” as “(un)consciousness” related it to both Theosophy and European philosophy alike. In the succeeding relationalization, Row claimed the superiority of his Advaita Vedānta over both. The claims of the superiority of his philosophy over Theosophy initiated a decline in his status as an expert on “Hinduism” in the Society (see 12.5). Blavatsky’s attempt to close off the discourse proved to be more effective than Row’s claim of hegemony, regardless of the validity of the arguments on either side. This outcome points to the power asymmetry in the colonial discourse. Nevertheless, Row’s theistic *bhakti* Advaita Vedānta was still received in the Theosophical Society, a result that is indicative of the irreversibility of hybridization processes. However, while these processes cannot be reversed, the “already hybrids” can be rehybridized in ways that forge new and altered relations.

It is necessary to discuss the question of the power asymmetry between T. Subba Row and Blavatsky because – as was the case with Dvivedi’s absence from the Theosophical narrative and the shift from “Indian experts” to “Westerners” speaking for “Hinduism” – the subtleties of the argument between the two show that the analytical tool developed so far is not sensitive enough to include these dimensions. Several of the issues already discussed above may help to sharpen the analytical tool in this respect. First, the idea of relationizing helps us to understand that the relationizings establish hierarchies or try to eliminate differences by homogenization. However, this does not explain why Blavatsky was able to maintain her position against Subba Row. Krech’s discussion of Weber’s notion of charismatic leadership gives a hint to Blavatsky’s position here. Blavatsky successfully demonstrated “Ausseralltäglichkeit” in several instances and could therefore claim charismatic authority on this basis. One of these instances was the cup and saucers incidence at Shimla (see Chapter 5). Another claim of “Ausseralltäglichkeit” was the demonstration of the *siddhis* not only by Blavatsky herself but also by Besant, Leadbeater, and many other Theosophists.

Two different epistemological strategies prevailed in the Theosophical Society. The first was a philological or educational approach, while the second was a clairvoyant or evolutionary approach. The master narrative and the “Quickening of Evolution” provide the connection between the two. Through education, morality,

and the practice of (*rāja*)*yoga* – as well as other bodily practices, such as following special diets, etc. – one can quicken the process of evolution and develop higher faculties of perception (see Chapters 7 and 8).

The possession of yogic powers was important within the Theosophical Society and was connected to what Weber called charismatic leadership. Demonstrating the *siddhis* was a way of ensuring the “Ausseralltäglichkeit”⁵⁰² of the leader and imbuing him or her with authority. The prominence given to these abilities also provides an example of how “occult” expertise and expertise on “Hinduism” merged some time around 1890.

A second point that helps to explain why Blavatsky was able to maintain her hegemonic position towards Row can be described in terms of what Foucault calls the institutions of the discourse. What is meant by this is that the power of a discourse cannot be exercised only in utterances, but is based, rather, on its institutionalization.⁵⁰³ In the Theosophical Society, for example, Blavatsky, with the support of Olcott, also based her authority on these institutions and on her (and Olcott’s) office, drawing on what Weber describes as official authority.⁵⁰⁴ This points to one of the weaknesses in Bhabha’s concept of hybridization. Bhabha’s idea of hybridization seems to operate in a power vacuum, in the sense that hybridization appears to be a process of negotiation between equals. The reason for this is that Bhabha’s focus lies on the level of discourse. Bhabha explains that,

Strategies of hybridization reveal an estranging movement in the ‘authoritative’, even authoritarian inscription of the cultural sign. At the point at which the precept attempts to objectify itself as a generalized knowledge or a normalizing, hegemonic practice, the hybrid strategy or discourse opens up a space of negotiation where power is unequal but its articulation may be equivocal.⁵⁰⁵

This explains not only the disruption of power asymmetry in processes of hybridization but also indicates the fragility of that power. This disruption disturbs the discourse and opens up the possibility of recontextualizing the minority position in the hegemonic discourse. This is a result that is based on the submission of the minority to this discourse which, at the same time, also enables them to resist

502 Weber, Max and 1864–1920, *Grundriss der Sozialökonomie III. Abteilung*, 140–43.

503 Keller, *Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse*, 127; Foucault, *Überwachen und Strafen*.

504 Weber, Max and 1864–1920, *Grundriss der Sozialökonomie III. Abteilung*, 128. Similar claims have repeatedly been made in the research on Theosophy – the role of the *siddhis* has, however, so far been mostly neglected. See, e.g., Wessinger Lowman, “The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar)”; Tim Rudbøg, “Helena Petrovna Blavatsky’s Esoteric Tradition,” in *Constructing Tradition: Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism*, ed. Andreas B. Kilcher, Aries Book Series (2010); Viswanathan, “Theosophical Society”.

505 Bhabha, “Culture’s In-Between,” 58.

it. Bhabha calls this “the power of tradition,”⁵⁰⁶ and the same idea was recognized by Althusser who described it using the term “interpellation,” which likewise demands submission to the discourse but establishes the subject in this discourse and therefore allows it its agency.⁵⁰⁷ Bhabha’s concern is not “power,” but its fragility. The realization of this fragility on the part of the colonizer leads to an “anxiety” which is intrinsic to strategies of power, such as the deployment of stereotypes within the hegemonic discourse, because these strategies cannot be totalized.⁵⁰⁸ This leads to the constant “anxiety” that the hegemonic discourse might collapse. The colonial discourse thus oscillates between the attempt to homogenize the other and make it one’s own, on the one hand, and being constantly menaced by the possibility that this attempt might be a success and might, thus, destroy the difference between “self” and “other.”⁵⁰⁹ In the case of relationalization, this menace is particularly striking because the “other” deploys the strategies of the hegemonic discourse based on the “power of tradition” while claiming its own hegemony in this discourse. In the case of Row, he deployed such a strategy towards Blavatsky in a way that menaced her position. However, the power asymmetry derived from her authority enabled her to defend her hegemonic position. Understood from this perspective, Row’s strategy was successful because it disturbed the discourse in such a way that Blavatsky was herself forced to deploy a strategy of relationalization in order to secure her position. The relationizings on the textual level refer to the power asymmetry whereas the relations that are established through this process of hybridization are to be conceptualized as part of the discursive structure. These two levels must be distinguished from one another if we are to avoid falling into the trap of understanding hybridization as being devoid of power relations.

In the last chapter, these power asymmetries and the meshing of multifaceted processes of hybridization will be discussed in the context of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*. A final theoretical consideration will be provided at the end of Chapter 13 (see Chapter 4.6).

506 Bhabha, “Introduction,” 3.

507 Louis Althusser, *Ideologie und Ideologische Staatsapparate: Aufsätze zur marxistischen Theorie*, Positionen (Hamburg, Westberlin: VSA, 1977), 142.

508 Homi K. Bhabha, “Sly Civility,” in Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 143.

509 Bhabha, “Of Mimicry and Man,” 131.

V The “Quickening of Evolution” 2: The Pedagogy of Morality Based on the Stages of Initiation

Together with the Indian Theosophist Bhagavan Das, Besant founded the Central Hindu College (CHC), Benares, in 1898. Seventeen years later, in 1915, the college became the nucleus of the Benares Hindu University. During this period between 1899 and 1903, three textbooks and two story books were published, and a college magazine was founded that continued until the CHC merged into its larger successor. These institutions and publications formed part of a widespread Theosophical educational system which was in turn integrated within the colonial educational system.

13 The “Quickening of Evolution”: Education for Initiation in the Central Hindu College and the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*

The 19th century saw an attempt by European states to monopolize education within their borders, a refashioning of the educational system that was consequently exported to the colonies. This process began in the 18th century in France, in the wake of the European enlightenment, and was then pioneered by Austria, Prussia, and Russia. The goal was to establish an idea of belonging that was centered around similar language groups, as well as a sense of communality connected to the emerging nationalism.¹ This was in no way a homogeneous development either within or across nations, and several other stakeholders besides the state also provided educational facilities. Most notable among these were the institutions of Christian education organized by various churches, monastic societies, and private associations, in both the colonies² and in Europe.³ The educational landscape in India in this period, and in Benares in particular, provides a paradigmatic example of the diversity of educational programs which existed before, and often continued alongside, the new state schools.⁴ All social strata in Benares had their own systems of education, which were often exclusive institutions bound by caste and religion. The Indian pandits, representing the brahmanical caste, controlled the Sanskrit schools which were meant for the education of brahmans. The merchants, mostly vaishyas, had their own vocational schools, and Muslims, again, had institutions of their own.

The institutionalization of state education had a great impact on the idea of what constituted valid and useful knowledge. This was henceforth defined by the state, resulting in local, non-state, knowledge being marginalized. The British education system in India was a vocational system: Although it claimed to provide a “liberal education,” it was actually intended to educate clerks for the British colonial administration. It failed in its claimed attempt to provide mass

1 Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, 61–62. For the expansion of university education, see Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 1132–47. For the process of the institutionalization of university education in Europe and abroad, see Pietsch Tamson, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 1–90.

2 Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, 343–51.

3 Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt*, 1121.

4 Nita Kumar, *Lessons from Schools: The History of Education in Banaras* (New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage, 2000), 14.

education, since it was unable to provide sufficient schools for every Indian pupil. In addition, positions in the administration of the British Raj were restricted in quantity and quality, so the educational system would have been unable to ensure the ability of all to participate equally in the economy even if it had achieved a universal reach. This lack of capacity left open a space for Indian educators to establish their own schools. As long as they taught the full curriculum of the English schools, they were free to offer additional courses in Indian religion and culture. However, since these courses were additional and often optional, they were frequently perceived as being less important than the compulsory courses and were thus often attended by only a few pupils.⁵

English education was at first not seen by all Indians as the right instrument for education, because it did not provide the vocational education needed for the traditional professions of the brahmins, the merchants, and the craftsmen. Kumar explains that, as a result, only a thin stratum of Indian society opted for an English education. Amongst those who chose this option in Benares were the Agarwallas, and the family of Madhav Das, in particular, to which Bhagavan Das belonged. The family were rich merchants who could afford to live off their fortune and who initially educated their children at home. Numerous, mostly caste-bound, societies were later to found their own schools. To a great extent, these focused on providing an English education because it was, on the one hand, mandatory if the institution wished to gain state support, while, on the other hand, it was perceived as “progressive” in contrast to traditional “backward” Indian ways. As a consequence of the spread of English education and the perception of its “progressive” nature, traditional systems of education were marginalized and lost their importance, to a certain degree at least.⁶

It was in this milieu that the Central Hindu College was founded. Its founders included both Indians and non-Indians, with sometimes overlapping and sometimes concurring agendas. The college made religious instruction compulsory and attempted to combine “Western” education with classical Indian education in Sanskrit and Indian philosophy and religion. It can be understood as a structure in which numerous encounters took place and in which many potential connections among discursive fields were realized.

⁵ Kumar, *Lessons from Schools*, 14–37.

⁶ Kumar, *Lessons from Schools*, 38–83.

13.1 The *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* and the Central Hindu College in the Research on Theosophy: Sources and Dispositions

The importance of the Central Hindu College and the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* for Theosophy and the wider context of colonial India is generally acknowledged.⁷ However, a detailed study of the history of the college, and detailed studies of the editing and writing process, as well as the content, of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* remain research desiderata. The following chapter tries to partially fill this void by discussing in detail the ethics expounded in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* and interpreting them against the background of the “Quickening of Evolution” as elaborated in Annie Besant’s Theosophy (see Chapter 8). I argue that the *Sanātana Dharma Texts Books* were written as books of initiation and that the ethics therein are based on the preliminary stages of initiation.

In the following, I will sketch the history of the Central Hindu College and discuss the major scholarly problems in relation to the writing, editing, and publishing process of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*. This will provide the background against which the subsequent analysis of the ethics expounded therein will be understood. Most of the information given in the following section is drawn from the few accounts found in secondary sources. The main resource for the history of the college is Arthur Nethercot’s biography of Annie Besant.⁸ Some additional information based on primary sources can be found in Anne Taylor’s biography of Besant.⁹ She based her account *grosso modo* on information found in the *Central Hindu*

7 Wessinger Lowman, *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*, 223–29; John S. Hawley, “Sanātana Dhrama as the Twentieth Century Began: Two Textbooks, Two Languages,” in *Ancient to Modern: Religion, Power, and Community in India*, ed. Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 314; Johnson, *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*, 197; Raj Kumar, Rameshwari Devi and Romila Pruthi, *Annie Besant: Founder of Home Rule Movement* (Jaipur: Pointer Publishers, 2003), 13–14; Malinar, “Karmic Histories and Synthesis of ‘East’ and ‘West’,” 65; Moritz, “Globalizing ‘sacred Knowledge’,” 216–17; Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 15–212.

8 Nethercot’s work is still the most exhaustive biography on Annie Besant. However, one of the problems with Nethercot’s biography is that he does not reference his information properly. Some of his information is drawn from *The Central Hindu College Magazine* but he also draws on interviews and other sources which are not referenced, and it is thus often impossible to verify his sources. Later work, especially that of Catherine Wessinger, is almost entirely based on Nethercot’s text.

9 Pécastaing-Boissière’s biography of Annie Besant also does not provide any new information on the Central Hindu College. Although, she does not refer to Nethercot in her account but bases her description almost exclusively on other secondary sources.

College Magazine, which is one of the main sources for the college's history. Almost all the issues of the magazine are preserved in Varanasi in the library of the Indian section of the Theosophical Society. Unfortunately, the collection is in very bad shape and pages are sometimes missing, as I discovered when I had the opportunity to consult these issues during a visit to Varanasi in December 2017.¹⁰ Other accounts which are largely first-hand can be found in 1) the memories of Sri Prakasa, son of Bhagavan Das, about Annie Besant and his education at the Central Hindu College.¹¹ 2) *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, edited by James Cousins, which includes several articles written by close co-workers of Besant during her time in Benares. 3) Ester Bright's *Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant*, which contains several of Besant's letters to the author, the daughter of Ursula Bright, one of Besant's major sponsors, as well as the author's memories of Besant.

Details concerning the events that led to the establishment of the Benares Hindu University (henceforth BHU) can be found in the works of Jürgen Lütt and Leah Renold on the establishment of the BHU and in Nita Kumar's broader work on education in Benares. These three secondary sources focus neither on Annie Besant nor on Theosophy, and are, in consequence, mostly blind to, or uninterested in, any Theosophical dimensions in the content of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. Similarly, Nethercot, Wessinger, and Taylor do not analyze the content of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* and do not, therefore, interpret them as products of the wider Theosophical milieu. In the following I will confine myself to a short overview of the history of the CHC with a focus on the religious instruction offered there. A comprehensive history of the college remains to be written.

13.2 A Brief History of the Central Hindu College

The idea for a Hindu college in Benares was first promoted by Besant some time around 1895, and she began to raise funds for such an institution on her tour through India in late 1896 and early 1897. Besant's engagement with Benares in general, and with the Central Hindu College project in particular, was supported by Upendranath Basu, the general secretary of the Indian section,

¹⁰ I thank Pradeep H Gohil, Mr. Mishra, and the staff of the library for their warm reception and support. I also thank all the other members of the Indian section with whom I have had the chance to converse in Hindi and to therefore improve my speaking skills. I have some especially fond memories of the gate keeper who allowed me to sit by his fire every night when I returned from my Hindi lessons – it was very cold in Varanasi during the days I spent there.

¹¹ Sri Prakasa, *Annie Besant*, Bhavan's Book University 24 (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1954), ix.

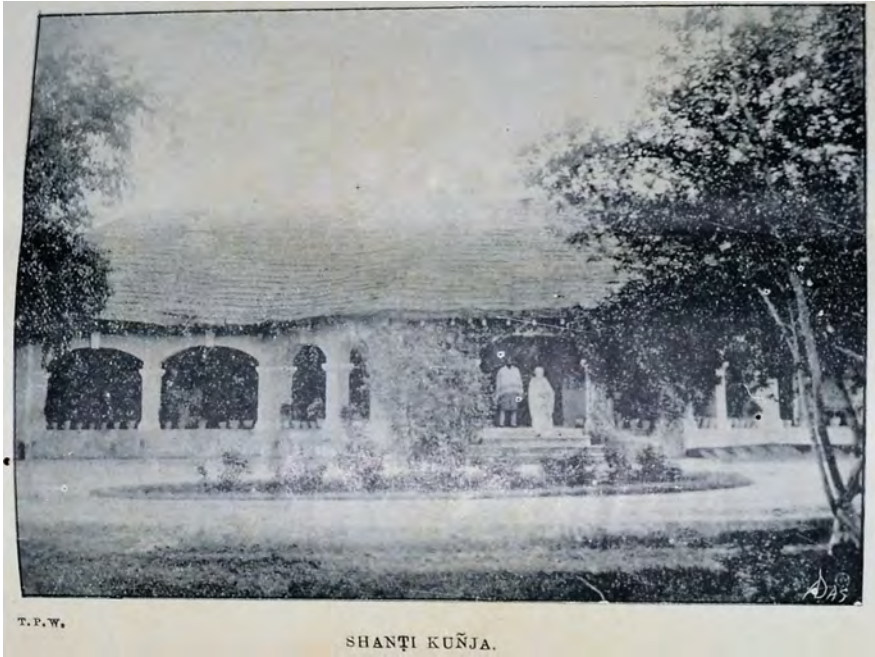


Figure 11: Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das in front of Shanti Kunj, Benares. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Shanti Kunj, Benares, around 1909. Detail from *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. IX, No.11, Nov. 1909. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai).

who rented a bungalow which became both her first residence in Benares and the section's first headquarters. The CHC was officially opened on the same site in July 1898. Besant herself was not present at the opening because she was in London for the summer months,¹² but she was back in Benares in September and took an active interest in the development of the project. Soon after, with both the school and the Indian section of the Theosophical Society flourishing, a new compound was purchased with the financial aid of Ursula Bright.¹³ The compound was large enough to include “a hall for meetings; offices; a printing press; [. . .] a pharmacy [. . . and] a house for Chakravarti and his family,”¹⁴ and Besant also had her new home built there, which she called shanti kunj (Figure 11), “abode of

¹² Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 40–63.

¹³ Ester Bright, *Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant* (London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1936), 62–63; Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 63–64.

¹⁴ Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 277.

peace” (or shanti kunj in the Sanskrit version – both renderings are common – I opt for “shanti kunj” because this better reflects the likely pronunciation in the Hindi milieu of Benares). The house was large enough to accommodate herself, Countess Wachtmeister, and Bertram Keightley.¹⁵ The Central Hindu College was soon to receive another generous donation, when the Maharaja of Benares donated one of his palaces that was very near to the recently purchased compound.¹⁶ Taylor explains that this act of generosity was a direct reaction to a comment by the Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces, Sir Antony Macdonald, who suspected that the CHC was serving as a hotbed for radical politics.¹⁷

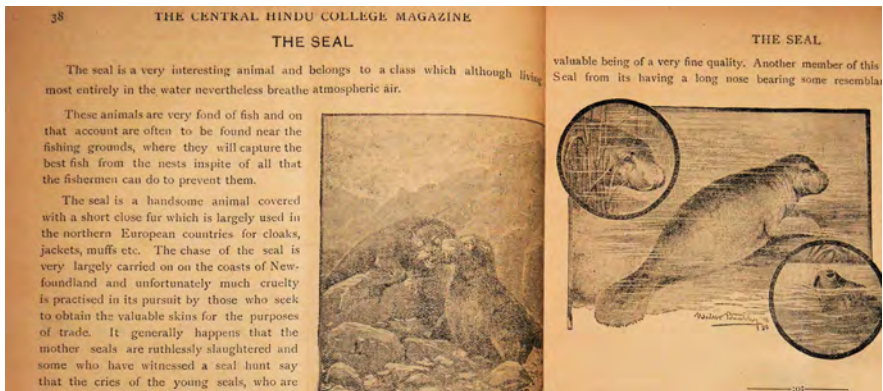


Figure 12: *The Central Hindu College Magazine* contained numerous pictures of wildlife, such as “the seal” pictured here. (Photograph by an unknown photographer. Around 1902. Detail, The Seal. From *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. IV, No. 2, Feb. 1904. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai).

This grant, in addition to other generous donations of wealthy Indians, enabled the college to flourish further. Besant’s lectures and journalistic efforts attracted several talented young Indians who later became teachers at the CHC, including C. S. Trilokekar, B. Sanjiva Rao, G. V. Subba Rao, and Sri Prakasa. Besant’s journalistic endeavors also led to the establishment of a new journal, *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, which was published for the first time in January 1901. In the same year, the college became formally affiliated with Allahabad University.¹⁸ In its first years of publication, *The Central Hindu College Magazine* included a wide

¹⁵ Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 66.

¹⁶ Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 68.

¹⁷ Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 279–80.

¹⁸ Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 70.

range of topics. Already in its early volumes it included illustrations ranging from animals (see Figure 12) to monuments, both South Asian and from elsewhere around the world. Starting from around 1909, its front page was redesigned and at the end of each volume an extra picture page and advertisements were included (see Figure 13).

The Hindu Biscuit Co., Ltd., Delhi.

The only GOLD MEDAL for Biscuits awarded in the
Tenth Colonial Exhibition
held at Calcutta in December, 1899.



For price list, terms and all other particulars please address the Secretary, of the—
Hindu Biscuit Co., Ltd., DELHI.
Recommended by Mrs. Annie Besant, as more suitable than foreign made.

HINDU DRAMATIC WORKS.

Translated from the Original Standard into English by—**H. H. WILSON, B.A., M.A.**

1. *Mull* (English) pages 106. 2. *Ar. 2*. 3. *History of page 21*. 4. *3*. 5. *Shakuntala* pages 102. 6. *Ar. 4*. 7. *Vikram and Urvash* pages 106. 8. *Ar. 1*. 9. *Ar. 2*. 10. *Ar. 3*. 11. *Ar. 4*. 12. *Ar. 5*. 13. *Ar. 6*. 14. *Ar. 7*. 15. *Ar. 8*. 16. *Ar. 9*. 17. *Ar. 10*. 18. *Ar. 11*. 19. *Ar. 12*. 20. *Ar. 13*. 21. *Ar. 14*. 22. *Ar. 15*. 23. *Ar. 16*. 24. *Ar. 17*. 25. *Ar. 18*. 26. *Ar. 19*. 27. *Ar. 20*. 28. *Ar. 21*. 29. *Ar. 22*. 30. *Ar. 23*. 31. *Ar. 24*. 32. *Ar. 25*. 33. *Ar. 26*. 34. *Ar. 27*. 35. *Ar. 28*. 36. *Ar. 29*. 37. *Ar. 30*. 38. *Ar. 31*. 39. *Ar. 32*. 40. *Ar. 33*. 41. *Ar. 34*. 42. *Ar. 35*. 43. *Ar. 36*. 44. *Ar. 37*. 45. *Ar. 38*. 46. *Ar. 39*. 47. *Ar. 40*. 48. *Ar. 41*. 49. *Ar. 42*. 50. *Ar. 43*. 51. *Ar. 44*. 52. *Ar. 45*. 53. *Ar. 46*. 54. *Ar. 47*. 55. *Ar. 48*. 56. *Ar. 49*. 57. *Ar. 50*. 58. *Ar. 51*. 59. *Ar. 52*. 60. *Ar. 53*. 61. *Ar. 54*. 62. *Ar. 55*. 63. *Ar. 56*. 64. *Ar. 57*. 65. *Ar. 58*. 66. *Ar. 59*. 67. *Ar. 60*. 68. *Ar. 61*. 69. *Ar. 62*. 70. *Ar. 63*. 71. *Ar. 64*. 72. *Ar. 65*. 73. *Ar. 66*. 74. *Ar. 67*. 75. *Ar. 68*. 76. *Ar. 69*. 77. *Ar. 70*. 78. *Ar. 71*. 79. *Ar. 72*. 80. *Ar. 73*. 81. *Ar. 74*. 82. *Ar. 75*. 83. *Ar. 76*. 84. *Ar. 77*. 85. *Ar. 78*. 86. *Ar. 79*. 87. *Ar. 80*. 88. *Ar. 81*. 89. *Ar. 82*. 90. *Ar. 83*. 91. *Ar. 84*. 92. *Ar. 85*. 93. *Ar. 86*. 94. *Ar. 87*. 95. *Ar. 88*. 96. *Ar. 89*. 97. *Ar. 90*. 98. *Ar. 91*. 99. *Ar. 92*. 100. *Ar. 93*. 101. *Ar. 94*. 102. *Ar. 95*. 103. *Ar. 96*. 104. *Ar. 97*. 105. *Ar. 98*. 106. *Ar. 99*. 107. *Ar. 100*. 108. *Ar. 101*. 109. *Ar. 102*. 110. *Ar. 103*. 111. *Ar. 104*. 112. *Ar. 105*. 113. *Ar. 106*. 114. *Ar. 107*. 115. *Ar. 108*. 116. *Ar. 109*. 117. *Ar. 110*. 118. *Ar. 111*. 119. *Ar. 112*. 120. *Ar. 113*. 121. *Ar. 114*. 122. *Ar. 115*. 123. *Ar. 116*. 124. *Ar. 117*. 125. *Ar. 118*. 126. *Ar. 119*. 127. *Ar. 120*. 128. *Ar. 121*. 129. *Ar. 122*. 130. *Ar. 123*. 131. *Ar. 124*. 132. *Ar. 125*. 133. *Ar. 126*. 134. *Ar. 127*. 135. *Ar. 128*. 136. *Ar. 129*. 137. *Ar. 130*. 138. *Ar. 131*. 139. *Ar. 132*. 140. *Ar. 133*. 141. *Ar. 134*. 142. *Ar. 135*. 143. *Ar. 136*. 144. *Ar. 137*. 145. *Ar. 138*. 146. *Ar. 139*. 147. *Ar. 140*. 148. *Ar. 141*. 149. *Ar. 142*. 150. *Ar. 143*. 151. *Ar. 144*. 152. *Ar. 145*. 153. *Ar. 146*. 154. *Ar. 147*. 155. *Ar. 148*. 156. *Ar. 149*. 157. *Ar. 150*. 158. *Ar. 151*. 159. *Ar. 152*. 160. *Ar. 153*. 161. *Ar. 154*. 162. *Ar. 155*. 163. *Ar. 156*. 164. *Ar. 157*. 165. *Ar. 158*. 166. *Ar. 159*. 167. *Ar. 160*. 168. *Ar. 161*. 169. *Ar. 162*. 170. *Ar. 163*. 171. *Ar. 164*. 172. *Ar. 165*. 173. *Ar. 166*. 174. *Ar. 167*. 175. *Ar. 168*. 176. *Ar. 169*. 177. *Ar. 170*. 178. *Ar. 171*. 179. *Ar. 172*. 180. *Ar. 173*. 181. *Ar. 174*. 182. *Ar. 175*. 183. *Ar. 176*. 184. *Ar. 177*. 185. *Ar. 178*. 186. *Ar. 179*. 187. *Ar. 180*. 188. *Ar. 181*. 189. *Ar. 182*. 190. *Ar. 183*. 191. *Ar. 184*. 192. *Ar. 185*. 193. *Ar. 186*. 194. *Ar. 187*. 195. *Ar. 188*. 196. *Ar. 189*. 197. *Ar. 190*. 198. *Ar. 191*. 199. *Ar. 192*. 200. *Ar. 193*. 201. *Ar. 194*. 202. *Ar. 195*. 203. *Ar. 196*. 204. *Ar. 197*. 205. *Ar. 198*. 206. *Ar. 199*. 207. *Ar. 200*. 208. *Ar. 201*. 209. *Ar. 202*. 210. *Ar. 203*. 211. *Ar. 204*. 212. *Ar. 205*. 213. *Ar. 206*. 214. *Ar. 207*. 215. *Ar. 208*. 216. *Ar. 209*. 217. *Ar. 210*. 218. *Ar. 211*. 219. *Ar. 212*. 220. *Ar. 213*. 221. *Ar. 214*. 222. *Ar. 215*. 223. *Ar. 216*. 224. *Ar. 217*. 225. *Ar. 218*. 226. *Ar. 219*. 227. *Ar. 220*. 228. *Ar. 221*. 229. *Ar. 222*. 230. *Ar. 223*. 231. *Ar. 224*. 232. *Ar. 225*. 233. *Ar. 226*. 234. *Ar. 227*. 235. *Ar. 228*. 236. *Ar. 229*. 237. *Ar. 230*. 238. *Ar. 231*. 239. *Ar. 232*. 240. *Ar. 233*. 241. *Ar. 234*. 242. *Ar. 235*. 243. *Ar. 236*. 244. *Ar. 237*. 245. *Ar. 238*. 246. *Ar. 239*. 247. *Ar. 240*. 248. *Ar. 241*. 249. *Ar. 242*. 250. *Ar. 243*. 251. *Ar. 244*. 252. *Ar. 245*. 253. *Ar. 246*. 254. *Ar. 247*. 255. *Ar. 248*. 256. *Ar. 249*. 257. *Ar. 250*. 258. *Ar. 251*. 259. *Ar. 252*. 260. *Ar. 253*. 261. *Ar. 254*. 262. *Ar. 255*. 263. *Ar. 256*. 264. *Ar. 257*. 265. *Ar. 258*. 266. *Ar. 259*. 267. *Ar. 260*. 268. *Ar. 261*. 269. *Ar. 262*. 270. *Ar. 263*. 271. *Ar. 264*. 272. *Ar. 265*. 273. *Ar. 266*. 274. *Ar. 267*. 275. *Ar. 268*. 276. *Ar. 269*. 277. *Ar. 270*. 278. *Ar. 271*. 279. *Ar. 272*. 280. *Ar. 273*. 281. *Ar. 274*. 282. *Ar. 275*. 283. *Ar. 276*. 284. *Ar. 277*. 285. *Ar. 278*. 286. *Ar. 279*. 287. *Ar. 280*. 288. *Ar. 281*. 289. *Ar. 282*. 290. *Ar. 283*. 291. *Ar. 284*. 292. *Ar. 285*. 293. *Ar. 286*. 294. *Ar. 287*. 295. *Ar. 288*. 296. *Ar. 289*. 297. *Ar. 290*. 298. *Ar. 291*. 299. *Ar. 292*. 300. *Ar. 293*. 301. *Ar. 294*. 302. *Ar. 295*. 303. *Ar. 296*. 304. *Ar. 297*. 305. *Ar. 298*. 306. *Ar. 299*. 307. *Ar. 300*. 308. *Ar. 301*. 309. *Ar. 302*. 310. *Ar. 303*. 311. *Ar. 304*. 312. *Ar. 305*. 313. *Ar. 306*. 314. *Ar. 307*. 315. *Ar. 308*. 316. *Ar. 309*. 317. *Ar. 310*. 318. *Ar. 311*. 319. *Ar. 312*. 320. *Ar. 313*. 321. *Ar. 314*. 322. *Ar. 315*. 323. *Ar. 316*. 324. *Ar. 317*. 325. *Ar. 318*. 326. *Ar. 319*. 327. *Ar. 320*. 328. *Ar. 321*. 329. *Ar. 322*. 330. *Ar. 323*. 331. *Ar. 324*. 332. *Ar. 325*. 333. *Ar. 326*. 334. *Ar. 327*. 335. *Ar. 328*. 336. *Ar. 329*. 337. *Ar. 330*. 338. *Ar. 331*. 339. *Ar. 332*. 340. *Ar. 333*. 341. *Ar. 334*. 342. *Ar. 335*. 343. *Ar. 336*. 344. *Ar. 337*. 345. *Ar. 338*. 346. *Ar. 339*. 347. *Ar. 340*. 348. *Ar. 341*. 349. *Ar. 342*. 350. *Ar. 343*. 351. *Ar. 344*. 352. *Ar. 345*. 353. *Ar. 346*. 354. *Ar. 347*. 355. *Ar. 348*. 356. *Ar. 349*. 357. *Ar. 350*. 358. *Ar. 351*. 359. *Ar. 352*. 360. *Ar. 353*. 361. *Ar. 354*. 362. *Ar. 355*. 363. *Ar. 356*. 364. *Ar. 357*. 365. *Ar. 358*. 366. *Ar. 359*. 367. *Ar. 360*. 368. *Ar. 361*. 369. *Ar. 362*. 370. *Ar. 363*. 371. *Ar. 364*. 372. *Ar. 365*. 373. *Ar. 366*. 374. *Ar. 367*. 375. *Ar. 368*. 376. *Ar. 369*. 377. *Ar. 370*. 378. *Ar. 371*. 379. *Ar. 372*. 380. *Ar. 373*. 381. *Ar. 374*. 382. *Ar. 375*. 383. *Ar. 376*. 384. *Ar. 377*. 385. *Ar. 378*. 386. *Ar. 379*. 387. *Ar. 380*. 388. *Ar. 381*. 389. *Ar. 382*. 390. *Ar. 383*. 391. *Ar. 384*. 392. *Ar. 385*. 393. *Ar. 386*. 394. *Ar. 387*. 395. *Ar. 388*. 396. *Ar. 389*. 397. *Ar. 390*. 398. *Ar. 391*. 399. *Ar. 392*. 400. *Ar. 393*. 401. *Ar. 394*. 402. *Ar. 395*. 403. *Ar. 396*. 404. *Ar. 397*. 405. *Ar. 398*. 406. *Ar. 399*. 407. *Ar. 400*. 408. *Ar. 401*. 409. *Ar. 402*. 410. *Ar. 403*. 411. *Ar. 404*. 412. *Ar. 405*. 413. *Ar. 406*. 414. *Ar. 407*. 415. *Ar. 408*. 416. *Ar. 409*. 417. *Ar. 410*. 418. *Ar. 411*. 419. *Ar. 412*. 420. *Ar. 413*. 421. *Ar. 414*. 422. *Ar. 415*. 423. *Ar. 416*. 424. *Ar. 417*. 425. *Ar. 418*. 426. *Ar. 419*. 427. *Ar. 420*. 428. *Ar. 421*. 429. *Ar. 422*. 430. *Ar. 423*. 431. *Ar. 424*. 432. *Ar. 425*. 433. *Ar. 426*. 434. *Ar. 427*. 435. *Ar. 428*. 436. *Ar. 429*. 437. *Ar. 430*. 438. *Ar. 431*. 439. *Ar. 432*. 440. *Ar. 433*. 441. *Ar. 434*. 442. *Ar. 435*. 443. *Ar. 436*. 444. *Ar. 437*. 445. *Ar. 438*. 446. *Ar. 439*. 447. *Ar. 440*. 448. *Ar. 441*. 449. *Ar. 442*. 450. *Ar. 443*. 451. *Ar. 444*. 452. *Ar. 445*. 453. *Ar. 446*. 454. *Ar. 447*. 455. *Ar. 448*. 456. *Ar. 449*. 457. *Ar. 450*. 458. *Ar. 451*. 459. *Ar. 452*. 460. *Ar. 453*. 461. *Ar. 454*. 462. *Ar. 455*. 463. *Ar. 456*. 464. *Ar. 457*. 465. *Ar. 458*. 466. *Ar. 459*. 467. *Ar. 460*. 468. *Ar. 461*. 469. *Ar. 462*. 470. *Ar. 463*. 471. *Ar. 464*. 472. *Ar. 465*. 473. *Ar. 466*. 474. *Ar. 467*. 475. *Ar. 468*. 476. *Ar. 469*. 477. *Ar. 470*. 478. *Ar. 471*. 479. *Ar. 472*. 480. *Ar. 473*. 481. *Ar. 474*. 482. *Ar. 475*. 483. *Ar. 476*. 484. *Ar. 477*. 485. *Ar. 478*. 486. *Ar. 479*. 487. *Ar. 480*. 488. *Ar. 481*. 489. *Ar. 482*. 490. *Ar. 483*. 491. *Ar. 484*. 492. *Ar. 485*. 493. *Ar. 486*. 494. *Ar. 487*. 495. *Ar. 488*. 496. *Ar. 489*. 497. *Ar. 490*. 498. *Ar. 491*. 499. *Ar. 492*. 500. *Ar. 493*. 501. *Ar. 494*. 502. *Ar. 495*. 503. *Ar. 496*. 504. *Ar. 497*. 505. *Ar. 498*. 506. *Ar. 499*. 507. *Ar. 500*. 508. *Ar. 501*. 509. *Ar. 502*. 510. *Ar. 503*. 511. *Ar. 504*. 512. *Ar. 505*. 513. *Ar. 506*. 514. *Ar. 507*. 515. *Ar. 508*. 516. *Ar. 509*. 517. *Ar. 510*. 518. *Ar. 511*. 519. *Ar. 512*. 520. *Ar. 513*. 521. *Ar. 514*. 522. *Ar. 515*. 523. *Ar. 516*. 524. *Ar. 517*. 525. *Ar. 518*. 526. *Ar. 519*. 527. *Ar. 520*. 528. *Ar. 521*. 529. *Ar. 522*. 530. *Ar. 523*. 531. *Ar. 524*. 532. *Ar. 525*. 533. *Ar. 526*. 534. *Ar. 527*. 535. *Ar. 528*. 536. *Ar. 529*. 537. *Ar. 530*. 538. *Ar. 531*. 539. *Ar. 532*. 540. *Ar. 533*. 541. *Ar. 534*. 542. *Ar. 535*. 543. *Ar. 536*. 544. *Ar. 537*. 545. *Ar. 538*. 546. *Ar. 539*. 547. *Ar. 540*. 548. *Ar. 541*. 549. *Ar. 542*. 550. *Ar. 543*. 551. *Ar. 544*. 552. *Ar. 545*. 553. *Ar. 546*. 554. *Ar. 547*. 555. *Ar. 548*. 556. *Ar. 549*. 557. *Ar. 550*. 558. *Ar. 551*. 559. *Ar. 552*. 560. *Ar. 553*. 561. *Ar. 554*. 562. *Ar. 555*. 563. *Ar. 556*. 564. *Ar. 557*. 565. *Ar. 558*. 566. *Ar. 559*. 567. *Ar. 560*. 568. *Ar. 561*. 569. *Ar. 562*. 570. *Ar. 563*. 571. *Ar. 564*. 572. *Ar. 565*. 573. *Ar. 566*. 574. *Ar. 567*. 575. *Ar. 568*. 576. *Ar. 569*. 577. *Ar. 570*. 578. *Ar. 571*. 579. *Ar. 572*. 580. *Ar. 573*. 581. *Ar. 574*. 582. *Ar. 575*. 583. *Ar. 576*. 584. *Ar. 577*. 585. *Ar. 578*. 586. *Ar. 579*. 587. *Ar. 580*. 588. *Ar. 581*. 589. *Ar. 582*. 590. *Ar. 583*. 591. *Ar. 584*. 592. *Ar. 585*. 593. *Ar. 586*. 594. *Ar. 587*. 595. *Ar. 588*. 596. *Ar. 589*. 597. *Ar. 590*. 598. *Ar. 591*. 599. *Ar. 592*. 600. *Ar. 593*. 601. *Ar. 594*. 602. *Ar. 595*. 603. *Ar. 596*. 604. *Ar. 597*. 605. *Ar. 598*. 606. *Ar. 599*. 607. *Ar. 600*. 608. *Ar. 601*. 609. *Ar. 602*. 610. *Ar. 603*. 611. *Ar. 604*. 612. *Ar. 605*. 613. *Ar. 606*. 614. *Ar. 607*. 615. *Ar. 608*. 616. *Ar. 609*. 617. *Ar. 610*. 618. *Ar. 611*. 619. *Ar. 612*. 620. *Ar. 613*. 621. *Ar. 614*. 622. *Ar. 615*. 623. *Ar. 616*. 624. *Ar. 617*. 625. *Ar. 618*. 626. *Ar. 619*. 627. *Ar. 620*. 628. *Ar. 621*. 629. *Ar. 622*. 630. *Ar. 623*. 631. *Ar. 624*. 632. *Ar. 625*. 633. *Ar. 626*. 634. *Ar. 627*. 635. *Ar. 628*. 636. *Ar. 629*. 637. *Ar. 630*. 638. *Ar. 631*. 639. *Ar. 632*. 640. *Ar. 633*. 641. *Ar. 634*. 642. *Ar. 635*. 643. *Ar. 636*. 644. *Ar. 637*. 645. *Ar. 638*. 646. *Ar. 639*. 647. *Ar. 640*. 648. *Ar. 641*. 649. *Ar. 642*. 650. *Ar. 643*. 651. *Ar. 644*. 652. *Ar. 645*. 653. *Ar. 646*. 654. *Ar. 647*. 655. *Ar. 648*. 656. *Ar. 649*. 657. *Ar. 650*. 658. *Ar. 651*. 659. *Ar. 652*. 660. *Ar. 653*. 661. *Ar. 654*. 662. *Ar. 655*. 663. *Ar. 656*. 664. *Ar. 657*. 665. *Ar. 658*. 666. *Ar. 659*. 667. *Ar. 660*. 668. *Ar. 661*. 669. *Ar. 662*. 670. *Ar. 663*. 671. *Ar. 664*. 672. *Ar. 665*. 673. *Ar. 666*. 674. *Ar. 667*. 675. *Ar. 668*. 676. *Ar. 669*. 677. *Ar. 670*. 678. *Ar. 671*. 679. *Ar. 672*. 680. *Ar. 673*. 681. *Ar. 674*. 682. *Ar. 675*. 683. *Ar. 676*. 684. *Ar. 677*. 685. *Ar. 678*. 686. *Ar. 679*. 687. *Ar. 680*. 688. *Ar. 681*. 689. *Ar. 682*. 690. *Ar. 683*. 691. *Ar. 684*. 692. *Ar. 685*. 693. *Ar. 686*. 694. *Ar. 687*. 695. *Ar. 688*. 696. *Ar. 689*. 697. *Ar. 690*. 698. *Ar. 691*. 699. *Ar. 692*. 700. *Ar. 693*. 701. *Ar. 694*. 702. *Ar. 695*. 703. *Ar. 696*. 704. *Ar. 697*. 705. *Ar. 698*. 706. *Ar. 699*. 707. *Ar. 700*. 708. *Ar. 701*. 709. *Ar. 702*. 710. *Ar. 703*. 711. *Ar. 704*. 712. *Ar. 705*. 713. *Ar. 706*. 714.

its later history and the energy Besant invested in it. Several other schools were built on the model of the CHC and became affiliated with it. The crowning glory of this success was a visit in 1906 by the Prince and Princess of Wales, who would later become George V, the King of England, and Queen Mary, his consort.²⁰ The royal couple accepted a personal invitation from Besant, who herself stood as guarantor for their safety while they visited the college compound (see Figure 14), since she would not allow the government police to enter the grounds. As will be seen below in the analyses of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*, Annie Besant was a loyalist²¹ and her affection for King and Empire both shaped the curriculum of the Central Hindu College while also being a significant subject of debate.

After Besant's election as President of the Theosophical Society in 1907, she returned to India in late November to find that all was not well in the Central Hindu College: Not only did it have financial problems, but its students had also performed poorly in the last round of examinations. The CHC's financial woes were a result of the refusal of the board of trustees either to raise the fees charged by the college or to acquire state support, despite the significant growth in the number of students and staff since 1898. The college thus remained dependent on private donations and Besant financed much of its expenses with the honoraria she earned from her lectures.²² Around this time, Besant began to formulate her ideas for a pan-Indian University that would be welcoming to all faiths. Her initiative took on an official form in 1910 when she filed a petition for a Royal Charter for her "University of India," which was initially not forwarded to the Secretary of State by the Viceroy.²³ At the same time, the Indian Muslim community initiated a movement for the establishment of a Muslim University,²⁴ while

approach of these schools was based on the spiritist educational endeavor also seems plausible (cf. Lawson, "Theosophy and Education," 85–91). However, it only scratches the surface of the vast system of Theosophical education that included hundreds, if not thousands, of schools around the globe.

20 Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 86–88.

21 Prakasa, *Annie Besant*, 76–80; Herman A. de Tollenaere, "The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy and Labour, National, and Women's Movements in Indonesia and South Asia, 1875–1947" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, 21.05.1996), 86–87.

22 Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 104–14.

23 Jürgen Lütt, "The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University," in *German Scholars on India*, ed. The Cultural Department of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, New Delhi, 2 vols., Contributions to Indian Studies (Varanasi, Bombay: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; Nachiketa Publications, 1973–1976), 2:169–70.

24 For additional information on Muslim education in India, see Kumar, *Lessons from Schools*, 129–35.

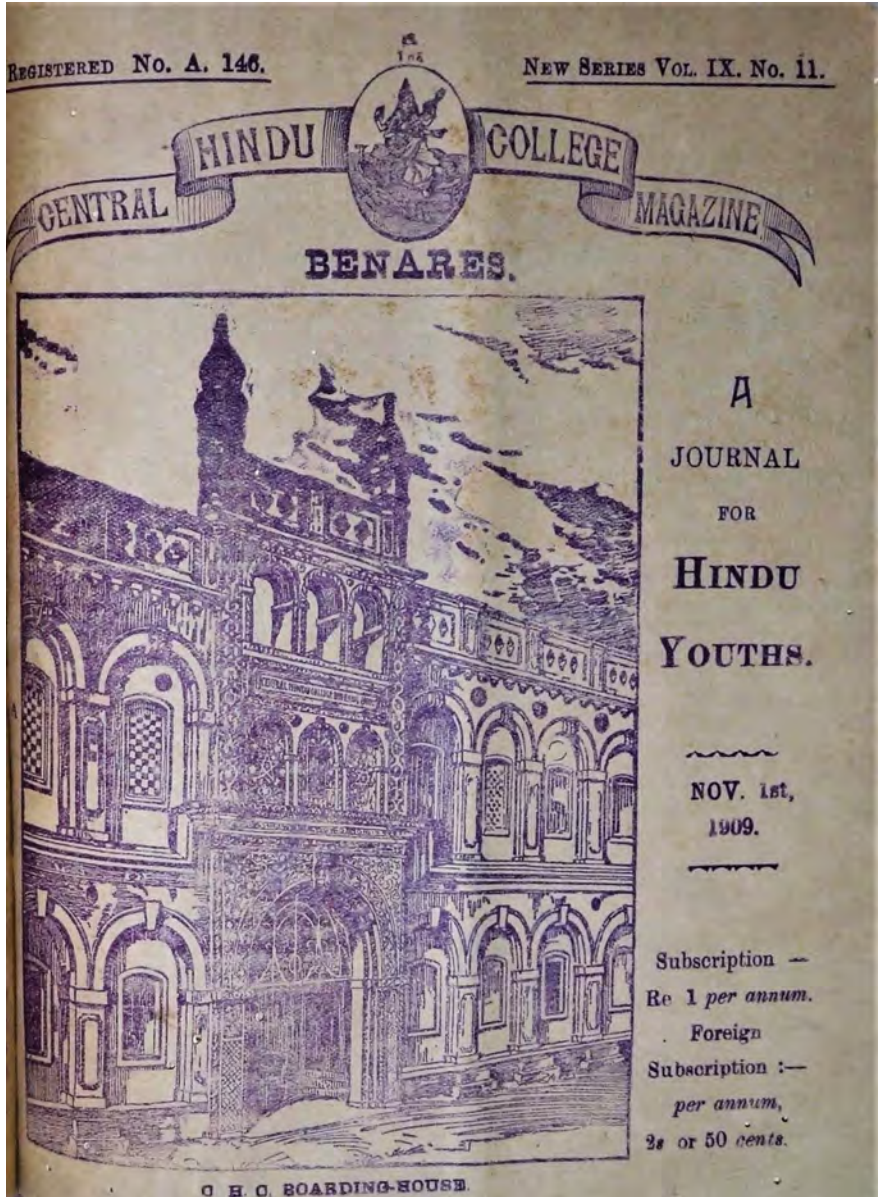


Figure 14: Cover page of *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, displayed is the Boarding House of the CHC. (Image by an unknown graphic artist. Around 1909. Cover page. From *The Central Hindu College Magazine*, Vol. IX, No. 11, Nov. 1909. Courtesy of the Theosophical Society, International Headquarters: Adyar Library and Research Centre, Chennai).

orthodox Hindus in the circle of Pandit Malaviya sought to establish a specifically Hindu university.²⁵

In 1909, Besant and Leadbeater identified a young Indian boy, Krishnamurti, as the future “World-Teacher.” Their proclamation of the boy’s status, and their subsequent establishment of the “Order of the Star in the East” to prepare the way for him, an organization that they sought to introduce into the Central Hindu College, led to opposition from the staff of the CHC.²⁶ Although Besant tried – at least to some extent – to mediate at first, she ultimately came to insist on her position regarding Krishnamurti, even going so far as to claim that no one could be a member of the Theosophical Society without also being a follower of Krishnamurti. This enraged many of Besant’s prominent supporters in the college, including Bhagavan Das²⁷ and George Arundale,²⁸ to such an extent that they resigned their positions. Lütt and Renold argue that the coincidence of the problems Besant encountered in raising enough money for the CHC and the lack of support for her Indian University was the reason why she agreed to merge her plans with those of Pandit Malaviya. He, in turn, was forced to work with Besant because the government would only approve the establishment of a Hindu university if it was based on an existing college.²⁹ With the strategic partnership between these two forceful individuals driving the vision for a Hindu university forward, the foundation stone of the Benares Hindu University was laid in 1916.

It seems that the traditions of the Central Hindu College concerning religious instruction, especially the daily readings of the *Bhagavadgītā* and the lectures on the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*, were not continued at the BHU.³⁰ As for the

25 Lütt, “The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University,” 2:169–74. For a detailed discussion of the different movements that tried to establish “their” universities in Indian at the time, see Renold, *A Hindu Education*, 29–63.

26 For information on Krishnamurti and his brother, and on the establishment of the “Order of the Star in the East”, see Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 135–73.

27 Das was especially estranged by the actions of Annie Besant and the “Krishnamurti cult.” He wrote a long letter to the editor of the *Christian Commonwealth* which was published and later translated and republished, in which he vehemently complains about Annie Besant and the “Krishnamurti movement.” Bhagavan Das, *Das Central Hindu College und Mrs. Besant: An den Herausgeber des “Christian Commonwealth” London, England* (Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1914), Uebersetzt nach dem englischen Text herausgegeben von The Divine Life Press 614 Oakwood-Blox. Chicago Ill. U.S.A. Nonetheless, Bhagavan Das remained a friend and ally of Annie Besant up to her death. Prakasa, *Annie Besant*, ix.

28 Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 177.

29 Lütt, “The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University,” 2:177–78; Renold, *A Hindu Education*, 51–52.

30 Lütt, “The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University,” 2:174–84; Prakasa, *Annie Besant*, 115.

Sanâtana Dharma Text Books, we have opposing accounts. Renold maintains that the *Text Books* were used in the University and that they were republished especially for this purpose.³¹ Unfortunately, it is unclear on what evidence she bases her account. Nethercot, by contrast, maintains that Malaviya wished to destroy all copies of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*, or at least to store them somewhere and not to use them in the university.³² Lütt's view is somewhere in between, maintaining that the text books were indeed used for religious instruction in the BHU but that Malaviya had them replaced with other text books some years later.³³ Whichever of these accounts is accurate, it seems plain that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* form an important part of the history of both the Central Hindu College and the Theosophical Society, and that they also contributed to the religious instruction offered by the BHU in at least its early years. In the following, the writing and editing process that led to the publication of the *Text Book* series is discussed in more detail, along with other methods for teaching religion that were used in the CHC.

13.3 The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*: The Process of Editing and Implementing the Texts in the Central Hindu College

The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* series comprises three books which were initially prepared for the religious education provided in the Central Hindu College. 1) The *Sanâtana Dharma Catechism*, first published in 1902, was a textbook for young children in question-and-answer form. 2) The *Sanâtana Dharma, An Elementary Text Book*, also first published in 1902, was compiled for older children. Finally, 3) the *Sanâtana Dharma, An Advanced Text Book*, first published in 1903, was intended for the use of the more advanced students. The authorship of the text books is usually attributed to Annie Besant, with Nethercot and Taylor adding that the books were published with the help of several of Besant's Indian colleagues, with Bhagavan Das being mentioned most prominently.³⁴ These accounts

³¹ Renold, *A Hindu Education*, 53.

³² Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 303. It seems that Malaviya did not destroy them. At least two editions of each of the *Advanced* and the *Elementary Text Books* are listed in the Catalogue of the Benares Hindu University Library from 1923. The Benares Hindu University, *The Benares Hindu University Library Catalogue* (Benares: The Benares Hindu University, 1923), 80.

³³ Lütt, "The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University," 2:191.

³⁴ Taylor does not clearly reference her source for the information that Besant wrote the *Text Books*. Taylor, *Annie Besant*, 278–79; Nethercot, *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*, 45; Malinar, "Karmic Histories and Synthesis of 'East' and 'West'," 66. The reference given by Renold, *Benares Hindu University Calender*, is inconclusive because the referenced pages do not

are all problematic due to their being drawn from relatively late sources. The main sources for the claims concerning Besant's authorship are:

- 1) A preface on the "History of the Sanātana-Dharma Text-Books" that was included in republications by the Theosophical Publishing House of the *Elementary* and the *Advanced Text Books* in 1939 and 1940.
- 2) The *Papers Regarding the Educational Conference, Allahabad, February 1911*, in which the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* series is repeatedly mentioned (see below) and is described in one instance as "Mrs. Annie Besant's books."³⁵
- 3) What is written about the *Text Books* in either *the Central Hindu College Magazine* or in other Theosophical magazines.

In the preface to the 1940 edition of the *Advanced Text Book*, the author, G. Srinivasa Murthi, includes several extracts from the *Annual Reports of the Central Hindu College*.³⁶ Therein we find an account on how the *Text Books* were drafted. First, a scheme was developed which outlined how religion should be taught in the Central Hindu College. This was drafted by Besant and Bhagavan Das and then circulated for amendments and suggestions among a number of individuals, both Indian and non-Indian and from within and outside the Theosophical Society. The draft was then reviewed, and the final scheme was approved by the board on December 30, 1900. Instruction in religion had started already before the *Text Books* were issued. According to Murthi, "soon after the institution started functioning, the need was felt, as was inevitable, for proper Text-Books, on the basis of which systematic instruction could be given."³⁷ This led to the appointment of a sub-committee in order to write such books. Murthi claims that "the Indian members of the sub-committee, as well as other learned scholars, supplied Samskr̥t texts, English translations, and other material. Dr. Annie Besant drafted the running text of the book in English. This was done in two months, middle of May to middle of July, 1901, at S'ri-nagar, Kashmir."³⁸ Soon after, "proof-copies of it are now in circulation amongst the members of the Board of Trustees and

indicate the authorship of the text books (Renold, *A Hindu Education*, 18). Kumar, Devi, and Pruthi do not give any references at all. Kumar, Devi and Pruthi, *Annie Besant*, 98.

35 "Papers Regarding the Educational Conference, Allahabad, February 1911." Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Department of Education CCCCXLVIII (Calcutta, 1911), 82.

36 I could not obtain copies of the reports during my research in the Theosophical archives. The reports have to be there, but they were not available to me. I will therefore have to rely on the accounts by Murthi for the relevant information on the *Text Books*.

37 The Theosophical Publishing House, ed., *Sanātana-Dharma: An Advanced Text-Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics* (Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1940), ix.

38 Theosophical Publishing House, *Sanātana-Dharma*, ix.

the Managing Committee, and other learned Hindu friends possessing special knowledge on the subject. (A hundred proof-copies were thus circulated.)”³⁹ Following this stage, another revision of the *Text Books* was made and again “printed proofs of the first were then in circulation. The suggestions for additions, alterations, omissions, and improvements, that were received, were discussed, and decided on, at eight special meetings of the Board of Trustees, and the book, as thus finally shaped, is now in the press.”⁴⁰ If we are to trust this account, it indicates that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* were the product of a collaboration by both Indian and non-Indian contributors, some of whom were members of the Theosophical Society while others were sympathetic to the Society and its goals.

13.3.1 Catechisms and other Textbooks for Religious Instruction in the Theosophical Society

In 1903, Mead wrote a short paragraph about the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* in *The Theosophical Review*. It was an introduction to a review that had been published earlier in *The Theosophist* and then reprinted. Therein Mead wrote,

we are only sorry that we have not seen a copy ourselves – and that too not only of No. III. but also of Nos. I. and II. One of our keenest regrets has for long been that the excellent series of Catechisms which was begun many years ago at Adyar, and of which only the *Buddhist*, *Dvaita* and *Viṣhisṇâdvaita Catechisms* have appeared, was not continued.⁴¹

Mead had not yet seen a copy of any of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* in December 1903, which suggests that they were not circulating widely in England at the time. He understood them as genuinely Theosophical writings in the tradition of other textbooks on religion issued by Theosophists. The catechisms listed by Mead are – with the exception of the *Buddhist Catechism*, of course⁴² – not well-known in the research on Theosophy. The *Sanâtana Dharma Catechism* fits well in this genre of catechisms published by Theosophists in India. Interestingly, Mead did not include *A Catechism of Hinduism* by Sris Chandra Vasu⁴³ in his list,

³⁹ Theosophical Publishing House, *Sanâtana-Dharma*, x.

⁴⁰ *The fourth Annual Report of the C.H.C., for 1902*, pp. 6–8 as quoted in Theosophical Publishing House, *Sanâtana-Dharma*, x–xi.

⁴¹ George R. S. Mead, “A Text-Book of Hindu Religion,” *The Theosophical Review* XXXIII, no. 196 (1903): 294–95.

⁴² See, e.g., Brefeld and Zander, “Henry Steel Olcott”.

⁴³ See also Sris Chandra Basu for a biography of Vasu, see Phanindranath Bose, *Life of Sris Chandra Basu* (not indicated: R. Chatterjee, 1932).

and it thus seems that this catechism was not widely known within the Theosophical Society.

Vasu, a Theosophist and one of the Indian supporters of the Central Hindu College, first met Annie Besant in 1896 and maintained a friendship with her throughout his life. His catechism was first published in *Prasnottara*, the journal of the Indian section of the Theosophical Society in Benares.⁴⁴ We can thus assume that it was well-known among the Board of Trustees of the Central Hindu College. In addition, Vasu writes in its preface that “the profits of this edition will all go towards the Central Hindu College Fund,”⁴⁵ so it seems that this catechism would have been a viable alternative to that which was issued by the trustees. This represents a remarkable instance of the discursive dynamics prevalent in the Theosophical Society. Vasu’s catechism was excluded from the curriculum of the Central Hindu College despite having been authored by an eminent Indian scholar and fellow Theosophist. However, this sleight seems not to have affected the relationship between Vasu and Besant. In a letter to Vasu written by Besant in the summer of 1912, she writes: “I shall reach Benares, if all goes well, on September 7th. I shall be so glad to be at home again, for Benares is ‘home’ to me as is no other place on earth save my master’s *ashrama*. With affection always, my dear good son, Annie Besant.”⁴⁶

At the current stage of research on the Theosophical Society, it is only possible to make assumptions about the debates that led to the exclusion of Vasu’s catechism. However, some hint may be found in the answer to the first question in Vasu’s catechism: “Who is a Hindu?”. The answer has it that a Hindu is “he who accepts the Vedas, the Smritis, the Puranas, and the Tantras as the basis of religion, and the rule of conduct, and believes in one Supreme God (Brahm), in the law of Retributive Justice (Karma), and in Re-incarnation (punar-janma).”⁴⁷ This emphasis on the Vedas and the Tantras points towards a canon of Indian literature that is quite different from that which was generally received in the Theosophical Society and from that found in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. In addition, the emphasis on the monotheistic interpretation of “Brahm” seems to contradict the theistic *bhakti* version of Advaita Vedânta (see Chapter 12) that is advanced in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*, as will be elaborated below. The version of “Hinduism” in the *Text Books* is aligned with the idea of “Hinduism” that crystallized through the writings of Indian spokespersons such as T. Subba Row and Manilal Divedi, and which was then in turn repeated by Blavatsky and Besant in the Theosophical tradition. This must remain a mere

⁴⁴ Bose, *Life of Sris Chandra Basu*, 175–79.

⁴⁵ Sris Chandra Vasu, *A Catechism of Hinduism* (Benares: Freeman & Co., Ltd., 1899), Preface.

⁴⁶ Besant Annie, Letter, July 1912, as cited in Bose, *Life of Sris Chandra Basu*, 178.

⁴⁷ Vasu, *A Catechism of Hinduism*, 1.

observation for the time being, as further research is needed to trace these dynamics further. However, it can be noted a) that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* fit within a Theosophical tradition of issuing textbooks for religious instruction, and b) that at the time when the first, the *Catechism*, was published, at least one other catechism was available which could have been used instead as a text book for the Central Hindu College. I argue that Vasu's catechism was not used because the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* were more in accord with the notion of the "Quickening of Evolution," which, at the time, was in the process of becoming the dominant interpretation of Theosophy.

13.3.2 The Question of Authorship of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*

The question of the authorship of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* has no conclusive answer as yet. In 1904, Mead wrote a review of the *Advanced Text Book*. In general, he applauded the publication because it was the first of its type: "This was the difficulty which confronted the Board of Trustees of the Central Hindu College, and with the characteristic energy of their chairwoman they at once set to work to supply themselves with the necessary instruments of instruction in the form of text-books."⁴⁸ The chairwomen mentioned here was Besant. Mead claimed that Besant's "hand and handiwork are visible in every page of the 400; especially is this the case in the 'Ethical Teachings,' with the general trend of which our readers have been made very familiar since the publication of *The Science of the Emotions*."⁴⁹ The mention of *The Science of the Emotions*, a work published by Bhagavan Das in 1900, is particularly interesting and we will return to this publication below. For the moment, it suffices to say that this mention fits well with the general narrative that the books were co-authored by Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das.

Mead's article ends with another telling passage.

If we might venture to make any criticism it is that the wording of the translations of some of the very numerous and most useful quotations (of which the Sanskrit text is wisely appended) might be occasionally improved; for instance, the English of the Shloka on p. 114 is exceedingly obscure. The transliteration of some of the Sanskrit letters also, e.g., the *n*'s, is not always regular.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ George R. S. Mead, "Reviews and Notices: A Synopsis of Hindu Faith and Morals," *The Theosophical Review* XXXIII, no. 198 (1904): 561.

⁴⁹ Mead, "Reviews and Notices," 562.

⁵⁰ Mead, "Reviews and Notices," 563.

That the translations differ in style and wording as well as transliteration might hint towards the shared work of several authors. However, while this is an interesting hint, it moves us no closer to a conclusive understanding of the process involved in writing the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*.

We are confronted with similar issues concerning the print run and distribution of the *Text Books*. As Lütt writes,

Translations of them appeared in all major Indian languages. By 1906, about 130,000 copies altogether of the three textbooks in the original English and in the several translations as well as reprints, had gone into circulation throughout the country. Other colleges were founded in Indian princely states on the pattern of the Central Hindu College: in Kashmir, Mysore, Baroda, in Rajputana and even in Hyderabad, where the textbooks of the CHC were the basis for religious instruction.⁵¹

Lütt's source for these claims is Murti's presentation of the history of the Central Hindu College, was already quoted above. It seems that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* were translated⁵² and that several schools adopted them,⁵³ and if this is the case then it suggests that they were issued in large numbers. We cannot be sure about the exact numbers and the translations that were published at the current state of research. It is nonetheless highly plausible to suppose that the *Text Books* had an impact far beyond the Central Hindu College. I hope that more research will be carried out on these issues in the future, and especially on the reception of the *Text Books* in Indian and "Western" academia. It is interesting in this regard that Arvind Sharma uncritically refers to the *Text Books* in his *Classical Hindu Thought*, published in 2000.⁵⁴

13.3.3 The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* between Universalism and Sectarianism

The subtitles of the *Sanâtana Dharma Texts Books* – *Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics* for the basic and advanced books, and *Hindu Religion and Morals* in

51 Lütt, "The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University," 2:164.

52 The very brief entry in the review section of *The Theosophist* mentions a Telugu and a Sindhi edition of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. It is also noteworthy that it mentions a "Telugu Translation Committee of the Indian section of the T.S." It seems that the translations were supervised by whole committees for each separate language. Anon, "Sanatana Dharma Catechism," *The Theosophist* XXIV, no. 4 (1903): 247.

53 "Papers Regarding the Educational Conference, Allahabad, February 1911." 85–88.

54 Arvind Sharma, *Classical Hindu Thought: An Introduction* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 99; 188.

the case of the Catechism – summarize the aims of the works. The goal and the means for achieving these ends are outlined in the prefaces to the *Advanced* and the *Elementary Text Books*. The purpose is the “the building up of a character – pious, dutiful, strong, self-reliant, upright, righteous, gentle and well-balanced – a character which will be that of a good man and a good citizen”⁵⁵ and the means are “the fundamental principles of religion, governing the general view of life and of life’s obligations, [which] are alone sufficient to form such a character.”⁵⁶ The *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* are distinctly “Hindu” in their language and they use “Hindu” religious concepts, yet they do so while always claiming universality. This claim of universality is a central motif in Theosophical thought and teaching.

Malinar explains that the title *sanātana dharma* was used by “orthodox Brahmanical circles, so-called ‘sanatanis’ [who] had begun to organize themselves as defenders of what they viewed as ‘Hindu tradition.’”⁵⁷ Besant was familiar with this context and The Board of Trustees discussed the issue in the introductions to the *Text Books*. In the *Advanced Text Book*, one reads that the “religious and ethical training” in the Central Hindu College “must avoid all doctrines which are the subject of controversy between schools recognised as orthodox.”⁵⁸ This is another instance of the Theosophical commitment, discussed above,⁵⁹ to the idea that the ancient wisdom religion involved taking a universalistic approach to religions. Diverging positions were likewise often excluded by denoting them as “sectarian,” which can be understood as a hierarchical evaluating relationizing. In the case of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, striking a balance between “universalism” and “sectarianism” was a delicate endeavor. The books had, on the one hand, to be sufficiently “Hindu” to gain the support of the Indian members of the Board of Trustees. Yet, at the same time, they had to avoid making statements, be they “Hindu” or “Theosophical,” about what would constitute a “Hindu” orthodoxy, as this would risk marginalizing or excluding those whose views or practices differed, and would thus draw the resistance of those who wished to establish a universal “Hinduism.”⁶⁰

55 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, v.

56 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, v.

57 Malinar, “Karmic Histories and Synthesis of ‘East’ and ‘West’,” 67.

58 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, I.

59 See Chapters 8, 10, and 12.

60 For a thorough discussions of these dynamics, see Malinar, “Karmic Histories and Synthesis of ‘East’ and ‘West’,” 65–71.

13.3.4 The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* as Books of Initiation

The interdependence of the *Text Books* and Besant's Theosophy is evident in several features of the texts, and in their evolutionary trajectory in particular. It is notable that the references to Hindu works other than the *Bhagavadgîtâ* multiply in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* when compared to those of Besant's works considered elsewhere in this book. In addition, the *termini technici* used in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* are more frequently borrowed from Sanskrit than they are in Besant's writings. For example, almost everywhere throughout the *Text Books*, "Jîvâtâmâ" is used as the term for the "Self." In Besant's writings, by contrast, the term "Jîvâtâmâ" does not occur at all, although she did use "Âtmâ" frequently. But "Âtmâ" in Besant's writings referred to "Âtmâ-Buddhi-Manas"⁶¹ rather than to the idea of the reincarnating "Self." This is not to say, however, that Besant never refers to such a Self, but when she does so she tends to use the English "Self" or "Spirit" for the concept that is analogous to the Jîvâtâmâ of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*.⁶²

The general objective of the *Text Books* was outlined. They were meant to teach morals and to enable the reader to distinguish right from wrong. As in Besant's thought, the idea of good conduct was connected to evolution. The "Will of Ishvara" is the force that guides evolution, and the fundamental moral principle is that "to work with this Will is Right; to work against it is Wrong."⁶³ Analogous ideas are formulated in Besant's writings.⁶⁴ As will be discussed below, the principle that appears in Besant's writings as submission to the "divine will" in order to accelerate evolution was also the main subject of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. The language nevertheless changes in some respects, and concepts such as "Sat, Chit and Ânanda," and especially Ânanda as "Bliss," become more important

61 E.g., Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man*, 59. This usage of the term can be seen in many other writings, such as *Death and After?*, *Man and His Bodies*, and *The Ancient Wisdom*. More detailed research would be welcomed to develop a more comprehensive picture of the use of the term in Besant's writings. It seems that there is a shift from the idea of Âtmâ as simply being a principle connected to Buddhi and Manas to a more complex understanding of Âtmâ as the reincarnating Self, which is closer to the idea of Jîvâtâmâ in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*.

62 E.g., Besant, *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul*, 15. In Besant's *Bhagavadgîtâ* translation, *âtmâ* is usually translated by "Self" or "Spirit." More research is needed on the topic of Besant's *Bhagavadgîtâ* translations, as they change in wording over the editions, and it is still unclear how well Besant knew Sanskrit and how much she was aided and influenced by her associates in Benares, most prominently Bhagavan Das.

63 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 115 – *The Elementary Text Book* always appears as such in footnotes.

64 See, e.g., Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 284. See also Chapter 8.

in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. Their key concepts of sacrifice and duty as daily practice, mediated by social institutions and ideals which lead to initiation, are structurally coherent with Besant's writings. What is notable here is that the idea of mental powers (see Chapter 8.2) has a less explicit role in the *Sanâtana Dharma Textbooks*.

I argue that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* stand in the same tradition as Besant's "Quickening of Evolution" and that they were conceptualized as books that aimed to prepare students for initiation. Initiation thus provides the primary focus for the present chapter, in which it will be shown that the ethics described in the *Text Books* are derived from the preliminary stages of initiation as they appear in Besant's writings.

13.4 The Ethics of Initiation

In the *Sanâtana Dharma Catechism*, question forty-seven asks: "What are Right and Wrong?" "I'shvara guides His worlds along the road that is best for them; [it is answered] all that helps the worlds to go along that road is Right; all that hinders them is Wrong."⁶⁵ Doing that which helps the worlds' advance means that right conduct is that which accelerates evolution, while that which "hinders evolution" is wrong.⁶⁶ This view is wedded to a moralizing pedagogy which aims at obedience to the teacher and to the divine will, with this obedience being equated with human progress.⁶⁷ The *Catechism* thus introduces a distinct mode of conduct to the youngest pupils of "Hinduism," and a mode of conduct that aligns with the general idea of the "Quickening of Evolution" discussed in Chapter 8. It will be seen that the ethics presented in the *Text Books* build on the Theosophical tradition. At the same time, numerous divergences, at times only apparent as nuances in the textual layer, indicate multifaceted processes of hybridization meshing together in these works. These claims will be elaborated in what follows and will be traced through the *Elementary* and the *Advanced Text Books*.

⁶⁵ The Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma Catechism: A Catechism for Boys and Girls in Hindu Religion and Morals* (Benares: Board of Trustees, Central Hindu College, 1902), 14.

⁶⁶ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 275 – *The Advanced Text Book* always appears as such in footnotes.

⁶⁷ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma Catechism*, 16.

13.4.1 The Ethical Science as the Means for the “Quickening of Evolution”

Ethics in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* were understood as the “Ethical Science.” This science was presented as “a definite and systematically arranged series of facts of conduct in their proper relations to each other.”⁶⁸ This statement indicates that the “ethics” were based on “facts” and that the authors of the *Text Books* understood these “facts” and were the authorities on “correct” human conduct. The authors thus positioned themselves as moral teachers occupying a pivotal position in the hierarchy of educators. The claim that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* are based on an “Ethical Science” can be read as an attempt at relationalization. The ethical rules found within are positioned as universal laws based on scientific facts. The deployment of a supposedly scientific epistemology in an attempt to translate the structure of scientific reasoning into a presentation of “Hindu” ethics is an instructive and striking example of hybridization.

The aim of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* was to show “men, through the Science of Conduct, how to live in harmony with each other and with their surroundings.”⁶⁹ The language of obedience found in the *Catechism* was substituted with a language of mutual love and happiness in the *Elementary Text Book*,⁷⁰ and then relativized in the *Advanced Text Book*. This shift can be understood as being based on the idea of individual progression. While younger children are supposed to follow their teacher uncritically, older children, by contrast, should follow the code of conduct given in the *Text Books* because they understand the underlying principles. “Ethics” are also presented as science, “the Science of Conduct,”⁷¹ in the *Advanced Text Book*, but

the conduct of man has reference to his surroundings, as well as to himself. We have to ascertain what is good in relation to those who form our surroundings, as well as in relation to the time and place of the actor; and we may take a wider and wider view of our surroundings, according to the knowledge we possess. [. . .] Ethical Science is therefore a relative Science.⁷²

The “ethics” presented are connected here to stages of development – “the knowledge we possess”⁷³ – of the individual and his surroundings. These surroundings were understood in Besant’s Theosophy to be the results of the individual’s past

68 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 107.

69 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 107.

70 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 107.

71 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 257.

72 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 257.

73 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 257.

evolution as well as providing the necessities for its further evolution. In Besant's thought, this view was connected to her ideas about *karma* and how *karma* was the principle which secured human progress. In her concept of evolution, individual humans have to acquire every experience that is possible if they are to reach the end of this evolution. The effects of *karma* were thus such as to bring human beings to the right place and time to gain the experiences they require in order to take the next steps in their evolution. On this view, it was not only the circumstances that were influenced by *karma* and served as instruments of further evolution, but also the bodies which were shaped according to the current level of the individual's evolution. Each new body acquired in the sequence of reincarnations would be better fit to express the *Âtma* within and to facilitate the transfer of consciousness upwards. In Besant's later writings, certainly no later than *The Evolution of Life and Form*, this view was connected to an idea of vibrations which needed to be in harmony with each other and with the vibrations coming from "Īshvara" in order to communicate with the bodies and with the higher being, thus leading to swifter progress.⁷⁴

If read through the lens of Besant's Theosophical thought, then, it seems that the "ethics" of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* were meant to be the means by which to accomplish a swifter individual evolution. It is argued in the following that the general idea of "ethics" in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, as well as many specific paragraphs, should indeed be read against this background. As discussed in Chapter 8, initiation stood at the core of the "Quickening of Evolution" because it was only after initiation that the most significant progress could be made. For this reason, I will discuss the ethics elaborated in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* with a focus on the preliminary stages of initiation.

13.4.2 Unity as the Foundation of Universal Ethics

The foundation of the ethics in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* is claimed to be the unity of all beings, meaning that "in each separate upādhi there is a part or reflection of the One Self."⁷⁵ This is repeated in the *Advanced Text Book*, where it is said to be the only firm basis of morality: "The *first* thing we learn from religion

⁷⁴ See, e.g., Besant, *Reincarnation*, 64; Besant, *Reincarnation*, 70; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 350; Besant, "Karma the Law of Causation, of Justice and the Adjustment of Effects," 77; Besant, "Karma the Law of Causation, of Justice and the Adjustment of Effects," 77; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 319; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 392; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 348; Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 17; Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 28–29.

⁷⁵ Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 111.

is the Unity of all selves, and this is the foundation of Ethics. Ethics is built upon: THE RECOGNITION[!] OF THE UNITY OF THE SELF AND THE DIVERSITY OF THE NOT-SELF.”⁷⁶ On this basis, mutual help is “the only thing that really helps each, and that what injures one really injures all.”⁷⁷ The *Advanced Text Book* presents the idea of unity with the “One Self” as the highest good: “The ultimate object of Morality, of Ethic, of the Science of Conduct, is to bring about Universal Happiness, Universal Welfare, by uniting the separated selves with each other and with the Supreme Self.”⁷⁸

The *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* claim that this principle of unity was introduced by the ṛṣis based on “reason.” The “reason” spoken of here is equated with “chit,” as this is the one principle which enables “all mental processes, concrete and abstract, the perception in the higher as well as in the lower worlds, direct clear vision of truths as of objects.”⁷⁹ This is why “the authoritative declarations of the Shruti on general morality are [the] final [. . .] binding and universal obligation.”⁸⁰ It follows from this that every insight deduced by reason is authoritative truth. This morality of “union” is relationized in an epistemologically hierarchical way to every other every other ethical framework. Following a two-fold logic, this morality is declared to be a science based on reason, which “reason” is itself said to be based on the higher faculty of “chit” and thus to be a transcendental universal principle. Likewise, this universal law is included in the Theosophical master narrative, in which the ṛṣis are presented as advanced teachers of the ancient wisdom. The term “chit” is translated into the scientific epistemology while also rooting it in another epistemology based on higher knowledge.

The “reason” in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* is, on the basis of the premises mentioned above, considered to be the faculty that is able to “distinguish between precepts of universal and those of local and temporary obligation.”⁸¹ This is also one of the qualities of the ṛṣis, who are thought to be able to interpret the Shruti in such a way that it can be adapted to specific times and places. Against this background, the ṛṣis are presented in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* as advanced initiates, “Masters” who taught the Ancient Wisdom according to the needs of given times and places, or, to put it another way, in a

76 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 262.

77 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 111. This is similarly repeated in the *Advanced Text Book*. Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 263.

78 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 258–59.

79 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 265.

80 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 264.

81 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 265–66.

manner appropriate to particular stages in the evolution of humanity. The ability to perceive the “universal,” in contrast to the “local and temporary,” is the first preliminary quality of the would-be initiates (see Chapter 8.2). The key point here is that the “permanent,” which equates with the universal, is what is most important. This idea of the “permanent” and “universal” principles also applies to the “real Self,” which is taken to be the foundation of the universal unity.

13.4.3 Love and Hate Equal Unity and Separateness

The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* argue that “the recognition of the Unity of the Self by the Reason, which is Wisdom, shows itself in a world of separate forms as Love.” Similarly, “the many-ness of the Not-Self is the cause and explanation of Hate.”⁸² A similar motif can be found in Bhagavan Das’ *The Science of the Emotions*, published in 1900, which was identified by Mead as one of the models for the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. Das wrote that the “desire to be united with or separated from an object is Love (राग, raga) or Hate (द्वेष dvesha).”⁸³ Love projected to higher beings, and especially to God, was understood by Das as, “Love universal and the capacity for work in identification with the life of Ishvara and gradually to find greater and greater joy in sacrifice for others, even as He finds joy in sacrifice for His worlds.”⁸⁴ This view of love is also one of the main concerns of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* and accords with Annie Besant’s Theosophical thought.⁸⁵ The depiction of love here can also be read as a reference to *bhakti*, which I discuss in relation to Row’s theistic *bhakti* Advaita Vedānta in Chapter 12.

The idea that the works of Das and Besant are connected both to each other and to the contents of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* is further suggested by Das’ claim on the opening pages of his 1900 publication. There one reads:

From वैराग्य, *vairāgya* – from the ceasing of desire – from विवेक *viveka* – from the discrimination which sees that all objects of desire are limited and fleeting, and, therefore, painful – from these alone, but from these without fail, proceeds the बोध, *Bodha*, the

⁸² Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 271.

⁸³ Bhagavan Das, *The Science of the Emotions* (London, Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900), 22.

⁸⁴ Das, *The Science of the Emotions*, 182.

⁸⁵ It seems that the collaboration between Das and Annie Besant was close at the time. Das included the following statement in his book: “INSCRIBED TO ANNIE BESANT, BY WHOSE WISH AND UNDER WHOSE GUIDANCE THIS WORK WAS WRITTEN.” Das, *The Science of the Emotions*, not paginated.

Knowledge, the true Philosophy that grasps that which is not limited, not fleeting, and, therefore, not painful.⁸⁶

Viveka and *vairāgya* are similarly the first two preliminary stages of initiation in Besant's thought, and are also included in the stages of initiation in the work of Blavatsky and Divedi work (see Chapters 9 and 11). Around 1900, Das and Besant seem to have worked in close collaboration, as is suggested by several mutual influences on their thought. Not only do we see this in Das' *The Science of the Emotions*, but it is also apparent in Annie Besant's later work, *A Study of Consciousness*, from 1904,⁸⁷ in which the motif of "love" is repeated and connected to the idea of the "Quickening of Evolution." Worship based on this "love" is one of the most important elements in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, since the worship of ideals, for example in the form of heroes, was understood as one of the means by which individuals could elevate themselves. This point will be developed in more detail below in the discussion of "Hero-worship."⁸⁸

13.4.4 The Right and Wrong of the Relative Morality: The Two Paths and the Stages of Evolution

The third chapter on the "Ethical Science" is entitled "Right and Wrong." It begins with a description of the two paths, the well-known *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti mārgas* of Śāṃkhya philosophy, which together are termed "evolution"⁸⁹ in the *Text Books*. This translation transfers these concepts, which did not appear in Besant's earlier writings, into the center of (Theosophical) evolutionism. It seems that Besant only adopted the idea of the *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti mārgas* – they appear most prominently in her commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* – after the publication of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*.⁹⁰ This is an interesting point because it suggests that Besant

⁸⁶ Das, *The Science of the Emotions*, 10.

⁸⁷ The connection between Das' work and Besant's work has already been noted by Crow. He interprets two points in a totally different light to me. First, he does not credit the Indian Theosophists with any agency, but sees them as simply repeating Theosophy employing Indian terminology. I strongly disagree on this point. The other assumption I would contest is Crow's view that the system proposed in terms of bodily control served primarily to maintain control over the Theosophical Society and to claim exclusive contact with the masters. Crow, "Taming the Astral Body," 699.

⁸⁸ E.g. Annie Besant, *A Study in Consciousness: A Contribution to the Science of Psychology* (London, Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904), 325.

⁸⁹ Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 115.

⁹⁰ Besant, *Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad-Gītā*, 67.

may have learned about the concepts from one of her Indian informants, possibly Bhagavan Das, during the writing process that led to the publication of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. However, this must remain a possibility for now as several other sources can plausibly be suggested as providing the origin for her interest in the concepts (Subba Row, for example, talks about the two *mārgas* in his commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā*).⁹¹

In the *Text Books*, the two paths were translated into a concept of evolution and interlinked with the “divine will,” which latter provides the basis for human progress as it enables one to determine the difference between “right” and “wrong”: “These two paths make up what is called evolution, and along this road of evolution the Will of Īshvara in His aspect of Viṣṇu, is guiding His universe. To work with this Will is Right; to work against it is Wrong.”⁹² Interestingly, the individualist tone that is rather prominent in Besant’s Theosophical writings is somewhat subdued in the *Text Books*. Good conduct is rather presented as being connected to the general evolution of the whole world: “Speaking generally, that which is suitable to the stage of evolution which the world has reached, that which helps it onwards, is RIGHT; that which obstructs and hinders evolution is WRONG. For the will of Īshvara points steadfastly to the highest good, and guides His universe towards good.”⁹³ The aim of good conduct is declared here to be an acceleration of evolution – “helps it onwards” – by working with the will of Īshvara. At this point in the explanations in the *Elementary Text Book*, the relativity of the ethics to the stages of evolution is made explicit. It is explained that all of one’s desires that lead towards “unity” should be followed because the world at large is on the turning point from the *pravṛtti* to the *nivṛtti mārga*, with the former being equated with the lower stages of evolution and the latter with the higher stages.⁹⁴ This is repeated in the *Advanced Text Book*, in which the *nivṛtti mārga* is described as “spiritual evolution.”⁹⁵ In passing across from the lower to the higher stages, the desire the desire for “separateness” is given up and replaced by the desire for “unity.” It is this desire that is identified as marking the difference between advanced human beings and “animals, savages, and backward undeveloped Jīvātmās.”

For animals, savages, and backward undeveloped Jīvātmās, whose individuality is still very weak, separateness has still to be aimed at, and what is right or wrong for the more

91 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 92.

92 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 115.

93 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 275.

94 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 115.

95 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 274.

advanced is not yet right or wrong for them. This is what is meant by saying that morality is relative. It is related to our position in evolution, to the path we are on.⁹⁶

The quotation above points to two dimensions of evolution. First, there is a correspondence between the stage of evolution and the code of conduct maintained by the individual in this stage. Secondly, this correspondence is expanded to whole races, encompassing a “morality” of “savages” and “undeveloped” individuals in general. Such a relativized “morality” could potentially justify any kind of action. Inherent in this view of morality are hierarchical distinctions between, and biases towards and against, races: Some humans are almost equated with “animals” and are categorized as underdeveloped “savages,” a view that partly contradicts Besant’s claim that human beings are qualitatively different from animals in their evolution.⁹⁷ This perspective was, however, controversial within the Theosophical Society and forms part of the general concept of the “Quickening of Evolution” (see Chapter 8.2). The idea of the relativity of morality is translated in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* into the idea of the *āśrama* system and the *varṇas*.

13.4.5 Recontextualization in Theosophical Evolutionism: The *Āśrama* System and the *Varṇas*

In the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*, the *āśrama* system and the *varṇas* are described as guidelines for ways of conduct that are fitting for the stage of evolution one has reached. Social status, as well as changes due to life cycles, are recontextualized and located within the grand scheme of evolution and individual progress.

The *Āśramas* and the *Varṇas* were given in order to shew people what kind of virtues they should aim at, in the particular place and time in which they find themselves, and thus to help on their orderly evolution. As all men have not the power nor the time to find out for themselves the Will of *Īshvara*, the *Shâstras* have been given to tell us of that Will, and so to help us in distinguishing between Right and Wrong.⁹⁸

The *Āśramas* and *Varṇas*⁹⁹ are presented as guidelines the following of which allows one to be secure that one is acting in line with the divine will, the “Will of *Īshvara*.” These guidelines, it is claimed, were championed by the “*Shâstras*.” *Dharma* is presented in the *Text Books* as a set of virtues corresponding to the

⁹⁶ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 115.

⁹⁷ Besant, *Reincarnation*, 61–62.

⁹⁸ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 117.

⁹⁹ The terms are given here as they appear in the *Text Books*, without the normal diacritics.

stages of evolution. Adopting these virtues would “help [the person] on their orderly evolution,”¹⁰⁰ which we can understand as another way of saying that it will “accelerate their evolution.” The Âshramas and the Varṇas are discussed in the *Text Books* as an example of the laws given by Manu. The “four Âshramas [the *Text Books* state] are dictated by the facts and laws of individual evolution; and the rules of the four Castes by the facts and laws of human evolution at large.”¹⁰¹ What are identified as the social rules of Indian society are described as parts of the ancient wisdom religion that were institutionalized in order to facilitate the evolution of mankind and all “jivas.” We read that these universal “divisions” according to the *varṇas* and *âśramas* are to be found everywhere. As is the case with the claim about the exalted position of Manu (see below), the Indian system is evaluated as the most concrete and thus the system that is best able to help individuals forward in their evolution.

The Shastras are transferred into the Theosophical master narrative through the claim in the *Text Books* that “the ancient Sages and Seers [. . .] have left to us a complete outline of the scheme of evolution of our world-system, and have also left to us general rules for so dealing with our own life and the lives of others.”¹⁰² The most prominent of these “ancient Sages and Seers” in the *Text Books* is Manu, and, with the exception of the *Bhagavadgītā*, the *Manusmṛti* is the most frequently quoted scripture in the *Text Books*. The *Manusmṛti* was the most widely translated and best known of the *Dharmaśāstras* at the turn of the 20th century, with Georg Bühler’s 1886 translation in the *Sacred Books of the East* remaining the standard translation for over a hundred years.¹⁰³ In the *Text Books*, Manu is presented as “the great Law-giver of the race.”¹⁰⁴ Manu was translated into the Theosophical master narrative in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* and represented as a (Theosophical) master himself, with Besant adopting in her later writings the terminology of Manu as the “great ancient Law-giver” of India.¹⁰⁵

100 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 117.

101 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 279.

102 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 279.

103 Patrick Olivelle and Suman Olivelle, *Manu’s Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mânava-Dharmasâstra*, South Asia Research (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3–4.

104 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 4.

105 Annie Besant, “The Ancient Ideal of Duty: Speech Delivered at the 27th Anniversary, 1910, of the Srinivasa Mandiram and Charities, Bangalore,” in *For India’s Uplift: A Collection of Speeches and Writings on Indian Questions*, ed. G.A. Natesan, 2nd ed., rev. and enl (Madras: G.-A. Natesan, 1917), 7; Annie Besant, *India Bond or Free? A World Problem* (London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, Ltd, 1926), 20.

Manu is further described as the producer of the *Pitris* and of numerous “divine and human races.”¹⁰⁶ The *Pitris* are discussed prominently in Blavatsky’s *The Secret Doctrine*¹⁰⁷ and in several of Besant’s writings¹⁰⁸ as those beings, also called the *Manasaputras*, who brought about the swifter progress of humanity in the past, a view that was connected to the idea that there is a qualitative difference in evolution between humans and animals (see Chapter 6.7). Although the role of the *Pitris* is not discussed in detail in the *Text Books*, it is stated that “the full meaning of descent from *Pitris* is ascertainable only by study of occult science.”¹⁰⁹ In the light of the status given to Manu as a (Theosophical) master, this statement can be understood as a two-step relationalization: 1) Manu is first relationalized to other (religious) Law-givers and placed in an exalted position as the producer of the *Pitris*. This is a move of hierarchical genealogical relationizing, as Manu can be understood as the ancestor of all later “law-givers.” Then, 2) it is stated that the “full meaning” can only be understood through “occult science,” which can be equated with Theosophy. This can be described as a move of hierarchical epistemological relationizing.

It can be observed that numerous elements, such as the *varṇas* and *āśramas*, were translated into (Theosophical) evolutionism and relationized a) to other religions and b) to Theosophy. Similar translations of a wide range of elements will be discussed in the following section, beginning with the *guṇas*, which are discussed as characteristics of certain stages of evolution in the *Text Books*.

13.4.6 The *Guṇas* as Bodily Tendencies which Determine the Path of Human Evolution

The transition between the two paths, *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti mārgas*, is described in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* as the result of bodily tendencies that accord with the composition of the three *guṇas*: *tamas*, *rajas*, *sattva*.¹¹⁰ This is an interesting example of the incorporation of Śāṃkhya terminology in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*. Physical explanations concerning tendencies within the bodies leading to higher stages of evolution are common in Annie Besant’s Theosophical writings, although she usually employs language that is more

¹⁰⁶ Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 202.

¹⁰⁷ E.g., Blavatsky, *The Secret Doctrine*, 114–17.

¹⁰⁸ Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 423–25; Besant, *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul*, 14–15.

¹⁰⁹ Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 202.

¹¹⁰ Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 286–87.

rooted in “Western” science.¹¹¹ But Besant also refers to the *guṇa* in several instances, especially in connection with the transitions from one tendency to another in the evolution of humans.¹¹²

The general trajectory of the process of development presented in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* tends towards the development of the higher qualities associated with the sattvic *guṇa*. We read in the *Text Books* that “When Sattva asserts itself man begins to realise the littleness of efforts directed towards the personal self [. . .] He takes a calm and broad view of all things. He discriminates between the real and the unreal.”¹¹³ Here we find included in the description of the sattvic quality of evolution the two main characteristics of the first two preliminary stages of initiation: *viveka*, discrimination “between the real and the unreal,” and *vairāgya*, indifference,¹¹⁴ “a calm and broad view” with regard to worldly objects (see Chapter 8.2).

This is an instructive piece of evidence for the repetition in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* of the view that the preliminary stages of initiation, with their main aim of “Quickening Evolution,” serve as the basis for ethical instruction. It can also be observed that several elements, such as the *guṇa*, the *varṇas*, and the *āśrama* system, are translated into this evolutionary scheme in the *Text Books*. The integration of these books in the Indian educational system involved, then, an act of de- and recontextualization. In the next section, another de- and recontextualization will be discussed, that of the Indian epics, which were drawn upon in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* to provide numerous illustrations of the ethics expounded therein.

13.5 The Indian Epics and Heroic Ideals

In 1904, Besant wrote: “Hero-worship is often decried because a perfect ideal is not possible to find among men living in the world, but a partial ideal that can be

111 See, e.g., Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 28–29; Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man*, 14; Besant, *Evolution of Life and Form*, 14; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 67–68; Besant, *Man and His Bodies*, 59. Interestingly, in Dvivedi’s *Monism or Advaitism?*, as well as in *Rāja-Yoga*, references to the *guṇas* can be found in connection with evolution. See, e.g., Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 51; Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 49; Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 23–24; Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, 36. Tracing these possible continuities must remain a research desideratum for the time being.

112 She does so most prominently in *The Ancient Wisdom* and in *The Path of Discipleship*. See, e.g., Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 95; Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 17.

113 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 286.

114 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 77.

loved and emulated is a help in quickening evolution.”¹¹⁵ The idea of “worship” as a means for spiritual uplift and the cultivation of universal love already had a significant place in Besant’s early Theosophy,¹¹⁶ but the idea of Hero-worship seems to have found its way into her thought only around 1900. This shift was most likely a result of her interactions with her Indian collaborators in the Central Hindu College, such as Das, Sris Chandra Vasu, and others.

Ethical principles are illustrated in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* using stories drawn from the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*.¹¹⁷ The passages cited in the *Text Books* would most likely have been familiar to students at the Central Hindu College, since two volumes prepared by Besant on the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* belonged to the canon of books used in the college. Some paragraphs of the text in the *Elementary Text Books* were taken verbatim from Besant’s *The Story of the Great War*, published in 1899, and her *Shrī Râma Chandra*, published in 1901.¹¹⁸

In the *Text Books*, the stories from the Indian epics illustrate the right way of conduct and provide heroic ideals for the reader to live up to. The ethics expounded in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* are accompanied throughout by illustrative stories from the Indian epics, and this is especially true in the *Elementary Text Book*. These principles were then explicitly connected in the *Advanced Text Book* to what are presented there as core teachings of “Hinduism”, such as sacrifice (=yajña), debt (=karma), and the duty that results from one’s debts¹¹⁹ (=dharma).¹²⁰ These translations of both key terms and the broader narratives of the Indian epics are de- and recontextualized in the ethics of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* in such a way that “Hinduism” is presented as conveying the ideal model of a morality that is able to accelerate evolution.

115 Besant, *A Study in Consciousness*, 405–6.

116 See, e.g., Besant, *Reincarnation*, 56; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 83 Besant, “Theosophy and its Practical Application,” 313; Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 196–197, 394.

117 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 125–29.

118 See Annie Besant, *The Story of the Great War: Some Lessons from the Mahābhārata for the Use of Hindu Students in the Schools of India* (Benares, Adyar, London: Theosophical Publishing Society; Theosophist Office, 1899); Annie Besant, *Shrī Râma Chandra: The Ideal King*, Central Hindu College Lectures II (Benares, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901), Some Lessons from the Rāmāyaṇa for the Use of Hindu Students in the Schools of India.

119 It is explained in the *Text Books* that, due to karmic effects, humans owe certain debts to numerous others, such as the ancestors, the devas, and so on. Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 103–4. These are to be repaid by sacrifices and good conduct. See Chapter 13.9.

120 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 293–97.

The idea of orientation towards the ideal and towards those who are more advanced is understood in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* as a means for a temporary elevation which goes on to become permanent when one manages to maintain a constant orientation towards the ideal.¹²¹ This concept was not alien to Annie Besant's writings,¹²² but it figures more prominently in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. There, "heroism" is repeatedly connected to the stories of the *Mahābhārata* and even more prominently to that of Rama, the protagonist of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. This motif was familiar to Victorian society due to the publication in 1844 of Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. Carlyle's ideas about manliness as it manifested in certain historical persons, who he described as almost God-like hero figures, influenced not only the perception of Victorian Christianity as masculine but was also adopted in mimetic fashion by reform Hindus.¹²³ This appearance of this motif in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* and in Besant's presentation of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Mahābhārata* can be described as a recontextualization of the structure "Western Heroism" into the Indian epics.

In the *Advanced Text Book*, heroism is linked to the virtues elaborated above and in particular to the idea of help: "Compassion and Pity readily give rise to *Protection* of the weak, whenever they are threatened by those stronger than themselves, and in protecting them *Heroism* appears, the cheerful risking of one-self for the sake of a weaker."¹²⁴ Help, Heroism, and Self-Sacrifice go hand in hand in the *Advanced Text Book* with the feeling of love towards the less evolved, a feeling which demands that the more advanced help to elevate their inferiors. Another virtue discussed in connection to those of an inferior status is "*Liberality*." This is described as "a virtue [. . .] the virtue of *Charity*, is one which has been placed by Hinduism in the very first rank. दानम्, gift, has always been an essential part of every sacrifice, and the feeding of Brāhmaṇas has been no less essential."¹²⁵ This statement illustrates well how the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* proclaimed a unified vision of "Hinduism" in which certain virtues were deemed to be essential.

121 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 382. See also Chapter 13.4.

122 See, e.g., Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 376; Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 46–47. However, the motif can be found prominently in the books on the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa* by Besant, which were also meant for use as school books. Besant, *The Story of the Great War*; Besant, *Shrī Rāma Chandra*.

123 Veer, *Imperial Encounters*, 89–90.

124 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 383.

125 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 383–84.

13.6 Sat, Chit, Ânamam: Thought-Power instead of Consciousness and Love as the Guiding Principle for Universal Happiness

The qualities of the “Spirit” are described in the *Text Books* as “Sat, Chit, Ânamam – Being, Thought-Power and Bliss.”¹²⁶ These qualities are of great importance for the argument that love should be the guiding motivation for moral actions. The *Text Books* explain the interconnection of “Sat, Chit, Ânamam” as follows: Reason, which is the effect of “chit,” can guide these feelings of love towards the realization of the highest “Bliss,” which can only be found in *brahman*. Therefore, virtues which aid in “unification,” as a general principle that stands in opposition to “division,” were understood as being based on *brahman* and, consequently, one is able to make swifter evolutionary progress if one is in the possession of these virtues.¹²⁷

The *Text Books* explain that the impulse of “Jîvâtâmâ” to look for outer objects will gradually lead to a discrimination between desirable and non-desirable objects. The process of rethinking one’s desire for such objects is triggered by the “rebuffs of pain,”¹²⁸ and these rebuffs are, the authors maintain, therefore necessary if one is to realize the difference between temporal bliss and eternal bliss. In the course of this process, men develop a “center of I-ness”¹²⁹ which becomes the separating principle for as long as their knowledge remains limited. However, the accumulation of knowledge – which is here equated with experience – leads to the center eventually comprising “the great centre of the Universe, the centre of Îshvaric existence [. . .] and becomes the possessor of universal knowledge.”¹³⁰ This statement combines Advaita Vedântic elements, the “Ahankâra,” with theistic ideas of an “Îshvaric existence.” The theistic nuance here recalls quite strongly Subba Row’s concept of “Hinduism” (see Chapter 12).

The progression of the “Jîvâtâmâ” is explained step by step in more detail: 1) The rushing out to objects; 2) Learning that this might lead to pain; 3) The development of the qualities of “discrimination,” “prudence,” “forbearance,” and “toleration”;¹³¹ and finally 4) The guidance of one’s whole life by the principle of love.¹³² As a result, “the ahankâric mind becomes Manas, or the reflection of

126 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 11.

127 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 135.

128 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 304.

129 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 304.

130 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 305.

131 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 304–7.

132 These are all qualities that are listed as belonging to the preliminary stages of initiation (see Chapter 8.2).

the Universal Mind, the emotions also break through the barrier of indriyas and ascend to Buddhi, and reflect the life of Íshvara within. Verily then the Trinity of Âtmâ, Buddhi and Manas becomes a Unity, and the man a Jîvanmukta.”¹³³ The concept of the Âtmâ-Buddhi-Manas is deeply rooted in the Theosophical idea of the constitution of man and was well-known among Theosophists at the time.¹³⁴ Similarly, the term “Jîvanmukta” was probably known to at least some of the Indian pupils and was also the highest stage of initiation described by Besant in *The Path of Discipleship*.¹³⁵

The keynote of this process of evolution is the pursuit of “happiness.” The authors explain that happiness is eventually found in the “self” because it is essentially the same as “Íshvara.” Finding the “self” means relying on the qualities of the “self,” and these are described as “Íshvara,” “purity, wisdom and bliss, Sat, Chit and Ânanda.”¹³⁶ Realizing the “self,” by which the authors mean that one becomes Íshvara, which is all bliss, is described as the object of the ethical philosophy expounded in the *Text Books*.¹³⁷ The translation of Ânandâ as “bliss” is also prominent in Dvivedi’s writings.¹³⁸ But it is interestingly absent in Bhagavan Das’ *The Science of Emotions*.

It is notable that “Sat, Chit, Ânandâ” is translated here as “purity, wisdom and bliss,” while a few pages earlier it was translated as “Being, Thought-Power and Bliss.” “Chit” is most significant in this respect, as will be seen below, the translation as “thought-power” in the earlier version hints towards an important concept that runs through the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* and becomes intelligible in the light of the Theosophical tradition. In its translation as “wisdom” and in relation to the idea that it forms the basis of “reason,”¹³⁹ “chit” is presented as the main principle that eventually enables one to realize the unity of all beings. “Wisdom” can likewise be read here as a reference to the “ancient wisdom,” which would mean that what is referred to here is derived

133 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 307.

134 Sometime also referred to as the monad or the higher triad, it was understood as the immortal, reincarnating part of human beings. Blavatsky, *The Theosophical Glossary*. Besant also often refers to Âtmâ-Buddhi-Manas. See, e.g., Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 214–15; Besant, *The Seven Principles of Man*, 59.

135 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 109. See also Chapter 8.2.

136 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 310.

137 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 310.

138 See, e.g., Dvivedi, “The Adwaita Philosophy of Sankara,” 14–15; Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 54; Dvivedi, *Râja-Yoga*, (translations) 12–13.

139 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 265.

from a universal transcendental higher knowledge. Interestingly, “chit” is also translated elsewhere as “consciousness.”¹⁴⁰ This translation is an essential element in Dvivedi’s explanation of the working of consciousness,¹⁴¹ but in the *Text Books* “chit” and consciousness are not so closely linked. However, the idea of different stages of consciousness and the expansion of consciousness that ultimately leads one to reach the consciousness of Īśvara, which is key to Dvivedi’s notion of “chit,” is present in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*,¹⁴² as it is also in Besant’s writings¹⁴³ and in Row’s Theosophical thought.¹⁴⁴

Another paragraph in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* gives us yet a third translation of “Sat, Chit, Ânandâ,” this time as “Pure Being, Pure Intelligence, Pure Bliss.”¹⁴⁵ Undoubtedly, when translating it is not possible to define a one-to-one correspondence between words from different languages because words have to be rendered according to their particular contexts. However, in this instance, the conceptual distance between the various translations makes it almost seem as if several different authors have offered differing translations on different pages or that the authors collectively have deliberately adopted a variety of renderings. What can be seen in the paragraphs considered here is that this merging with Īśvara – in some cases “*brahman*” is used interchangeably with “Īśvara” – was identified as the goal of evolution. In the *Text Books*, this merging is more closely linked to “Universal Happiness, Universal Welfare, by uniting the separated selves with each other and with the Supreme Self”¹⁴⁶ than it is in the other examples considered in the present book.

13.7 Thought-Power and Emotional Power as Means for Helping Others: Cosmic Ideation and Its Repetition in Human Beings

In Chapter 11 of the *Elementary Text Book*, it is explained that “a virtue helps to produce a virtue in another, and a vice a vice, so that we may learn how to help others to rightness of thought and action, and thus promote their happiness. By showing love to others, we awaken love in them; by showing hate, we awaken

140 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 82.

141 Dvivedi, *Râja-Yoga*, (translations) 4–6. See also Chapter 11.4.

142 See Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 94–95, 143, 303.

143 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 91. See also Chapter 8.2.

144 Row, *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*, 5 See also Chapter 12.8.

145 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 47.

146 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 258–59.

hate.”¹⁴⁷ The view articulated here points towards the idea that one’s emotions and thoughts can have a great influence on others. Viewed through a Theosophical lens, this phenomenon can be explained by reference to the thought images and thought-forms which emerge when one produces a thought.¹⁴⁸ These forms attract similar forms and can cluster together so that they might ultimately have a very significant influence on the one who originally formed the thought.¹⁴⁹

The concept of thought-forms is important to Annie Besant’s Theosophy. Besant argues that this creative power shows man’s divinity, because thought-forms are the lesser reflection of God’s ability to create the world through his thoughts, which serve as a medium for his creative power. As we have seen above, this was also a motif in Subba Row’s writings, in which he speaks of cosmic ideation.¹⁵⁰ We also find this idea in Besant’s work, where it is usually termed “Divine ideation.”¹⁵¹ The same idea is described by Dvivedi with the phrase “divine ideation,” although Dvivedi differs – at least in his early writing – in thinking that this ideation was not a deliberate action taken by a God.¹⁵² In Besant’s view, and here we see how close the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* are,

One of the objects of theosophical teaching, partly lifting up the veil of the unseen world, is to give men a sounder basis for conduct, a more rational appreciation of the causes of which the effects only are seen in the terrestrial world. And few of its doctrines are more important in their ethical bearing than this of the creation and direction of thought-forms.¹⁵³

Besant claims here that “conduct” is one of the main issues of the Theosophical Society. The ethical component in Besant’s writings was closely linked to the idea of the “Quickening of Evolution.” The “thought-forms” and “thought-powers” as they appear in her writing are important because they have the potential to work on the higher planes of being and they also have, as mentioned above, the ability to elevate human beings to divinity. The control of these thought-powers was thus one of the main characteristics of the masters in Besant’s Theosophy. The training of this power was, perhaps unsurprisingly, also extremely important for aspirants.¹⁵⁴ I argue that this element in Besant’s thought constitutes part of the background to the last chapter of the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*.

147 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 214.

148 Besant, *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul*, 45.

149 Besant, “The Supreme Duty,” 188–89; Besant, *Karma*, 17; Besant, *Reincarnation*, 36.

150 Row, “A Personal and an Impersonal God,” 138.

151 Besant, *Reincarnation*, 30–31.

152 Dvivedi, “The Purânas,” 196.

153 Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 81.

154 Besant, *Thought Power*, 73.

“Chit” is translated in the *Text Books* as “Thought-Power” (see above)¹⁵⁵ and is connected to a notion of psychological reaction to certain modes of behavior, in the sense that “an emotion – and the virtue or the vice that is its permanent mood – when exhibited by one person to another, provokes in that other a similar emotion, virtue or vice.”¹⁵⁶ These emotions have the potential to either amplify each other or to eradicate each other. The virtues that will be elaborated on below were interpreted as the foundation of a strong nation because the “student of to-day is the citizen of to-morrow.” In the next section we will see that the nation and the Empire are understood in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* as communities which have the potential to form the basis for the realization of universal unity.

13.8 Excursus: Hindu Nationalism and British Royalism

The motif of “love and compassion” is characteristic of *bhakti* traditions. The practices of *bhakti* are described in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* as practices that aim to extend the feeling of love: “The cultivation of devotion is by meditating on the Object of devotion, by worshipping Him, by reading about Him, and by listening to, talking to and associating with those who are superior in devotion.”¹⁵⁷ As a direct consequence, it is realized that God is everything and that he is manifested fully in one’s superiors, and “Reverence to the Sovereign, the Head of the State, comes naturally.”¹⁵⁸ After the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, King Edward VII ascended to the throne.¹⁵⁹ The death of the old Queen and the coronation of the new King were probably still fresh in the minds of the people of the Empire in 1903, when the *Advanced Text Book* was published. “Patriotism” was the virtue that sprang from the other virtues of “*Loyalty, Fidelity and Obedience*” towards the King, “which make a good subject”:¹⁶⁰ “The motherland, the country as a whole, is looked up to as an ideal, as an object of reverence, to be served and worked for above and beyond all else. Though, as a whole, the country is greater than the patriot, the patriot has the power of helping his country by his service.”¹⁶¹ This idea of service for the greater good is repeated and extended to the “motherland,” which was India in the first instance but “Britain” in the second. This unique

155 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 11.

156 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 393.

157 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 340.

158 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 343.

159 Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914*, 397.

160 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 344.

161 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 345.

mixture of “Indian nationalism” and “Royalism” relating to pan-Indian “Hinduism” and to the British King and Empire will again be encountered below.

13.9 The Importance of Virtues for the “Quickening of Evolution”

So far, the general ideas of the *Text Books*’ ethics, and the foundations on which they rely, have been discussed. I now turn to consider the virtues relating to the bodies which surround the “self.” The aim described in the *Text Books* is the development of “the great virtue called self-control – the control of the lower selves by the higher Self, of the bodies by the Jīvâtma.”¹⁶² The appearance of the idea of “self-control” here can be read as a reference to several of the preliminary stages of initiation as they appear in Besant’s thought, but most prominently to “dama, control of the senses and the body” and to “shama, control of the mind.”¹⁶³ Several of the dimensions of this control as it is discussed in *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* can be identified as belonging to Annie Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution.” Most prominent among these is the idea of the purification of the lower bodies by the undertaking of daily practices.¹⁶⁴

With respect to the “Sûkshma Sharîra,”¹⁶⁵ the *Text Books* explain that the In-driyas¹⁶⁶ were “largely guided by animal appetites, which are distinctively râjasic.”¹⁶⁷ From this it follows that one should not trust one’s senses because the

162 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 139.

163 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 79–80.

164 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 313.

165 The Sûkshma Sharîra is described in the *Advanced Text Book* as the subtle body which comprises several koshas. It is composed from the subtle physical world of the different ethers of that region in which only manas exists. Between the region of manas and the physical body is the kâma-manas, in which manas is connected to the desires (kâma). In this intermediate region, two sets of indriyas (“organs”) play an important role: one, the “karmendriyas,” are the organs of action which belong to the lower bodies (the Sthûla Sharîras), and, second, the “jñânendriyas,” the organs of knowledge (Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 153–56). There is still no study that exhaustively discusses the differences between the various conceptions of the human constitution within the Theosophical Society. The best publication in this respect is that by Julie Chajes (née Hall). However, she focuses on the “Western” influences on the conceptions within the Society and is mostly concerned with Blavatsky (cf. Chajes (née Hall), “The Saptaparṇa,” 11–47). As it is not the aim of the present book to discuss the conception of the constitution of man in the Theosophical Society, a further discussion of the concepts expounded in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* must remain a research desideratum.

166 See previous footnote.

167 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 314.

senses are tainted by likes and dislikes and they thus lead to separateness. Hence, the preliminary stages of initiation demand that “the mind should be guided by its own discriminative faculty [viveka and shama], and should then subdue the senses [dama],”¹⁶⁸ a process that aims at “indifference to worldly objects, Vairâgya.”¹⁶⁹ Consequently, “the mind, when wedded to the indriyas, becomes rājasic. When wedded to Buddhi, it becomes sâttvic. The mind of an average man is normally rājasic at the present day. He should make efforts to change it to sâttvic.”¹⁷⁰ When the mind is rajasic, it is constantly concerned with the outer world and is driven by the objects around it. In this state it “is compared to a chariot, which is constantly being drawn away in ten different directions by ten horses, which are the ten indriyas.”¹⁷¹ In pursuit of this goal, it is recommended that one should turn one’s mind to more abstract thoughts and away from concrete thoughts in order to avoid it being distracted: “The training of the mind is man’s most important duty, and next to this follows the control of speech and actions. At the same time, he must not neglect his physical body. All the vehicles forming his body must be controlled and made harmonious with each other.”¹⁷² To reach this point, it is necessary to develop several characteristics.

The *Text Books* refer to the *Manusmṛiti* 6, 92, which includes “some of the characteristics needed,”¹⁷³ and to *BhG* 16, 1–3, which provides an “exhaustive list”¹⁷⁴ for the achievement of full control over one’s mind, speech, bodies, and action. In the next section, I will discuss the translation of *BhG* 16, 1–3 in the *Sanâtana Dharma Advanced Text Book*.

13.9.1 Translation within the Theosophical Society; The *Bhagavadgītā* and the List of Virtues

The list of virtues drawn from *BhG* 16, 1–3 is provided twice in the *Advanced Text Book*, once on page 291, as a general description of the virtues, and a second time on page 318, where it is embedded in a discussion of the specific virtues. When comparing the two versions of the list, three points stand

168 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 314.

169 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 78.

170 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 315–16.

171 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 316.

172 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 317.

173 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 317.

174 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 318.

out: 1) The second list is most likely based on Besant’s 1896 translation; 2) However, both of the lists in the *Text Book* differ in at least some respects from Besant’s translation (see chart below); and 3) There are some major differences between the first and the second versions of the list given in the *Text Book*.

A quick survey of some of the best-known *Bhagavadgītā* translations of the time,¹⁷⁵ as well as of some of the *Bhagavadgītā* translations circulating in and around the Theosophical milieu,¹⁷⁶ will show that there was no consensus regarding how the list of virtues given in *BhG* 16, 1–3 should be rendered (see Table 8). In the light of this survey, the conclusion that the model for the second list on page 318 of the *Advanced Text Book* was Annie Besant’s *Bhagavadgītā* translation seems at least plausible. In addition, as I have argued elsewhere, there is no evidence that Bhagavan Das was involved in the 1896 edition of Annie Besant’s translation.¹⁷⁷ From this starting point, it seems at least reasonable to doubt whether Bhagavan Das was single-handedly responsible for the selection of the Sanskrit texts in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, as is claimed in the later editions of the works.¹⁷⁸ Nonetheless, the differences between the versions on page 291 and page 318 still requires an explanation.

175 Charles Wilkins, *The Bhāgvat-Gēētā, or: Dialogues of Krēṣhṇā and Ārjōōn, in Eighteen Lectures; with Notes* (London: The East India Company (C. Nourse), 1785), Translated From the Original, in the Sānskrēēt, or Ancient Language of the Brāhmāns, 115; J. Cockburn Thomson, *The Bhagavad-Gītā: Or, a Discourse Between Kṛiṣhṇa and Arjuna on Divine Matters* (Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1855), A Sanskrit Philosophical Poem, 103; Kāshināth Trimbak Telang, *The Bhagavadgītā with the Sanatsugātīya and the Anugītā, The Sacred Books of the East* 8 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882), 114.

176 Mohini Mohun Chatterji, *The Bhagavad Gītā, or: The Lord’s Lay* (Cambridge (Massachusetts): John Wilson & Son, 1887), 234–35; William Quan Judge, *The Bhagavad-Gita: The Book of Devotion*, 9th ed. (New York: The Theosophical Publishing Co., 1913), Dialogue Between Krishna, Lord of Devotion, and Arjuna, Prince of India, 110; Edwin Arnold, *The Song Celestial, or: Bhagavad-Gītā (From the Mahābhārata) Being a Discourse Between Arjuna, Prince of India, and the Supreme Being Under the Form of Krishna; Translated from the Sanskrit Text* (London: Trübner & Co., 1885), 144.

177 “There is no evidence that Bhagavan Das helped to edit either the first or the second edition, which latter was published in 1896” (see Mühlematter, “Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge”). He is not credited for doing so, at least, and if he did one would have to explain why his name was prominently included only in the 1905 edition as co-author and then excluded again in the later editions.

178 In a 1916 edition of the *Elementary Text Book*, the preface outlining the authorship of the *Text Books* was not yet included. Interestingly, the title of the publishers changed from the Board of Trustees to The Managing Committee. The Managing Committee, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics* (Benares: Central Hindu College, 1916). The claim of authorship is then found from 1939 onwards in the editions published by The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar. Theosophical Publishing House, *Sanātana-Dharma*;

Table 8: Overview of the Translations of BhG 16, 1–3. All lines underlined with grey include changes from one translation to another. By the author.

Sanskrit	Besant's <i>BhG</i> 1896	<i>SD Advanced Text Book</i> , page 291	<i>SD Advanced Text Book</i> , page 318
abhayaṃ	fearlessness	fearlessness	fearlessness
sattvaśuddhir	cleanness of life	sāttvic purity	clean-living
jñānyogavyavarthitḥ	steadfastness in the Yoga of wisdom	steadfast pursuit of wisdom	steadfastness in the Yoga of wisdom
dānaṃ	almsgiving	charity	almsgiving
damas	self-restraint	control of the senses	self-restraint
yajñāś	sacrifice	sacrifice	sacrifice
svādhyāyas	study of the Shāstras	study	study of the Shāstras
tapas	austerity	austerity	austerity
ārjavam	straightforwardness	uprightness	straightforwardness
ahiṃsā	harmlessness	harmlessness	harmlessness
satyam	truth	truthfulness	truth
akrodhas	absence of wrath	absence of anger	absence of wrath
tyāgaḥ	renunciation	resignation	renunciation
śāntir	peacefulness	peace of mind	peacefulness
apsiśunam	absence of crookedness	avoidance of calumny	absence of crookedness
dayā bhūeṣu	compassion to living beings	pity for all beings	compassion to living beings
aloluptvaṃ	uncovetousness	absence of greed	uncovetousness
mārdavaṃ	mildness	gentleness	mildness
hrīr	modesty	modesty	modesty
acāpalam	absence of fickleness	absence of restlessness	steadfastness

Table 8 (continued)

Sanskrit	Besant's <i>BhG</i> 1896	<i>SD Advanced Text Book</i> , page 291	<i>SD Advanced Text Book</i> , page 318
tejaḥ	vigour	energy	energy
kṣamā	forgiveness	forgiveness	patience
dhṛtiḥ	fortitude	endurance	fortitude
śaucam	purity	purity	purity
adroho	absence of envy and pride	freedom from hatred and from pride	absence of envy and pride ¹⁷⁹

“Damas” is explicitly mentioned in the list. It is also one of the “mental qualities” that one must have in the “shatsampatti” stage of preliminaries to initiation. “Patience,” as a translation for *kṣamā*, is also included in the list. This rendering is especially interesting because it differs from the translation given by Besant in 1896. I argue that this change was deliberately adopted in order to adapt the passage to the wording she uses elsewhere in relation to the stages of initiation. The list also includes several virtues – such as “absence of wrath,” “peacefulness,” “mildness,” and the “absence of envy and pride” – which would correspond well with “*Titiksha*, endurance, a patient bearing of all that comes, a total absence of resentment.”¹⁸⁰

The main point made in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* concerning these virtues is that the bodies and the mind must be trained to go along with the rider (the inner Self), rather than allowing the horse (the outer bodies) to direct the rider.¹⁸¹ The metaphors of riding and the reference to *BhG* 5,34 are also found in *In the Outer Court*¹⁸² and in *The Path to Discipleship*,¹⁸³ which suggests at least some dependency. Although at the present state of research these translations processes cannot be analyzed in more detail, this provides another piece of evidence which suggests that the editing process of the *Text Books* was a complex affair, as it throws into question the supposition that Das singlehandedly provided all the Sanskrit texts and their translations. The translation of *BhG* 16 1–3 into the stages of

¹⁷⁹ All lines underlined with grey include changes from one translation to another.

¹⁸⁰ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 82.

¹⁸¹ *Manusmṛti*. xii. 3, as translated in Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 319.

¹⁸² Besant, *In the Outer Court*, 59.

¹⁸³ Here the riding metaphor is missing. Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 60.

initiation also serves as an example of how translation can be understood as a process of hybridization.

13.9.2 The Subjugation of the Mind as the Key to “Righteousness” and “Happiness”

The subjugation of the mind is characterized by one’s insight that one is different from one’s lower bodies.¹⁸⁴ This subjugation is called “Abhyāsa”¹⁸⁵ in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, and it is said that “this Abhyāsa will naturally strengthen Vairāgya, the absence of desire for personal and selfish ends.”¹⁸⁶ “Vairāgya” is described by Annie Besant as a preliminary stage to initiation (see Chapter 8.2), and of the one who achieves it, it is said that he “will establish himself in that constant mood of righteousness and performance of duty.”¹⁸⁷ Righteousness is understood here to be “truth” in the sense of being “real,” which is to say in the sense of the unity of *brahman* and self.

This insistence on righteousness as the only way to happiness in this world or in any other is characteristic of the Sanātana Dharma, whose very heart is duty, as justice is its key-note and unalterable law its life-breath. A man obtains every thing that he has duly earned, neither more nor less; every debt must be paid; every cause must be followed by its effect.¹⁸⁸

“Righteousness” and “happiness” are interconnected in this view because the discharging of one’s “duty” is understood as the guarantee that the “law” will maintain justice. Bearing in mind that the corresponding Indian concepts are translated in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*, the point could be rephrased as follows: Following one’s own *dharma* (duty) for the sake of *yajña* (righteousness, help) is the guarantor of karmic justice (law), which will eventually lead to *mokṣa* (union, bliss). “The virtue of *Content*,” the *Advanced Text Book* continues, “springs from a full recognition of this fact.”¹⁸⁹ The virtue of “Content” can be equated with “titiksha, edurance,” which is described by Besant as a result of one’s insight into the “good law.”¹⁹⁰ We

184 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 319.

185 In general, *abhyāsa* means (yogic) practice. In Advaita Vedānta it is often discussed as if *abhyāsa* is one of the means by which to overcome *avidyā*. Śaṅkara, for example, was critical of the use of *abhyāsa*. In contrast, Maṇḍanamiśra saw it as useful means for achieving this end. Bartley, “Vedānta”.

186 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 328.

187 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 328.

188 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 331.

189 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 331.

190 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 82.

read in the *Text Books* that “the contented man is happy under the most unfavourable circumstances, the root of his happiness being in himself.”¹⁹¹ This fits well with the description given in *The Path of Discipleship*.

Virtues Directed towards Superiors

One’s superiors are, the *Text Books* hold, “God, the Sovereign, Parents, Teachers, and the Aged.”¹⁹² This is illustrated, as are many other passages in the *Elementary Text Book*, by stories from the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa*. The main virtues that one should develop in relation to God are defined as “devotion” and “subjugation under the divine will,” while that which one should exhibit in relation to the Sovereign is described as “loyalty.”¹⁹³ One form of this loyalty is identified in the following way.

Patriotism, the love of one’s country, and *Public Spirit*, caring for the nation more than for oneself, are virtues that are so closely akin to loyalty that they should never be separated from it. ‘King and Country’ are the Object of true loyalty. No man should be without this love of country and the readiness to sacrifice himself for his native land.¹⁹⁴

Given the context of the *Text Books*, this passage can be read as an appeal to Hindu nationalism, but the use of the phrase “King and Country” here relationizes India to the British Empire. This interesting ambivalence can be traced through Besant’s oeuvre.

The virtue relevant to one’s parents is “obedience,”¹⁹⁵ which is also the primary virtue one should exhibit towards one’s “teacher.” “Reverence” and “service”¹⁹⁶ are added to the list of virtues directed towards teachers, while “reverence” is also the virtue due towards the aged. These virtues are described as resulting from a feeling of love, which starts out as a general feeling but then grows into “universal love”¹⁹⁷ through the process of evolution.

The *Sanātana Dharma Advanced Text Book* expands the list of virtues given in the *Elementary Text Book*. In the *Elementary Text Book*, “reverence” is presented as one of the key virtues in relation to one’s superiors. This is repeated in the *Advanced Text Book*, but to reverence is now added

Humility, the willing recognition of comparative littleness, unassociated with pain and coupled with the readiness to submit to guidance; by *Faith* in, and therefore *Submission* to, His

191 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 332.

192 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 153.

193 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 155.

194 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 156–57.

195 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 157.

196 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 161.

197 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 315.

wisdom; and by *Devotion* and *Gratitude* responding to His compassion, leading to complete *Self-Sacrifice* in His service.¹⁹⁸

Several similar motifs are also present in the stages of initiation as described by Besant. First, “faith” is key to the “shraddhâ” preliminary stage.¹⁹⁹ “Faith” in the abilities of the master as the notion appears in Besant’s Theosophy finds a parallel in the *Text Books* in “faith” in the wisdom of God. Secondly, “love and compassion” are attributed to the “hamsa” stage of initiation (see Chapter 8.2.7). In addition, the virtues of “submission” and “self-sacrifice” are leitmotifs in Annie Besant’s Theosophy.

These virtues are illustrated by and attributed to characters of the *Mahābhārata*, with Bhīṣma and Prahlāda being presented as models for these virtues.²⁰⁰ The constant references to the Indian epics serve an extremely important role. 1) They have a didactic significance. By illustrating the virtues in a known setting – Indian students would probably have been familiar with the stories of the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* – the virtues are connected to pre-existing knowledge and are thus more likely to be understood. 2) These illustrations recontextualize “Theosophical” ideas in the Indian epics. 3) They can be read as appeals to pan-Indian “Hinduism,” since these references imply that there is a single “Hinduism.” 4) This “Hinduism” provides an accessible route to the ancient wisdom religion and was therefore epistemologically hierarchized to other religions.

Virtues in Relation to Parents and Teachers

The last category of superiors is the “Parents and Teachers” to whom one owes the same virtues as one does to God and King, “and we may add to them the virtues of *Gentleness*, *Trustfulness* and *Teachableness*.”²⁰¹ In the case of “parents,” these virtues should be offered unconditionally because “parents are given to him by his *prārabdha*²⁰² karma.”²⁰³ Therefore, parents are understood

198 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 338.

199 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 86.

200 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 338.

201 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 348.

202 In the Advaita tradition, *prārabdha karma* is one of the three different kinds of karma, or, better, of the temporarily structured effects of karma. The *prārabdha karma* refers to past karma which is unfolding its effect in the current life, and these effects cannot be changed (Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview*, 106). This concept of different karmic effects was well-known to Besant (see Besant, *The Ancient Wisdom*, 326; Besant, *Karma*, 47). Dvivedi also repeatedly refers to it in *Monism or Advaitism?* and *Rāja-Yoga*. See, e.g., Dvivedi, *Rāja-Yoga*, (translations) 31; Dvivedi, *Monism or Advaitism?*, 67.

203 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 353.

as especially fitting for the present stage of evolution. In the case of the teacher, the pupil often chooses the teacher himself and therefore must judge with his own reasoning whether the teacher has real authority. This is because, the *Text Books* explain,

in India especially, where the spirit of devotion to teachers is strong, having come down from the time when the teacher was a true teacher, there is exceptional danger of the misplacing of faith, and consequently there is exceptional need for preserving a balance of mind and for rejecting false claims.²⁰⁴

This is a pragmatic adaption to the perceived reality of the situation in India, but it also acts as a reference to the idea of the degeneration of the present era due to materialism.

Virtues in Relation to Equals

The first category of “equals” identified in the *Text Books* are the equals in the family, in particular the wife and the husband. While the books maintain that husband and wife are equals, the virtues relevant to each are nevertheless presented differently. Husband and wife “are one, not two; love makes the two into one – love protective, sheltering, tender, on the side of the husband; love yielding, sweet, devoted, on the side of the wife.”²⁰⁵ Despite the rhetoric of equality, we see quite clearly here that the *Text Books* in fact maintain an inequality between husband and wife.

Love and devotion are presented as the key virtues of wives because “a wife who truly loves and serves her husband gains more of inner development and knowledge than she can gain by long austerities and painful penances.”²⁰⁶ This position is linked to the idea of the stage of evolution of women as wives, since love in the form of submission and faithfulness is seen as the fitting virtue for this stage.

For relationships with equals outside the family, several additional virtues are added: “hospitality,”²⁰⁷ “readiness to forgive wrongs,”²⁰⁸ and “urbanity.”²⁰⁹ All of these virtues are based on the principles of love and compassion and are once again illustrated using stories from the Indian epics, especially the *Rāmāyaṇa*. These virtues directed towards equals are understood as being important because

204 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 354.

205 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 183.

206 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 179.

207 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 182.

208 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 188.

209 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 189.

those who are one's equals are the closest to oneself, and relations to them thus have the greatest potential for leading one to realize the essential unity of everything. In these relations, the feeling of "love" can be extended to the universal level. The virtues which should be practiced in the family and towards other equals in order to cultivate them as general virtues towards the world are "Uprightness, Fair Dealing, Trust, Honour, Straightforwardness, Urbanity, Fidelity, Fortitude, Endurance, Co-operation – these are virtues which are necessary for happy and prosperous social life."²¹⁰ In addition, "readiness to forgive injuries is a virtue necessary for peaceful living"²¹¹ and "toleration is an allied virtue that may be practised towards equals or towards inferiors [. . .] Tolerance has always been a characteristic of Hinduism, which has never sought to convert men from their own faith."²¹²

Several of these virtues can be linked either to the preliminary or to the actual stages of initiation, but tolerance provides the most striking example. Tolerance is identified as characteristic of the third preliminary stage, "uparati,"²¹³ and it is understood as being genuinely "Hindu." Interestingly, this idea of "tolerance" as a characteristic of "Hinduism" was also perpetuated by Gandhi,²¹⁴ among others, and featured in academic discourses.²¹⁵ Whether "Hinduism" "is" genuinely tolerant was widely discussed in the past and is still discussed now. For example, Paul Hacker maintained that "tolerance" in "Hinduism" is essentially a strategy of inclusivism in which all other forms of religion are understood as belonging to the same system but as inferior components.²¹⁶ Malinar maintains that tolerance was promoted by several notable representatives of "Hinduism," such as Gandhi and Radhakrishnan, but that this was not necessarily the opinion of the majority.²¹⁷ There are no in-depth studies regarding the influence of Theosophy on this notion of "tolerance" in "Hinduism," but it seems plausible that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* influenced this view.

In the *Advanced Text Book*, this "tolerance" is described as being "based on the belief in the One Self, and the reverent acceptance of the infinite variety of Its

210 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 370.

211 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 370.

212 Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 371.

213 Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 81.

214 Bergunder, "Experiments with Theosophical Truth," 399.

215 Stietenron, "Hinduism".

216 Paul Hacker, "Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus," *Saeculum* 8 (1957).

217 Malinar, *Hinduismus*, 20. For a broader discussion of the question of tolerance in "Hinduism", see Harold Coward, "Tolerance and Responses to Religious Pluralism," in Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.

intellectual manifestations. Hence Hinduism has ever been permeated by the large-hearted toleration which is the very spirit of Īshvara.”²¹⁸ “Tolerance” should thus be the ideal for all true “Āryans” in the view of the authors of the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books*: “Such is the noble and liberal teaching of Hinduism, and it should shape the thoughts of every true Āryan, so that he may never fall into the error of trying to belittle or injure any of the religions of the world. Let him be tolerant even to the intolerant, and thus set a good example.”²¹⁹ Intolerance, by contrast, is equated with “sectarianism”²²⁰ and is identified as “undermining the ancient noble toleration of Hinduism.”²²¹ Therefore,

the true Āryan [. . .] must look on all Hindu sects as members of his own family, and refuse to quarrel with or to antagonise any. And he must look outside the pale of Hinduism, and see in the other religions that surround him rays of the same Spiritual Sun in which he himself is basking, and thus spread peace over India, and make possible for her united national existence. Let his religious watchword be ‘Include,’ not ‘Exclude,’ since the Self is One.²²²

The notion of an essential “unity” is put forward here, which appeals to Hindu nationalism. This inclusivist thinking is linked to an idea of the epistemological superiority of a pan-Indian “Hinduism,” a notion that comes close to Hacker’s idea about the inclusivism of “Hinduism.”²²³

Virtues in Relation to Inferiors

Chapter 10 in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* turns to the topic of the “Virtues and Vices in Relation to Inferiors.” The first category of “inferiors” are children, especially in relation to their parents, and the *Text Books* maintain that parents should show “*Tenderness, Compassion, Gentleness, Kindness.*”²²⁴ As the King is the most superior among men in his kingdom, the guiding “duty of *Protecting the Weal*: is incarnated in the righteous King, and it is the fulfilment of this duty which awakens the loyalty of his subjects.”²²⁵ When the virtues due to the King are recalled, we can see that the system elaborated in the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* sets up a reciprocity of moral obligations. The *Text Books* warn of

218 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 371.

219 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 373.

220 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 379.

221 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 379.

222 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 380.

223 Hacker, “Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus”.

224 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 197.

225 Board of Trustees, *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 200.

the danger which is connected with the shewing out of tenderness and protection to the weaker than ourselves is the vice of *Pride*. It arises from *ahamkâra*, that gives the sense of separateness of 'I' and 'you', and thinks more of the fact that 'I am helping this weaker one,' than of sharing what is really a common store with one temporarily shut out from it by his separate form. By letting the mind dwell on one's own usefulness and power to do good, pride is awakened, and quickly ruins the good-work that has been performed. None that wears a separate body may escape the power of this subtlest and most dangerous of foes, that is known as *ahamkâra*.²²⁶

The "sense of separateness" here is given as a translation for "ahamkara," and identified as the major enemy of the one who seeks to do "good-work." Pride is also identified as one of the "five fetters" mentioned in Besant's *The Path of Discipleship*.²²⁷

Showing the virtues towards inferiors has a direct effect on them, the authors of the *Advanced Text Book* maintain, because "compassion and pity seek, as does all love, to lessen the distance between itself and its object, to raise its object towards itself."²²⁸ In receiving this compassion and pity, the inferior might temporarily be elevated to a higher stage of evolution and his evolution can therefore be quickened by the assistance of the superior.

"*Appreciativeness*, the full recognition of all that is best in them,"²²⁹ is understood as a necessary requirement to motivate inferiors to bring out their best, while "*patience* is also most necessary in all dealings with inferiors; lesser ability generally implies less quickness of understanding, less power to grasp or to perform, and the superior needs to practice patience in order not to confuse and bewilder the inferior."²³⁰ Patience is mentioned in all the lists of stages of initiation discussed in this book.

Let the student then remember in all his relations with his inferiors to cultivate sympathy and compassion and active beneficence. If in the family he shows these virtues to the younger and to the servants, in his later life in society and in the nation these virtues will still mark his character, and he will become a true philanthropist, a benefactor of his community and of his country.²³¹

Here we can see an idea that is frequently repeated throughout the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*: the view that the training of the virtues and an adherence to a certain code of conduct will be beneficial in the future. Implicit in this idea

²²⁶ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book*, 205.

²²⁷ Besant, *The Path of Discipleship*, 107–8.

²²⁸ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 382.

²²⁹ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 387–88.

²³⁰ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 388.

²³¹ Board of Trustees, *Sanâtana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book*, 392.

is a notion of education as an endeavor that forms students to become that which their teachers intend.

In this light, the *Text Books* should be read as “books of initiation” in line with Besant’s notion of the “Quickening of Evolution.” It must, however, be noted that the “Quickening of Evolution” is not simply “adopted” but is de- and recontextualized while numerous Indian concepts are translated into it. This points to multifaceted meshing processes of hybridization in which numerous actors were involved. The *Text Books* should be understood as the products of these processes instead of conceptualizing them as the products of Das’ and Besant’s authorship.

13.10 Preliminary Conclusion: The “Science of Ethics” as the Means of the “Quickening of Evolution” and Preparation for Initiation

The *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* are instructive examples of hybridized texts within the global colonial discursive continuum around the year 1900. In the previous section, I have sought to illustrate how the preliminary stages of initiation presented in Annie Besant’s concept of the “Quickening of Evolution” were expanded into a concrete code of conduct in the *Elementary* and the *Advanced Text Books*. Almost all of the preliminary stages, including the different mental qualities and attributes, are to be found in the “Science of Ethics” that is presented in the *Text Books*. As has been shown in the previous chapters, the uptake of these qualifications was mediated by Indian Theosophists, such as Manilal Dvivedi. Their interpretation as stages of initiation was modeled by Blavatsky in *The Voice of the Silence* and then adopted by Dvivedi in the second edition of his *Râja-Yoga*. These texts were most likely received by Annie Besant, who then elaborated her description of these stages in *The Path of Discipleship* and *In the Outer Court*. Both of these works emerged from numerous encounters in the Indian Middle Class and connected highly diverse fields within the global colonial discursive continuum.

Although the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* should be understood as the products of meshing processes of hybridization rather than as products of Besant’s authorship, I argue that the ethics expounded therein are nevertheless deeply indebted to her Theosophical thought. On the basis of these observations, I argue that the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* were written in pursuit of the goal of the “Quickening of Evolution” of the students at the Central Hindu College, with initiation into Theosophy as their primary aim. These principles were recontextualized in an Indian context and retranslated into several Hindu concepts. This thus serves as an instance of the meshing processes of hybridization in

which this hybrid knowledge was presented as genuinely “Hindu,” which points towards a move of relationalization. This double-sided process of translation, re-translation, and de- and recontextualization with an overarching trajectory of relationalization can be read as forming part of the negotiations of concepts from asymmetric positions based on power relations that took place in the global colonial discursive continuum. This view will be elaborated in the next section.

13.11 Multiple Relationalization and the Involvement of the Author

The analytical tool abductively developed in this book has proven to be useful in several instances in this chapter on the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*. Several meshing processes of hybridization were identified by describing the traces found on the textual level. One of the key hybridization processes discussed here is translation, as the *Text Books* include numerous Sanskrit texts and quotations from Hindu scriptures, as well as many specific terms and phrases translated from these sources. Translation is usually accompanied by a process of de- and recontextualization. In several cases, as, for example, with the *āśramas* and *varṇas*, relationalization was deployed in order to establish relationizings of these elements to other religions, philosophies, or systems of ethics. In one instance, in which Manu was presented as the ancestor of the *Pitris*, a relationizing to the “occult science” was introduced which aimed at claiming a hegemonic position for Theosophy (= occult science).

14 Conclusion

At the top of this small hill, you have found yourself at the zero point of the world, at the centre of time itself. Paradoxically, for Greenwich to be the centre of the world in time it must be inscribed with the alterity of place. Stand to the left-hand side of the brass strip and you are in the Western hemisphere. But move a yard to your right, and you enter the East: whoever you are, you have been translated from a European into an Oriental.²³²

(Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire*, 1995)

Greenwich – as the epitome of the British desire to explore, describe, measure, categorize, map, understand, rule, dominate, and conquer the world – touches the center of this book. Only “move a yard” and “you have been translated from a European into an Oriental.” There is only a “brass strip” dividing “East” from “West” and preventing one from being “translated” from the one into the other: There is only the social construct, the desire to categorize, in order to *know* who we are, that lies in that yard between “East” and “West.” This desire was so powerful that it remains up till today the basis for all kinds of dichotomies: “East” and “West,” “civilized” and “uncivilized,” “first world” and “third world,” and, as some have suggested, even that between “global north” and “global south.” All these dichotomies can only exist together and are only brought into existence in relation to each other. The relations between these opposites are the “in-betweens,” the “stairwells” described by Bhabha, that “hybridize” that which must “already be hybrid” because “hybridity,” in the sense of a resistance towards totalization, is the condition that ideas can be repeated, transferred, de- and recontextualized, and relationized. All these processes of “hybridization” establish new and alter existing relations.

In the present book, I have analyzed those processes in the Indian Middle Class from which the notions of the Theosophical stages of initiation emerged. Both the Theosophical Society as a “mediating structure” and its members as “actors” were parts of a larger discursive field which I have identified as the (uppercase) “Indian Middle Class.” This is distinct from the notion of the (lowercase) “Indian middle class” as a social stratum. The (uppercase) “Indian Middle Class” is only one of the “fields” in which all of these actors (often members of the (lowercase) “Indian middle class” and “Western” Theosophists) were involved: While encountering each other, they at the same time realized connections between a multitude of other discursive fields.

The stages of initiation that emerged from these encounters were the corner stones of the grand scheme of Theosophical evolution, which was based on a

232 Young, *Colonial Desire*, 1.

notion of self-development. This path of self-development was elaborated and systematized by Annie Besant in her concept of the “Quickening of Evolution,” according to which the stages of initiation formed the last few yards of the path. Both the “Quickening of Evolution” and the stages of initiation were re-contextualized in the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books*, the textbooks for religious instruction of the Central Hindu College, as the basis for the moral education expounded therein. The Central Hindu College was later incorporated into the Benares Hindu University, the first Indian Hindu University, where the *Sanâtana Dharma Text Books* were used as textbooks for religious and moral instruction from 1915 on.²³³ The morality discussed in the *Text Books* provided several sets of virtues, each of which is relative to particular stages of the individual’s evolution. Manifesting these virtues would secure a swift progress towards initiation for the pupils of the Central Hindu College. This moral education should be understood as part of the grand scheme of Theosophical evolution; as such, it aims at initiation and the establishment of a more advanced humanity.

14.1 The Emergence of the Stages of Initiation and the “Quickening of Evolution” From the Indian Middle Class: Mapping out a Multifaceted Discursive Field

This book has identified the “Quickening of Evolution” as one of the fundamental topics of Besant’s early Theosophy. Besant’s view is based on an idea of evolution as self-improvement directed towards the acceleration of one’s own evolution. Initiation is regarded as the stage of this evolution during which the most rapid progress can be made. On each succeeding stage of initiation, a set of qualities and virtues is developed while certain powers, often identified as the *siddhis*, are acquired. These include powers which correspond with the display of clairvoyant faculties by Besant and Leadbeater.

In sum, the “Quickening of Evolution” provides a program that mediates between the two poles of the Master Paradox (see Chapter 7.1). The Theosophical masters were conceptualized as evolutionarily highly developed human beings: According to the Theosophical account, on the usual evolutionary path, it would take almost countless reincarnations to reach the level of a master. At the same time, the masters were understood as teachers who conveyed their wisdom to others through education. The vast evolutionary gap between the

²³³ At the current stage of research, it is unclear how long they were used as such.

masters and their students, ordinary human beings, could be bridged by a method which provided swifter progress, Besant’s “Quickening of Evolution.”

The Voice of the Silence, one of the late works of H. P. Blavatsky, has often been described as an important book for Theosophy, and is frequently referred to in the primary sources as central text of the Society. Surprisingly, there have been no previous studies that analyze the contents of this book. The close reading of Blavatsky’s *The Voice of the Silence* provided in the present book showed that the work is intended as a book of initiation. Not only does its structure as a dialogue between a master and a chela suggest such an interpretation, but so too does the description of the stages of initiation which can be found therein. These stages are presented in language that is opaque at times and loaded with references to a wide range of Theosophical concepts. Applying the analytical tool described above allowed the conceptualization of this work as a “hybrid” book based on “already hybrids.” Interestingly, there is a direct link to Manilal Dvivedi’s work in this context, for Blavatsky relied on Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga* in her description of the stages of initiation.

As a book of initiation, *The Voice of the Silence* was also pivotal for Annie Besant’s own initiation by the Theosophical masters, with it being alleged that Besant met a Theosophical master for the first time after she read the work. Besant presented the stages of initiation later in a systematized way in her *The Path of Discipleship* and *In the Outer Court*, and these two works should thus also be read as “books of initiation.” These texts provide the clearest exposition of Besant’s notion of the “Quickening of Evolution.”

Both *The Voice of the Silence* and Annie Besant’s notion of the “Quickening of Evolution” emerged from numerous encounters in the “Indian Middle Class.” The Indian members of the Theosophical Society were initially seen in this discursive field as the experts on “Hinduism,” while the non-Indian members were the experts on “occult” matters. This gradually changed around 1890. At this time, the non-Indian members started to claim expertise on “Hindu” matters, while the Indian members tried to claim authority over occult matters as well. Describing these dynamics as relationalization has allowed the identification of certain formulations as markers for “hybridization processes.” These formulations aimed at claiming hegemonic positions in the discourse.

Manilal Dvivedi’s *Rāja-Yoga* is of great interest in the context of this discourse. I have argued that Dvivedi’s work was the blueprint for the idea of the stages of initiation in Theosophy. Being itself an “already hybrid,” it was the starting point for numerous “hybridization processes” which led to the uptake of rājayogic states of meditation and the Advaita Vedānta concept of approaching the guru as stages of initiation in the grand scheme of Theosophical evolutionism.

Another key player in this discourse was T. Subba Row. Row's work developed from a presentation of Advaita Vedānta that denied theistic ideas to a presentation of a theistic *bhakti* Advaita Vedānta in his *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita*. His ideas concerning the merging with the Logos as the goal of human evolution and about the acceleration of this process seem to have been the blueprints for the later reception of "Hinduism" in the Theosophical Society. His work provides a paradigmatic description of the discursive dynamics in the Theosophical Society. Row claimed superiority for his theistic *bhakti* Advaita Vedānta not only over other systems of "Hinduism" but also over Theosophy as a whole. This led to an argument with Blavatsky in which Row could not prevail. The idea of absolute tolerance towards all other religions that was propounded in the Theosophical Society proved to have boundaries of its own, which were negotiated between the Indian and the non-Indian Theosophists around the 1880s. Row played a pivotal role in this negotiation.

The mapping out of the discursive field from which emerged the Theosophical ideas of the stages of initiation as the culmination of the "Quickening of Evolution" provided the background against which I conceptualized the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* as "hybrid" books of initiation. Several of the preliminary and the actual stages of initiation were identified as the blueprints for the ethics discussed in the *Text Books*. In some instances, the stages are explicitly named in these institutional texts for religious instruction.

The combination of these ethics with ideas about the *āśrama* system and the *varṇas* translated these notions of Indian social stratification into a scheme of (Theosophical) evolutionism. Following the ethics and ways of conduct described in the *Text Books* would help students to accelerate their own evolution, that of the nation, and, ultimately, the evolution of all of humanity. The nationalistic and, at times, royalist undertones of the *Text Books*, together with their views on hero worship, make them peculiar writings which differ in some important respects from Besant's (early) Theosophy. These differences indicate that these textbooks were a part of a continuing "process of hybridizations" in which numerous Indian and non-Indian actors partook.

As textbooks for religious instruction in the Benares Hindu University, the *Sanātana Dharma Text Books* became yet another starting point for multifaceted "processes of hybridization" and played an important part in the emergence of Hindu nationalism. In this respect, their importance for the history of the Theosophical Society and for the wider context of the Indian independence movement, and, thus, for global history more broadly, have until now been underestimated.

In short, the present book describes a heterogeneous discursive field. Following the stages of initiation and the "Quickening of Evolution" through the

material considered here illustrates that “processes of hybridization” do not lead to discontinuities but rather provide continuity within new and altered relations. Referring to Foucault’s ideas about genealogy, and their inherent difficulties, Bergunder writes: “It is never a decision between one or the other. There is neither pure continuity nor pure discontinuity; there is always both, and scholarly assessment necessitates balance between them.”²³⁴ Thinking of genealogies in terms of “processes of hybridization” while employing the analytical tool developed in this book allows one to “balance between” “pure continuity” and “pure discontinuity” because it helps one to think beyond ideas of “purity” and dichotomies of “continuity” and “discontinuity.” It allows the drawing of complex pictures of “exchange” processes while simultaneously maintaining heterogeneity and describing the succession of knowledge as a complex “metaprocess of meshing hybridizations.”

The analysis of these processes of hybridization shows that the Theosophical Society was neither “purely Western” nor “purely Eastern,” but part of a wider “field of encounters” that was embedded in the “global colonial discursive continuum.” The Indian and non-Indian Theosophical actors realized multifaceted connections in this continuum. This conclusively shows that the Theosophical Society as a structure was a significant cultural broker at the turn of the centuries from the 19th to the 20th, connecting Indian and non-Indian discourses alike by a process of mutual – but not necessarily equal in terms of power-asymmetries – agency of both “Easterners” and “Westerners.” This book thus provides a substantial contribution to a fundamental reconceptualization of the Theosophical Society and indicates numerous research desiderata which, when analyzed thoroughly, will draw an even more complex, and therefore more comprehensive, picture.

14.2 A View of Theosophy that goes “Beyond”

Theosophical thought is based on an idea that several higher planes of being exist above the physical world and that humans have several (generally seven, although the number may differ see Chapter 12) bodies which correspond to the physical and the higher planes of existence. The topics identified in the Theosophical writings considered in the present book are initiation into occult knowledge, the possibility of achieving higher knowledge by developing higher faculties of perception, and the possibility of accelerating evolution by self-

²³⁴ Michael Bergunder, “‘Religion’ and ‘science’ Within a Global Religious History,” *Aries* 16, no. 1 (2016): 133.

development. Theosophical reflections on these topics are often backed by references to Indian scriptures and ancient Indian writers. Similar elements have often been discussed in the scholarship as typologies for “esotericism”²³⁵ in general or for Theosophy in particular.²³⁶ So what is new here?

For one, I understand the references to the Indian scriptures *not* as another illustration of the well-known narrative of “Theosophical orientalism,” but rather as an indicator of a fundamental and mutual “exchange process.” To analyze these processes of “exchange,” I required an analytical tool which would allow me to draw a complex picture and to describe the heterogeneity of these “exchanges.” The language of “exchange” proved to be incapable of depicting such a complex picture because it is based on a conception of the simple “trading” of ideas that has no effect on the traded nor the traders. The analytical tool developed in the present book, which is based on Bhabha’s notion of “hybridity” and on concepts from the global history approach, provides a language that is more sensitive to the alterations which are the results of such “exchanges.”

Secondly, drawing on this analytical tool allows this book to go beyond descriptions of “initiation,” the “Eastern influence,” or “Theosophical evolutionism” to consider the “meshing processes of hybridization” between “East” and “West” which established numerous new relations and altered existing ones. Analyzing these processes made it clear that dichotomous ideas, such as that of a completely distinct and monolithic “East” and “West,” are untenable. On the basis of the theoretical framework laid out in Chapters 3 and 4, the resurfacing in my sources of elements from the typologies mentioned above proves my point, rather than undermining it, because it illustrates how “processes of hybridization” establish new relations and do not destroy but alter existing ones. However, the approach taken in the present book is very different from any typological methodology because, instead of being essentialist, it draws attention to multifaceted ongoing “meshing processes of hybridization.”

14.3 An Analytical Tool to Describe Hybridization Processes on the Textual Level

The discussion of Bhabha’s concept of “hybridity” threw up evidence that he did not provide a *useful* analytical tool for describing “hybridization.” His ideas should rather be understood as non-concepts and epistemological strategies for

235 E.g. Hanegraaff, *Esotericism and the Academy*; Faivre, *Access to Western Esotericism*.

236 E.g. Godwin, *The Theosophical Enlightenment*; Lubelsky, *Celestial India*.

thinking “beyond” (see Chapter 3.2). The notion of a “non-concept” is based on Derrida’s insistence that his idea of “différance” is not a concept.²³⁷ Being a “concept” would undermine the effectiveness of *différance*, which should rather be read as a deconstructivist strategy.²³⁸ I argue that “hybridity” should be understood as a structurally similar idea. Not only is Derrida’s “différance,” and the related notion of “iteration,” the theoretical foundation for Bhabha’s “hybridity,” but “hybridity” is also described by Bhabha using a language of “hybridity” that makes his notion and his manner of writing about it an epistemological strategy rather than a concept. As such, it remains problematic as an analytical category. “Hybridity” as a figure of thought is nonetheless well established in the scholarship. The development of an analytical tool in the present book has made it possible to not only *think* beyond but also to *research* beyond.

On the textual level, it is impossible to “observe” “hybridization” directly. It can only be identified by its “traces.” This means that two levels must be distinguished when analyzing “hybridization processes”: a) the level of the “traces of hybridization,” e.g., texts, and b) the level of “hybridization,” which is to be located on the level of discourse. Developing a language which allows for the identification of “traces of hybridization” has made it possible to differentiate between modes of “hybridization.”

In sum, the analytical tool allows the identification of numerous “traces of hybridization” on the textual level. By first identifying these traces, several different processes of “hybridization” can then be described. What is usually simply called “hybridization” should rather be understood as a multifaceted “meshing of processes of hybridization.” Such a view increases the level of detail perceivable. As such, it is the precondition for a research agenda which focuses on heterogeneity instead of homogeneity and allows us to conceptualize the potential connectedness of discourses. As such, this tool is not confined to research on the Theosophical Society but can be adapted to other fields of research in Religious Studies and beyond.

²³⁷ Jacques Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of a Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 11.

²³⁸ Colebrook, “Difference,” 59.

14.4 The Notion of “Already Hybrids”: Conceptualizing Non-Originals and Fields of Encounters as Premises for “Hybridization”

Following Bhabha, “hybridity” is understood here as a necessity. For it is only if concepts resist totalization, meaning that they can be used apart from the wider contexts in which they were first uttered, and also detached from the act of their first utterance, that they can be repeated in the multitude of contexts, which repetition is indicative of their “hybridity” (see Chapter 3.1). Hence, the “movement” of ideas, either from one linguistic system into another or within the same linguistic system to different synchronous and asynchronous contexts, can be understood in terms of “hybridization processes” of “already hybrids.” These “already hybrids” all have their own historicity and are part of numerous traditions repeating them in multifaceted contexts. Movements of “already hybrids” do not happen in abstract spaces but are triggered in encounters between actors and actors or between actors and texts. Numerous “actual spaces of encounters” often constitute what I have called “fields of encounters,” such as the “Indian Middle Class” (see Chapter 5) or “early orientalism” (as described in Chapter 10).

However, one cannot encounter any “originals” in these “fields of encounters” but only “already hybrids” in which numerous discursive fields are connected. These fields are all part of the global colonial discursive continuum in which all discursive fields are “potentially,” but not “actually,” interconnected. When actors encounter each other (also via texts), these connections become actualized. This is the precondition of “hybridization processes.” Actors then translate the connections made in these encounters into relations which can be identified by their traces on the textual level. Such traces can include, among other things, transliterated or translated words, references, certain elements and/or structures, or relationizings (see Chapter 4.6).

14.5 Future Research

This book contributes to at least three fields of research: 1) research on Theosophy, 2) Postcolonialism and research on “hybridity,” and 3) global history. The first field is fast developing towards the inclusion of theoretical approaches derived from the latter two. Still, scholarship in this area is only beginning to implement sophisticated sets of theories and methodologies. My book makes a substantial contribution to this development.

In the research on the Theosophical Society, insular views prevail. What is required for a more comprehensive understanding is a view that includes the numerous fields in which individual Theosophists and the Society as a structure were engaged. The present book makes a contribution to such a view by identifying the importance of the Theosophical Society and Theosophical thought for education in India. This is not only an important part of the history of Theosophy, but also of the British Empire and of global history more generally. More fundamental research into Theosophical sources is needed to provide a foundation for future research in this area. Not only are comprehensive bibliographies and critical editions of the major Theosophical works currently lacking, but there are also no biographies of many major Theosophists which satisfy basic scholarly standards. Besant and Blavatsky might be exceptions in this respect, but, as I indicated in Chapter 8.1, numerous research desiderata also remain with respect to Besant's vita.

The analytical tool developed in this book helps one to perceive and manage an increase in complexity and a perspective on heterogeneity instead of homogeneity. However, a major difficulty is that I, as the author of the present book, constantly deploy "processes of hybridization" while elaborating my thesis. I have an interest in arguing my position and presenting it as superior to other positions when judged against epistemological or chronological criteria. Relationalization is one of the basic modes of scholarly work. I constantly refer to "distinguished scholars," "experts in the field," "instructive examples," and so on, to strengthen my argument. This is sanctioned by the scholarly tradition, but it is not *neutral*, and it is not devoid of power asymmetries. In taking this approach, I put forward another "already hybrid" based on "already hybrids" and when someone reads this text, he or she encounters these "already hybrids" which are repeated and altered in the very moment the text is read. The development of a formally structured and systematic methodology, and a constant reflection on and reevaluation of that methodology, cannot avoid this involvement, but it can at least render it more visible. It is to be hoped that in the future such a methodology will be developed based on the analytical tool introduced in the present book.

Global history makes high demands. One would have to know, or at least try to know, everything that was written about a particular period of time in order to describe all the global connections which influenced certain developments – and this would only satisfy the synchronic dimension of historical analysis. To acquire such a complete knowledge is impossible. What is possible is the development of research programs in which the complexity of "hybridization processes" can be described in more depth. That is why in the future more collaborations between scholars from diverse academic fields are needed. Bringing together

scholars of Religious Studies, Indology, and History, and scientists from different fields of the natural sciences (and hopefully many other disciplines) has the potential to assist in the development of research programs in which the complexity of “hybridization processes” can be described in more depth. The hope is that such collaboration will yield maps of networks of knowledge which would not rely on exclusion to reduce complexity but would rather feed on the inclusion of complexity. This would go *beyond* the theoretical claims of both postcolonialism and global history.

Bibliography

- A humble devotee of S'rī Gopāla Krishna. *The Panchadasī*. Bombay: The Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1912.
- A.B.C., and Henry Steel Olcott. "The Perils of Dabbling in Mesmerism." *The Theosophist* 4, no. 47 (1883): 280–81.
- Althusser, Louis. *Ideologie und Ideologische Staatsapparate: Aufsätze zur marxistischen Theorie*. Positionen. Hamburg, Westberlin: VSA, 1977.
- Amsterdamhermetica.nl. "About HHP – Western Esotericism in Amsterdam." Accessed September 30, 2019. <https://www.amsterdamhermetica.nl/esotericism-in-the-academy/esotericism-in-amsterdam>.
- Amsterdamhermetica.nl. "Programme – History of Hermetic Philosophy." Accessed September 30, 2019. <https://www.amsterdamhermetica.nl/esswe-2-4-july-2019/programme>.
- Anderson, Gerald H., ed. *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*. Grand Rapids (Michigan), Cambridge: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999.
- Andrew, F. Walls. "Hardy, Robert Spence." In Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, 280.
- Anon. *Society for the Promotion of National Education*. Adyar, unpublished.
- Anon. "The Real and the Unreal." *The Theosophist* 4, no. 47 (1883): 267–69.
- Anon. "The Panchadasi." *The Theosophist* 5, no. 11 (1884): 377–78.
- Anon. "Monism or Advaitism?" *Lucifer* VIII, no. 43 (1891): 75–76.
- Anon. "Raja-Yoga." *Lucifer* VII, no. 41 (1891): 423–26.
- Anon. "The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali." *Lucifer* VII, no. 42 (1891): 509–12.
- Anon. "The Twelve Principal Upanishads." *Lucifer* IX, no. 54 (1892): 510–11.
- Anon. "The Ma'ndu'kyopanishad with Gaudapa'da's Ka'rika's and the Bha'shya of S'ankara." *The Theosophist* XVI, no. 2 (1894): 126–27.
- Anon. "Sanatana Dharma Catechism." *The Theosophist* XXIV, no. 4 (1903): 247.
- Arnold, Edwin. *The Light of Asia, or: The Great Renunciation; Being the Life and Teaching of Gautama, Prince of India and Founder of Buddhism*. Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1879.
- Arnold, Edwin. *The Song Celestial, or: Bhagavad-Gītā (From the Mahābhārata) Being a Discourse Between Arjuna, Prince of India, and the Supreme Being Under the Form of Krishna; Translated from the Sanskrit Text*. London: Trübner & Co., 1885.
- Arnold, Edwin. *India Revisited*. London: Trübner & Co., 1886.
- Asprem, Egil. "Theosophical Attitudes Towards Science: Past and Present." In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 405–27.
- Asprem, Egil. "Beyond the West: Towards a Comparativism in the Study of Esotericism." *Correspondences* 2.1 (2014): 3–33.
- Baier, Karl. *Yoga auf dem Weg nach Westen: Beiträge zur Rezeptionsgeschichte*. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1998.
- Baier, Karl. *Meditation und Moderne: Zur Genese eines Kernbereichs moderner Spiritualität in der Wechselwirkung zwischen Westeuropa, Nordamerika und Asien*. 2 vols. 1. Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2009.
- Baier, Karl. "Modelle der Meister-Schüler-Beziehung im Christentum." In *Meister und Schüler: Tradition, Transfer, Transformation*. Edited by Jeong-hee Lee-Kalisch and Almut-Barbara Renger, 307–25. Studien für Ostasiatische Kunstgeschichte 3. Weimar: VDG, 2016.

- Baier, Karl. "Theosophical Orientalism and the Structures of Intercultural Transfer: Annotations on the Appropriation of the *Cakras* in Early Theosophy." In Chajes (née Hall), Julie, *Theosophical Appropriations*, 309–54.
- Bartley, Christopher. "Vedānta: Advaita Vedānta and the Schools of Vedānta." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Bayly, Christopher Alan. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780–1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*. The Blackwell History of the World. Malden MA, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2004.
- Bayly, Christopher Alan. "A Pre-History of the Middle Class?" In Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*.
- Bayly, Susan. *Caste, Society and Politics in India from Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age*. 1999. The New Cambridge History of India IV-3. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Beetz, Michael. "Herbert Spencer und dessen Rezeption als Sozialdarwinist." In *Streitfall Evolution: Eine Kulturgeschichte*. Edited by Angela Schwarz, 334–46. Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2017.
- The Benares Hindu University. *The Benares Hindu University Library Catalogue*. Benares: The Benares Hindu University, 1923.
- Bergunder, Michael. "The Early Turn of the Theosophical Society to 'Advaita Vedanta' and 'Hinduism' in 1882–1883: A Story of Global Religious Entanglements in Colonial British India." (forthcoming).
- Bergunder, Michael. "Gandhi, Esoterik und das Christentum." In *Esoterik und Christentum: Religionsgeschichtliche und theologische Perspektiven*. Edited by Michael Bergunder and Daniel Cyranka, 129–48. Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005.
- Bergunder, Michael. "Die Bhagavadgita im 19. Jahrhundert: Hinduismus, Esoterik und Kolonialismus." In *Westliche Formen des Hinduismus in Deutschland: Eine Übersicht*. Edited by Michael Bergunder. Halle: Verlag der Franckeschen Stiftungen, 2006.
- Bergunder, Michael. "Was ist Esoterik? Religionswissenschaftliche Überlegungen zum Gegenstand der Esoterikforschung." In *Aufklärung und Esoterik: Rezeption – Integration – Konfrontation*. Edited by Monika Neugebauer-Wölk, 477–507. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 2008.
- Bergunder, Michael. "What Is Esotericism? Cultural Studies Approaches and the Problems of Definition in Religious Studies." *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 22 (2010): 9–36.
- Bergunder, Michael. "Experiments with Theosophical Truth: Gandhi, Esotericism, and Global Religious History." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 82, no. 2 (2014): 398–426.
- Bergunder, Michael. "'Religion' and 'Science' Within a Global Religious History." *Aries* 16, no. 1 (2016): 86–141.
- Berner, Ulrich. *Untersuchungen zur Verwendung des Synkretismus-Begriffs*. Göttinger Orientforschungen 2. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1982.
- Besant, Annie. *Autobiographical Sketches*. London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1885.
- Besant, Annie. *My Path to Atheism*. 3rd ed. London: Freethought Publishing Company, 1885.
- Besant, Annie. "Karma and Social Improvement." *Lucifer* IV, no. 24 (1889): 457–63.
- Besant, Annie. *What Theosophy Is*. Theosophical Tracts no. 4. London: H.P.B. Press, date of publication not identified [1891].
- Besant, Annie. "Death – and After? The Fate of the Body." *Lucifer* Vol. XI, no. 62 (1892): 153–59; Continued from p. 61.

- Besant, Annie. *Reincarnation*. Theosophical Manuals 2. London, New York, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path; Theosophical Society, 1892.
- Besant, Annie. *The Seven Principles of Man*. Theosophical Manuals 1. New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892.
- Besant, Annie. *An Exposition of Theosophy: Reprint from "The World," N. Y. February 26, 1893*. Boston: The Boston Theosophical Publishing Co., 1893.
- Besant, Annie. "General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament: [On the Evolution of Man]." In, *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17, 157–64*.
- Besant, Annie. "Karma the Law of Causation, of Justice and the Adjustment of Effects." In, *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17, 75–81*.
- Besant, Annie. "The Supreme Duty." In, *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17, 186–90*.
- Besant, Annie. "Theosophy and Ethics." In, *The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17, 133–39*.
- Besant, Annie. "Theosophy and Its Practical Application." *Lucifer* Vol. XII, no. 70 (1893): 309–13.
- Besant, Annie. *Karma*. Theosophical Manuals 4. London, Benares, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Theosophist Office, 1895.
- Besant, Annie. *The Bhagavad Gîtâ, or: The Lord's Song*. London, Benares, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Theosophist Office, 1895.
- Besant, Annie. *The Birth and Evolution of the Soul: Two Lectures*. London, Adyar, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1895.
- Besant, Annie. Interview by "A representative of The Westminster Gazette." Wednesday, April 24, 1895. London; Mrs. Besant and the Mahatmas: How They Look and How They Are Scented; "Master Morya's" View of Mr. Judge.
- Besant, Annie. *Man and His Bodies*. Theosophical Manuals VIII. London, New York, Benares, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1896.
- Besant, Annie. *The Ancient Wisdom: An Outline of Theosophical Teachings*. London, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Benares, Madras: Theological Publishing Society; The Theosophical Book Concern; "Mercury" Office; The Theosophical Publishing Society; "The Theosophist" Office, 1897.
- Besant, Annie. *In the Outer Court*. 2nd ed. Theosophical Publishing Society: London, 1898.
- Besant, Annie. *Dharma: Three Lectures by Annie Besant, F.T.S., Delivered at the Eight Annual Convention of the Indian Section Held at Benares on October 25th, 26th., and 27th., 1898*. Benares, London, Adyar: Theosophical Publishing Society; Theosophist Office, 1899.
- Besant, Annie. *The Path of Discipleship: Four Lectures Delivered at the Twentieth Anniversary of the Theosophical Society, at Adyar, Madras, December 27, 28, 29 and 30, 1895*. 1896. 2nd ed. London, New York, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1899.
- Besant, Annie. *The Story of the Great War: Some Lessons from the Mahâbhârata for the Use of Hindu Students in the Schools of India*. Benares, Adyar, London: Theosophical Publishing Society; Theosophist Office, 1899.

- Besant, Annie. *Evolution of Life and Form: Four Lectures Delivered at the Twenty-Third Anniversary Meeting of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, 1898*. 2nd ed. London, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900.
- Besant, Annie. *Shrī Rāma Chandra: The Ideal King*. Central Hindu College Lectures II. Benares, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901. Some Lessons from the Rāmāyana for the Use of Hindu Students in the Schools of India.
- Besant, Annie. *Thought Power: Its Control and Culture*. London and Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901.
- Besant, Annie. *A Study in Consciousness: A Contribution to the Science of Psychology*. London, Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904.
- Besant, Annie. *Some Problems of Life*. 2nd ed. London, Benares: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1904.
- Besant, Annie. *Hints on the Study of the Bhagavad-Gītā: Four Lectures Delivered at the Thirtieth Anniversary Meeting of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, Madras, December, 1905*. Benares, London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1906.
- Besant, Annie. *Annie Besant: An Autobiography*. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1908. Illustrated.
- Besant, Annie. *The Three Paths to Union with God: Lectures Delivered at Benares, at the Sixth Annual Convention of the Indian Section of the Theosophical Society, October 19th, 20th and 21st, 1896*. 1896. London: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1913.
- Besant, Annie. "The Ancient Ideal of Duty: Speech Delivered at the 27th Anniversary, 1910, of the Srinivasa Mandiram and Charities, Bangalore." In *For India's Uplift: A Collection of Speeches and Writings on Indian Questions*. Edited by G.A. Natesan. 2nd ed., rev. and enl. 1–15. Madras: G.A. Natesan, 1917.
- Besant, Annie. *India Bond or Free? A World Problem*. London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd, 1926.
- Besterman, Theodore. *Mrs Annie Besant: A Modern Prophet*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1934.
- Bevir, Mark. "Theosophy and the Origins of the Indian National Congress." *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 7, 1–3 (2003): 99–115.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Culture's in-Between." In *Questions of Cultural Identity*. Edited by Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, 53–60. London: Sage, 1996.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Introduction: Locations of Culture." In Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1–27.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse." In Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817." In Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Sly Civility." In Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 132–44.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "The Commitment to Theory." In Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*.
- Bhabha, Homi K., ed. *The Location of Culture*. 1994. Routledge Classics. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern: The Question of Agency." In Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 245–82.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation." In Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*.
- Bhabha, Homi K. "Introduction: Narrating the Nation." In Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, 1–7.
- Bhabha, Homi K., ed. *Nation and Narration*. 1990. London: Routledge, 2010.
- Birch, Jason. "The Meaning of Haṭha in Early Haṭhayoga." *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 131, no. 4 (2011): 527–54.

- Birch, Jason. "Rājayoga: The Reincarnations of the King of All Yogas." *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 17, no. 3 (2013): 399–442.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* Vol. II – Theology. New York, London: J.W. Bouton; Bernard Quaritch, 1877.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of the Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* Vol. I – Science. New York, London: J.W. Bouton; Bernard Quaritch, 1877.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. "Mahatmas and Chelas." *The Theosophist* 5, no. 58 (1884): 233.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *The Key to Theosophy: Being a Clear Exposition, in the Form of Question and Answer, of the Ethics, Science, and Philosophy for the Study of Which the Theosophical Society Has Been Founded*. London, New York: The Theosophical Publishing Company; W. Q. Judge, 1889.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *The Voice of the Silence: Being Chosen Fragments from the "Book of the Golden Precepts"*. London, New York: The Theosophical Publishing Company; W. Q. Judge, 1889. For the Daily Use of Lanoos (Disciples).
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *The Theosophical Glossary*. London, New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society, 1892.
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna. *The Secret Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy*. 3rd ed., rev. 2 vols. 1. London, New York, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path Office; The Theosophist Office, 1893. Cosmogogenesis.
- "Blavatsky Study Center: Website on H.P. Blavatsky & Theosophy Including Blavatsky Archives." Accessed December 17, 2019. <http://www.blavatskyarchives.com>.
- Board of Trustees. *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Benares: Central Hindu College, 1902.
- The Board of Trustees. *Sanātana Dharma Catechism: A Catechism for Boys and Girls in Hindu Religion and Morals*. Benares: Board of Trustees, Central Hindu College, 1902.
- The Board of Trustees. *Sanātana Dharma: An Advanced Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Benares: Central Hindu College, 1903.
- Bogdan, Henrik. *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*. SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions. Albany NY: State University of New York Press, 2007.
- Bose, Phanindranath. *Life of Sris Chandra Basu*. not indicated: R. Chatterjee, 1932.
- Bowler, Peter J. *Evolution: The History of an Idea*. 3. ed., rev. and enl. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Bretfeld, Sven, and Helmut Zander. "Henry Steel Olcott: The Buddhist Catechism (India, 1881/1908)." In *Religious Dynamics Under the Impact of Imperialism and Colonialism: A Sourcebook*. Edited by Björn Bentlage et al., 472–85. Numen Book Series volume 154. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016.
- Bright, Ester. *Old Memories and Letters of Annie Besant*. London: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1936.
- Bronkhorst, Johannes. "Vedānta as Mīmāṃsā." In *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity*. Edited by Johannes Bronkhorst, 1–91. Papers of the 12th World Sanskrit Conference vol. 10.3. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2007.
- Bronkhorst, Johannes. "Ājīvika." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Brown, C. Mackenzie. *Hindu Perspectives on Evolution: Darwin, Dharma, and Design*. Routledge Hindu Studies Series. London: Routledge, 2012.

- Brown, Daniel. "John Tyndall and 'The Scientific Use of the Imagination'." In *The Poetry of Victorian Scientists: Style, Science and Nonsense*. Edited by Daniel Brown, 142–63. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 83. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.
- Brown, W. Norman. *The Saundaryalahari or Flood of Beauty: Traditionally Ascribed to Śaṅkārācārya*. Harvard Oriental Series 43. Cambridge, Mass., 1958.
- Bulwer Lytton, Edward. *Zanoni*. Novels of Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton – Library Edition XXV. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1862. Vol. II.
- Butler, Judith. *Hass spricht: Zur Politik des Performativen* [Excitable Speech. A Politics of the Performative]. 1997. Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 1998.
- Campbell, Bruce F. *Ancient Wisdom Revived: A History of the Theosophical Movement*. Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980.
- "Campbell Theosophical Research Library – Search Index of Theosophical Periodicals." Accessed December 17, 2019. <http://www.austheos.org.au/csearch/ui-search.htm>.
- Castro Varela, María do Mar, and Nikita Dhawan. *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung*. 2nd ed. rev. Cultural Studies 36. Bielefeld: transcript, 2015.
- Chajes (née Hall), Julie. "The Saptaparṇa: The Meaning and Origins of the Theosophical Septenary Constitution of Man." *Theosophical History* XIII, no. 4 (2007).
- Chajes (née Hall), Julie. *Recycled Lives: A History of Reincarnation in Blavatsky's Theosophy*. Oxford Studies in Western Esotericism. Edited by Henrik Bogdan. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.
- Chajes (née Hall), Julie, and Boaz Huss, eds. *Theosophical Appropriations: Esotericism, Kabbalah, and the Transformation of Traditions*. The Goldstein-Goren Library of Jewish Thought publication no. 21. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 2016.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton Studies in Culture / Power / History. Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000.
- Chatterjee, Partha. "The Subalternity of a Nationalist Elite." In Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 94–117.
- Chatterji, Mohini Mohun. *The Bhagavad Gītā, or: The Lord's Lay*. Cambridge (Massachusetts): John Wilson & Son, 1887.
- Colebrook, Claire. "Difference." In *A Companion to Derrida*. Edited by Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor, 57–71. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 56. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley Blackwell, 2014.
- Coleman, Emmette. "The Sources of Madame Blavatsky's Writings." In *A Modern Priestess of Isis: Abridged and Translated on Behalf of the Society for Psychical Research from the Russian of Vsevolod Sergyeevich Solovyoff by Walter Leaf*. Edited by Walter Leaf. Cambridge Library Collection. Spiritualism and Esoteric Knowledge. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1895.
- Conrad, Sebastian. *Globalgeschichte: Eine Einführung*. Beck'sche Reihe 6079. München: C. H. Beck, 2013.
- Conrad, Sebastian, and Andreas Eckert. "Globalgeschichte, Globalisierung, multiple Modernen: Zur Geschichtsschreibung der modernen Welt." In *Globalgeschichte: Theorien, Ansätze, Themen*. Edited by Sebastian Conrad, Andreas Eckert and Ulrike Freitag, 5–49. Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus, 2007.
- Cooper-Oakley, Alfred J. "Secretary's Report of Asiatic Branches." *Supplement to the Theosophist* IX, no. 100 (1888): XIX–XXV.

- Cooper-Oakley, Alfred J. "The Vedanta: A Lecture Read by the Secretary Before the Convention of the Theosophical Society, December 1887. The Quotations from and References to Sanskrit Works Have Been Supplied by Pandit N. Bhashyacharya." *The Theosophist* IX, no. 103 (1888): 411–23.
- Cousins, James H., ed. *The Annie Besant Centenary Book: 1847–1947*. Adyar: The Besant Centenary Celebrations Committee, 1947.
- Covell, Ralph R. In Anderson, *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*.
- Coward, Harold. "Tolerance and Responses to Religious Pluralism." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Cowell, George. *Life & Letters of Edward Byles Cowell*. London, New York: Macmillan & Co; The Macmillan Company, 1904.
- Crow, John L. "Taming the Astral Body: The Theosophical Society's Ongoing Problem of Emotion and Control." *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 80, no. 3 (2012): 691–717.
- Dalmia, Vasudha. "Sanskrit Scholars and Pandits of the Old School: The Benares Sanskrit College and the Constitution of Authority in the Late Nineteenth Century." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 24, no. 4 (1996): 321–37.
- Das, Bhagavan. *The Science of the Emotions*. London, Benares: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1900.
- Das, Bhagavan. *Das Central Hindu College und Mrs. Besant: An den Herausgeber des "Christian Commonwealth" London, England*. Berlin: Philosophisch-Theosophischer Verlag, 1914. Uebersetzt nach dem englischen Text herausgegeben von The Divine Life Press 614 Oakwood-Blox. Chicago Ill. U.S.A.
- Davis, Donald R. Jr. "Being Hindu or Being Human: A Reappraisal of the *PuruṣārThas*." *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 1–3, no. 8 (2004): 1–27.
- Deimann, Götz, and Norbert Deuchert, eds. *Die anthroposophischen Zeitschriften von 1903 bis 1985: Bibliographie und Lebensbilder*. Beiträge und Quellen zur Geschichte der anthroposophischen Bewegung und Gesellschaft. Stuttgart: Freies Geistesleben, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Différance." In *Margins of a Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Signatur Ereignis Kontext." In *Randgänge der Philosophie*. Edited by Peter Engelmann, 291–314. Wien: Passagen Verl., 1988.
- Deussen, Paul. *Outlines of Indian Philosophy: With an Appendix on the Philosophy of the Vedānta in Its Relations to Occidental Metaphysics*. Berlin: Karl Curtius, 1907.
- Deutsch, Eliot. *Advaita Vedānta: A Philosophical Reconstruction*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1973.
- Deutsch, Eliot, and Rohit Dalvi. *The Essential Vedānta: A New Source Book of Advaita Vedānta*. Treasures of the World's Religions Series. Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004.
- Deveney, John Patrick. "The Two Theosophical Societies: Prolonged Life, Conditional Immortality, and the Individualized Immortal Monad." In Chajes (née Hall), Julie, *Theosophical Appropriations*, 93–114.
- Dhole, Nandalal. *A Hand Book of Hindu Pantheism: The Panchadasi*. Calcutta: Heeralal Dhole, 1886.
- Dirlik, Arif. "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism." *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 2 (1994): 328–56.
- Dixon, Joy. *Divine Feminine: Theosophy and Feminism in England*. Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.

- Dodson, Michael S. *Orientalism, Empire, and National Culture: India, 1770–1880*. Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Dunlop, Knight. "The Great Aryan Myth." *The Scientific Monthly* 59, no. 4 (1944): 296–300.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "The 'Saving of Another Hindu Soul'." *The Theosophist* 5, no. 49 (1883): 25–26.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. *Rāja-Yoga: Or the Practical Metaphysics of the Vedānta*. Bombay: The "Subodha-Prakasha" Printing Press, 1885. Being a Translation of the Vakyasudha or Ḍṛgdṛśyaviveka of Bhāratitīrtha and the Aparokśānubhūti of Śrī Sankarāchārya.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "Shri Vakya Sudha: The Eternal Atman (Spirit)." *The Theosophist* 6, no. 64 (1885): 79–82; Translated, with Notes, by Manilal N. Dvivedi, F.T.S.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "Direct Cognition of the Unity of Jīva and Brahma: By S'rimat S'ankarāchārya with Notes." In Tatya, *A Compendium of the Raja Yoga Philosophy*, 1–33.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "Shrī-Vakyasudhā." In Tatya, *A Compendium of the Raja Yoga Philosophy*, 69–82.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "The Advaita Philosophy of Śaṅkara." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 2 (1888): 95–113.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "The Adwaita Philosophy of Sankara." *The Theosophist* X, no. 109 (1888): 7–18.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. *Monism or Advaitism? An Introduction to the Advaita-Philosophy Read by the Light of Modern Science*. Bombay: Soodha Prakasa Press, 1889.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. *Rāja-Yoga: Being a Translation of the Vakyasudha or Ḍṛgdṛśyaviveka of Bhāratitīrtha and the Aparokśānubhūti of Śrī Sankarāchārya*. 2nd ed. (1st 1885). Ahmedabad: Aryodaya Press, 1890.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "Fifteenth Convention and Anniversary of the Theosophical Society: At the Head-Quarters, Adyar, Madras, December 27th, 28th, and 29th, 1890." *Lucifer* VII, no. 42 (1891): 520–21; "Letter from the Learned Indian Sankrit Author, Professor Dvivedi."
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "Preface." In Tatya, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, i–vi.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "The Purānas: Philology Versus Symbology." *Lucifer* VIII, no. 44 (1891): 99–104.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "The Purānas: Philology Versus Symbology." *Lucifer* VIII, no. 45 (1891): 193–200; Continued.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "The Doctrine of Ma'ya'." *The Theosophist* XV, no. 4 (1894): 243–55.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. *The Māndūkyaopaniṣad: With Gaudapāda's Kārikās and the Bhāshya of S'ankara*. Bombay: The Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1894. Translated into English by Manilal N. Dvivedi.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. *The Imitation of S'ankara: Being a Collection of Several Texts Bearing on the Advaita*. Bombay, London: Pandit Jyestaram Mukundji; George Redway, 1895.
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai. "Theosophy Is an Idea." *The Theosophist* XVI, no. 9 (1895): 559–63.
- Ebling, Florian. "Mozarts Zauberflöte: Der Schrecken des Todes und die Macht der Musik." In *Theater um Mozart: Begleitbuch zur Ausstellung Theater um Mozart in Heidelberg und Schwetzingen vom 19. September bis 19. November 2006*. Edited by Bärbel Pelker, 127–42. Heidelberg: Winter, 2006.

- Edkins, Joseph. *Chinese Buddhism: A Volume of Sketches, Historical, Descriptive and Critical*. London: Trübner & Co., 1880.
- Eek, Sven. *Dâmodar: And the Pioneers of the Theosophical Movement*. 1965. Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1978.
- Engels, Eve-Marie. "Biologische Ideen Von Evolution Im 19. Jahrhundert Und Ihre Leitfunktion: Eine Einleitung." In *Die Rezeption Von Evolutionstheorien Im 19. Jahrhundert*. Edited by Eve-Marie Engels, 12–66. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995.
- Faivre, Antoine. *Access to Western Esotericism*. SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions. New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Faivre, Antoine. "Christian Theosophy." In Hanegraaff, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 258–67.
- Ferrier, James Frederick. *Lectures on Greek Philosophy, and Other Philosophical Remains*. 2 vols. Vol. I. Edinburgh, London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1866.
- Flood, Gavin D. *An Introduction to Hinduism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Fort, Andrew O. *Jivanmukti in Transformation: Embodied Liberation in Advaita and Neo-Vedanta*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.
- Foucault, Michel. *Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des Gefängnisses*. Suhrkamp-Taschenbuch Wissenschaft 184. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977.
- Frauwallner, Erich. *Geschichte der indischen Philosophie: Die Philosophie des Veda und des Epos. Der Buddha und der Jina. Das Samkhya und das klassische Yoga-System 1*. Salzburg: Otto Müller, 1953.
- Frederick, William Thomas. "Cowell, Edward Byles." In *The Dictionary of National Biography: Supplement*. Edited by Sidney Lee Vol. I Abbey-Eyre. Oxford, London: Oxford University Press; Humphrey Milford, 1927.
- French, James Brendan. "The Theosophical Masters: An Investigation into the Conceptual Domains of H.P. Blavatsky and C.W. Leadbeater." A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Department of Religion Studies, University of Sydney, August 2000.
- Frenschkowski, Marco. "The Science of Religion, Folklore Studies, and the Occult Field in Great Britain (1870–1914): Some Observations on Competition and Cain-Abel Conflicts." In Mühlematter; Zander, *Occult Roots of Religious Studies*.
- Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. "Veneration Despite Differences." In Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 94.
- Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand. *Discourses on the Gita: Translated from the Original Gujarati*. Ahmedabad. Navajivan Trust, 1960.
- Gardner, E. L., and Adelaide Gardner. "Mrs. Besant as Teacher." In Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 172–75.
- Ghosh, Aurobindo. "A Cheap Shoddy Import." In Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 10–13.
- Glaserapp, Helmuth von. "Hermann Jacobi." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 92 (1938): 1–14.
- Godwin, Joscelyn. *The Theosophical Enlightenment*. SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Godwin, Joscelyn. "Blavatsky and the First Generation of Theosophy." In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 15–31.
- Gold, Daniel. "Organized Hinduisms: From Vedic Truth to Hindu Nation." In *Fundamentalisms Observed*. Edited by R. S. Appleby and Martin E. Marty, 531–93. The Fundamentalism Project 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.

- Gombrich, Richard Francis. *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- González-Reimann, Luis. "Cosmic Cycles, Cosmology, and Cosmography." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. "The Theosophical Society, Orientalism, and the 'Mystic East': Western Esotericism and Eastern Religion in Theosophy." *Theosophical History* XIII, 3–28 (2007).
- Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas. "Western Esoteric Traditions and Theosophy." In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 261–307.
- Gough, Archibald Edward. *The Philosophy of the Upanishads and Ancient Indian Metaphysics: As Exhibited in a Series of Articles Contributed to the Calcutta Review*. Trübner's Oriental Series vol. 32. London: Trübner & Co., 1882.
- Hacker, Paul. "Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus." *Saeculum* 8 (1957).
- Hall, Stuart. "Wann gab es »das Postkoloniale«? Denken an der Grenze." In *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften*. Edited by Sebastian Conrad, Shalini Randeria and Regina Römheld. 2nd ed. enl., 197–223. Frankfurt am Main, New York: Campus, 2013.
- Hamlyn, D. W. "A Priori and a Posteriori." In *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Vol. 1. Edited by Donald M. Borchert. 2nd ed., 240–46. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2006.
- Hammer, Olav. "Theosophy." In *The Occult World*. Edited by Christopher Partridge, 250–59. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Hammer, Olav, and Mikael Rothstein, eds. *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*. Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J., ed. *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*. With the assistance of Antoine Faivre, Roelof van den Broek, and Jean-Pierre Brach. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *Esotericism and the Academy: Rejected Knowledge in Western Culture*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Hanegraaff, Wouter J. *Western Esotericism: A Guide for the Perplexed*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013.
- Hardy, Robert Spence. *A Manual of Buddhism, in Its Modern Development: Translated from Singhalese Mss*. London: Partridge and Oakley, 1853.
- Hardy, Robert Spence. *Eastern Monachism: An Account of the Origin, Laws, Discipline, Sacred Writings, Mysterious Rites, Religious Ceremonies, and Present Circumstances of the Order of Mendicants Founded by Gótama Budha*. London, Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1860. (Compiled from Singhalese MSS. and Other Original Sources of Information); with Comparative Notices of the Usages and Institutions of the Western Ascetics, and a Review of the Monastic System.
- Harlass, Ulrich. "Die orientalische Wende der Theosophischen Gesellschaft: Eine Untersuchung der theosophischen Lehrentwicklungen in der Zeit zwischen den Hauptwerken Alfred Percy Sinnetts." Inauguraldissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde, Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Heidelberg, August 7, 2019.
- Hawley, John Stratton. "Sanātana Dhrama as the Twentieth Century Began: Two Textbooks, Two Languages." In *Ancient to Modern: Religion, Power, and Community in India*. Edited by Ishita Banerjee-Dube and Saurabh Dube, 312–36. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Hoffmann, Ann-Kathrin. "Vom Kopf auf die Füße stellen: Waldorfpädagogik als Kulturforderung im Zeitalter des Intellektualismus?." In *Forschungsstand Anthroposophie*

- (working title). Edited by Moritz Bauer and Helmut Zander, Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, forthcoming.
- Huddart, David Paul. *Homi K. Bhabha*. Routledge Critical Thinkers. London, New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hulme, Peter. "Including America." *Ariel* 26, no. 1 (1995): 117–23.
- Imam, Abu. "Mitra, Raja Rajendralal." Accessed March 13, 2019. http://en.banglapedia.org/index.php?title=Mitra,_Raja_Rajendralal.
- Ingalls, Daniel H. H. "Śaṅkara on the Question: Whose Is Avidyā?" *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 3, No. 1 (1953): 69–72.
- "International Association for the Preservation of Spiritualist and Occult Periodicals." Accessed December 17, 2019. <http://www.iapsop.com/>.
- Jacobi, Hermann, Laugākshi Bhāskara, and Manilal Nabhubhai Dvivedi. "Review: The Tarkakamudī, Being an Introduction to the Principles of the Vaiśeshika and the Nyāya Philosophies." *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 1 (1887): 76–78.
- Jacobsen, Knut Axel. "Introduction: Yoga Traditions." In *Theory and Practice of Yoga: Essays in Honour of Gerald James Larson*. Edited by Knut A. Jacobsen, 1–27. Numen Book Series 110. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2005.
- Jacobsen, Knut Axel. "Prakṛti." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Jacobsen, Knut Axel, Helene Basu, Angelika Malinar, and Vasudha Narayanan, eds. *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*. Leiden: Brill, 2017-. <https://brill.com/view/db/enhi>.
- Johnson, Allan. "Change Is in the Air!" Accessed September 30, 2019. <http://correspondencesjournal.com/2018/04/27/change-is-in-the-air>.
- Johnson, K. Paul. *Initiates of Theosophical Masters*. SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.
- Johnson, Will J. *The Recognition of Śakuntalā: A Play in Seven Acts*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Johnston, Charles. "The Symbolism of the Upanishads." *The Path* VIII, no. 10 (1894).
- Jones, Kenneth W., and Gordon Johnson. *Socio-Religious Reform Movements in British India*. The New Cambridge History of India 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Joshi, Sanjay. "Introduction." In Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, xv–lvi.
- Joshi, Sanjay, ed. *The Middle Class in Colonial India*. Oxford in India Readings, Themes in Indian History. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Judge, William Quan. *The Bhagavad-Gita: The Book of Devotion*. 9th ed. New York: The Theosophical Publishing Co., 1913. Dialogue Between Krishna, Lord of Devotion, and Arjuna, Prince of India.
- Keller, Reiner. *Wissenssoziologische Diskursanalyse*. 3rd ed. Interdisziplinäre Diskursforschung. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2011.
- Kipling, Rudyard. "The Ballad of East and West." In *Barrack-Room Ballads and Other Verses*. 3rd ed., 75–83. London: Methuen and Co., 1892.
- Klatt, Johannes. "Röer, Hans Heinrich Eduard." *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie, Band 29*, 1889, 42–45.
- Kraft, Siv Ellen. "Theosophy, Gender, and the "New Woman."" In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 357–74.
- Kragh, Helge. *Conceptions of Cosmos: From Myths to the Accelerating Universe; a History of Cosmology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Kragh, Helge. "Big Bang: The Etymology of a Name." *Astronomy & Geophysics* 54, no. 2 (2013): 228–230.

- Krech, Volkhard. "Wie wird in Sukzessionen die Evidenz religiöser Semantiken hergestellt? Wissenssoziologische Beobachtungen." In *Sukzession in Religionen: Autorisierung, Legitimierung, Wissenstransfer*. Edited by Almut-Barbara Renger and Markus Witte, 3–21. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2017.
- Kuhn, Wilfried. *Ideengeschichte der Physik: Eine Analyse der Entwicklung der Physik im historischen Kontext*. With the assistance of Oliver Schwarz. 2nd ed. Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Spektrum, 2016.
- Kulke, Hermann, and Dietmar Rothermund. *Geschichte Indiens: Von der Induskultur bis heute*. 2nd upd. ed. München: C. H. Beck, 2010.
- Kumar, Nita. *Lessons from Schools: The History of Education in Banaras*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, London: Sage, 2000.
- Kumar, Raj, Rameshwari Devi, and Romila Pruthi. *Annie Besant: Founder of Home Rule Movement*. Jaipur: Pointer Publishers, 2003.
- Latour, Bruno. "Eine Soziologie ohne Objekt? Anmerkungen zur Interobjektivität." *Berliner Journal für Soziologie*, no. 2 (2001): 237–52.
- Lavoie, Jeffrey D. *The Theosophical Society: The History of a Spiritualist Movement*. Boca Raton: BrownWalker Press, 2012.
- Lawson, Max. "Theosophy and Education: From Spiritualism to Theosophy." *Theosophical History IV*, no. 3 (1992): 85–92.
- Leland, Kurt. "Annie Besant Shrine – Kurt Leland's Spiritual Orienteering." Accessed December 17, 2019. <https://www.kurtleland.com/annie-besant-shrine-m>.
- Lipner, Julius J. "The Rise of 'Hinduism', or: How to Invent a World Religion with Only Moderate Success." *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 10, no. 1 (2007): 91–104.
- Loomba, Ania. *Colonialism / Postcolonialism*. The New Critical Idiom. London, New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Lovejoy, Arthur O. *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University 1933. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1970.
- Lubelsky, Isaac. *Celestial India: Madame Blavatsky and the Birth of Indian Nationalism*. Sheffield, UK, Oakville, CT: Equinox, 2012.
- Lubelsky, Isaac. "Mythological and Real Race Issues in Theosophy." In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 335–55.
- Lütt, Jürgen. "The Movement for the Foundation of the Benares Hindu University." In *German Scholars on India*. Vol. 2. Edited by The Cultural Department of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, New Delhi. 2 vols., 160–95. Contributions to Indian Studies. Varanasi, Bombay: Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office; Nachiketa Publications, 1973–1976.
- Malaviya, Madan Mohan. "Service to Education." In Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 70.
- Malinar, Angelika. *The Bhagavadgītā: Doctrines and Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Malinar, Angelika. *Hinduismus*. Studium Religionen. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009.
- Malinar, Angelika. "Vom „Kanon-Fundus“ zum „variablen“ Kanon: Über den Status religiöser Texte im Hinduismus." In *Kanonisierung und Kanonbildung in der asiatischen Religionsgeschichte*. Edited by Max Deeg, Oliver Freiburger and Christoph Kleine, 57–79.

- Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte 820. Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2011.
- Malinar, Angelika. "Karmic Histories and Synthesis of 'East' and 'West': Annie Besant as Interpreter of Hinduism." In *Asia and Europa – Interconnected: Agents, Concepts, and Things*. Edited by Angelika Malinar and Simone Müller, 55–89. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2018.
- The Managing Committee. *Sanātana Dharma: An Elementary Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Benares: Central Hindu College, 1916.
- The Marquis of Dufferin and Ava. "A Microscopic Minority." In Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 3–9.
- Martin, Jane. "Entering the Public Arena: The Female Members of the London School Board, 1870-1904." *History of Education* 22, no. 3 (1993): 225–40.
- Masson, David. *Recent British Philosophy: A Review, with Criticisms*. 2nd ed. London: Macmillan & Co, 1867. Including some Comments on Mr. Mill's Answer to Sir William Hamilton.
- Mayr, Helmut. "Schlagintweit: z.T. bayer. Adel 1859." In *Neue Deutsche Biographie*. Edited by Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften 23. Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2007. Accessed February 8, 1029.
- Mead, George Robert Stow. *The Dream of Ravan: A Mystery*. London, New York, Adyar: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Path; The Theosophist Office, 1895; Reprinted from "The Dublin University Magazine," 1853 & 1854.
- Mead, George Robert Stow. "The Imitation of Shankara." *Lucifer* XVIII, no. 103 (1896): 83–84.
- Mead, George Robert Stow. "A Text-Book of Hindu Religion." *The Theosophical Review* XXXIII, no. 196 (1903): 294–95.
- Mead, George Robert Stow. "Reviews and Notices: A Synopsis of Hindu Faith and Morals." *The Theosophical Review* XXXIII, no. 198 (1904): 561–63.
- Mead, George Robert Stow. "Reviews and Notices: Mrs. Besant's 'Gītā' Lectures." *The Theosophical Review* Vol. XXXIX, no. 230 (1906).
- Metcalf, Barbara D., Thomas R. Metcalf, and Barbara Daly Metcalf. *A Concise History of Modern India*. 3rd ed. Cambridge Concise Histories. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Metcalf, Thomas R. *Ideologies of the Raj*. The New Cambridge History of India 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Meynard, Barbier de, Georg Bühler, J. Burgess, M. J. de Goeje, H. Thomson Lyon, G. T. Plunkett, Albert Socin, and Ernst Windisch. "Tenth International Congress of Orientalists, Held at Geneva: Report of the Transliteration Committee." *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* Oct. (1895): 879–92.
- Michaels, Axel. *Der Hinduismus: Geschichte und Gegenwart*. München: C. H. Beck, 1998.
- Mitra, Raja Rajendralal. "The Chan'dogya Upanishad." In Tatyā, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, 469–632.
- Mittra, Pramada Dasa. "Brahma Iswara and Maya." *The Theosophist* I, no. 1 (1879): 13–18.
- Monier-Williams, Monier. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Enlarged with Special Reference to Greek, Latin, Gothic, German, Anglo-Saxon, and Other Cognate Indo-European Languages*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1872.
- Monier-Williams, Monier. *Indian Wisdom: Or, Examples of the Religious, Philosophical, and Ethical Doctrines of the Hindus*. 2nd ed. London: Wm. H. Allen & Co., 1875. With a Brief History of the Sanskrit Literature and some Account of the Past and Present Condition of India, Moral and Intellectual.

- Monier-Williams, Monier. *Hinduism*. Non-Christian Religions Systems. London, New York: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; Pott, Young, & Co., 1878.
- Monier-Williams, Monier. "The Duty of English-Speaking Orientalists in Regard to United Action in Adhering Generally to Sir William Jones's Principles of Transliteration, Especially in the Case of Indian Languages; with a Proposal for Promoting a Uniform International Method of Transliteration so Far at Least as May Be Applicable to Proper Names." *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* Jul. (1890): 607–29.
- Monier-Williams, Monier, and Ernst Leumann. *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary: Etymologically and Philologically Arranged with Special References to Cognate Indo-European Languages.*, 1964.
- Mookerji, K. C. "Death of the Swami of Almora." *The Theosophist* 5, no. 5 (1884): 123.
- Moore-Gilbert, Bart. *Postcolonial Theory: Contexts, Practices, Politics*. 1997. London, New York: Verso, 2000.
- Moritz, Maria-Sofia. "Globalizing 'Sacred Knowledge': South Asians and the Theosophical Society, 1879–1930." PhD Dissertation, Jacobs University, April, 2017.
- Morrisson, Mark S. "The Periodical Culture of the Occult Revival: Esoteric Wisdom, Modernity and Counter-Public Spheres." *Journal of Modern Literature* 31, no. 2 (2007): 1–22.
- Mühlematter, Yves. "Charles Johnston's Interpretation of Yoga: Theosophy, Consciousness, and Spiritual Progress." In *Yoga and Sacred Texts*. Edited by Caroline Vander Stichele and Susanne Scholz. London, New York: Routledge, forthcoming.
- Mühlematter, Yves. "Philology as an Epistemological Strategy to Claim Higher Knowledge: Translational Endeavors Within the Theosophical Society." (forthcoming).
- Mühlematter, Yves. "Theosophische Identität auf Verhandlungsbasis: Westliche Wurzeln theosophischer Bhagavadgītā-Interpretationen bei T. Subba Row und Annie Besant." Masterarbeit, Philosophische Fakultät, Universität Freiburg, January 20, 2016.
- Mühlematter, Yves. "Some Will Be Ready to Expand Ere Long into the Consciousness of God': The Purpose of Human Evolution as Presented in Annie Besant's Writings." 7th Biannual Conference of the European Society for the Study of Western Esotericism (ESSWE), Amsterdam, July 02, 2019.
- Mühlematter, Yves. "Johnston, Charles (1867–1931)." In Mühlematter; Zander, *Occult Roots of Religious Studies*.
- Mühlematter, Yves, and Helmut Zander, eds. *Occult Roots of Religious Studies: On the Influence of Non-hegemonic Currents on Academia around 1900*. Okkulte Moderne 4. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2021.
- Mukerjee, Kumud Chander. "Fund in Honour of the Late Swami of Almora." *The Theosophist* 5, no. 6 (1884): 49.
- Müller, Friedrich Max. *A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners: In Devanāgarī and Roman Letters Throughout*. Handbooks for the Study of Sanskrit IV. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866.
- Müller, Friedrich Max. *The Upanishads: Part 1*. The Sacred Books of the East Vol. 1. Oxford, London: Clarendon Press; Macmillan & Co, 1879. The Khândogya-Upanishad, The Talavakāra-Upanishad, The Aitereya-Āranyaka, The Kaushītaki-Brāhmana-Upanishad, and the Vāgasaneyi-Samhitā-Upanishad.
- Müller, Friedrich Max. *The Upanishads: Part II*. The Sacred Books of the East Vol. XV. Oxford, London: Clarendon Press; Henry Frowde, 1884. The Katha-Upanishad, the Mundaka-Upanishad, the Taittirīyaka-Upanishad, the Brihadāranyaka-Upanishad, the Svetāsvatara-Upanishad, the Prasña-Upanishad, the Maitrāyana-Brāhmana-Upanishad.

- Müller, Friedrich Max. *A Sanskrit Grammar for Beginners: New and Abridged Edition Accented and Transliterated Throughout with a Chapter on Syntax and an Appendix on Classical Metres*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1886.
- Nachane, Sulochana A. "The Date of Madhusūdana Sarasvatī." *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 30, 3/4 (1949): 326–31.
- Nanda, Meera. "Madame Blavatsky's Children: Modern Hindu Encounters with Darwinism." In *Handbook of Religion and the Authority of Science*. Edited by James R. Lewis and Olav Hammer, 279–344. Brill Handbooks on Contemporary Religion volume 3. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011.
- Narayanan, Vasudha. "Bhakti." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Nehru, Jawahrlal. *An Autobiography: With Musings on Recent Events in India*. London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1938.
- Nehru, Jawahrlal. "India's Debt to Annie Besant." In Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 95.
- Nehru, Jawahrlal. "A Class in Need of Help." In Joshi, *The Middle Class in Colonial India*, 17–21.
- Nelson, Lance. "Madhusudana Sarasvatī on the 'Hidden Meaning' of the 'Bhagavadgītā': Bhakti for the Advaitin Renunciate." *Journal of South Asian Literature* 23, no. 2 (1988): 73–89.
- Nelson, Lance. "The Ontology of 'Bhakti': Devotion as 'Paramapuruṣārtha' in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and Madhusūdana Sarasvatī." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 32, no. 4 (2004): 345–92.
- Nethercot, Arthur Hobart. *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*. 2 vols. 1. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1961.
- Nethercot, Arthur Hobart. *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant*. 2 vols. 2. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963.
- Nettl, Paul. "'Sethos' und die freimaurerische Grundlage der 'Zauberflöte'." In *Bericht über die musikwissenschaftliche Tagung der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum in Salzburg vom 2. bis 5. August 1931*. Edited by Erich Schenk, 142–49. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1932.
- Neufeldt, Ronald W. "A Lesson in Allegory: Theosophical Interpretations of the Bhagavadgita." In *Modern Indian Interpreters of the Bhagavadgita*. Edited by Robert N. Minor, 11–33. SUNY Series in Religious Studies. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986.
- Nikhilananda, Swami. *Drg-Drsya Viveka: An Inquiry into the Nature of the 'Seer' and the 'Seen'*. Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Asrama, 1931. Text, with English Translation and Notes.
- Niranjana, Tejaswini. *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press, 1992.
- Olcott, Henry Steel. "Death of Subba Row." *The Theosophist* XI, no. 130 (1890): 576–78.
- Olcott, Henry Steel. *Old Diary Leaves: The True Story of the Theosophical Society*. 3 vols. 1. New York, London, Madras: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Ltd; The Proprietors of the "Theosophist," 1895.
- Olcott, Henry Steel. *Old Diary Leaves: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society*. 3 vols. 2. London, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; The Theosophist Office, 1900. Second Series, 1878–1883.
- Olcott, Henry Steel. *Old Diary Leaves: The Only Authentic History of the Theosophical Society*. 3 vols. 3. London, Madras: The Theosophical Publishing Society; Theosophist Office, 1904. Third Series, 1883–1887.
- Olivelle, Patrick. *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation*. South Asia Research. New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

- Olivelle, Patrick, and Suman Olivelle. *Manu's Code of Law: A Critical Edition and Translation of the Mānava-Dharmāsāstra*. South Asia Research. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Osterhammel, Jürgen. *Die Verwandlung der Welt: Eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts*. 2009. Historische Bibliothek der Gerda Henkel Stiftung. München: C. H. Beck, 2011.
- "Papers Regarding the Educational Conference, Allahabad, February 1911." Selections from the Records of the Government of India, Department of Education CCCCLVIII, Calcutta, 1911.
- Paramahansa, Swami, and Tallapragada Subba Row. "Advaita Philosophy." *The Theosophist* 4, no. 5 (1883): 118.
- Patridge, Christopher. "Lost Horizon: H.P. Blavatsky and Theosophical Orientalism." In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 309–33.
- Pécastaing-Boissière, Muriel, and Marie Terrier. *Annie Besant: Weisheit und Wissenschaft*. Deutsche Ausgabe, 1. Auflage. Grafting: Aquamarin Verlag, 2017. Die Biographie.
- Pellegrini, Gianni. "'Old Is Gold!': Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's Way of Referring to Earlier Textual Tradition." *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 43, 2/3 (2015): 277–334.
- Potter, Karl H. "Madhusūdana Sarasvatī." In *A Companion to the Philosophers*. Edited by Robert L. Arrington. 1. publ. in paperback, 590–92. Blackwell Companions to Philosophy 16. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2001.
- Powell, Jason. *Jacques Derrida: A Biography*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- Prakasa, Sri. *Annie Besant*. Bhavan's Book University 24. Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1954.
- Prescott, Andrew. "'Builders of the Temple of the New Civilisation': Annie Besant and Freemasonry." In *Women's Agency and Rituals in Mixed and Female Masonic Orders*. Edited by Alexandra Heidle and Joannes A. M. Snoek, 359–91. Aries Book Series v. 8. Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2008.
- Prothero, Stephen R. *The White Buddhist: The Asian Odyssey of Henry Steel Olcott*. Religion in North America. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- "Rajagopalachariar, Chakravarti." In *A Dictionary of World History*. Edited by Edmund Wright. 2nd ed. Oxford reference online premium. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2007.
- Rajagopalchariar, C. "Annie Besant and the Revival of Religion in India." In Cousins, *The Annie Besant Centenary Book*, 58.
- Ramakrishna-Vivekananda Center of New York. "Swami Nikhilananda." Accessed July 19, 2019. <https://www.ramakrishna.org/sn.htm>.
- Ramanuja Charya, N. "The Doctrine of Ma'Ya' and the Hindu Scriptures." *The Theosophist* XV, no. 2 (1893): 93–100.
- Ramanujacharya, Nallan Chakravartulu. *A Lonely Disciple: Monograph on T. Subba Row, 1856–90*. 1st ed. Adyar, Wheaton Ill. USA: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1993.
- Rambachan, Anantanand. *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity*. SUNY Series in Religious Studies. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2006.
- Rangacharia, Venkata Paravastu. "Brahma, Iswara and Maya." *The Theosophist* I, no. 4 (1880): 87–89.
- Ransom, Josephine. *A Short History of the Theosophical Society*. 1938. Madras, India: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1989.
- Rao, Conjeeveram Hayavadana. "Gough, Archibald Edward." In *The Indian Biographical Dictionary*. Edited by Conjeeveram H. Rao. Madras: Pillar & Co., 1915.
- Reinhard, Wolfgang. *Die Unterwerfung der Welt: Globalgeschichte der europäischen Expansion 1415–2015*. München: C. H. Beck, 2016.

- Renger, Almut-Barbara. "Der „Meister“: Begriff, Akteur, Narrativ." In Renger, *Meister und Schüler in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 19–53.
- Renger, Almut-Barbara, ed. *Meister und Schüler in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Von Religionen der Antike bis zur modernen Esoterik*. Göttingen: V & R Unipress, 2012.
- Renold, Leah. *A Hindu Education: Early Years of the Banaras Hindu University*. New Delhi, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Röer, Eduard Hans Heinrich. "Védānta-Sara: Or Essence of the Védānta, an Introduction into Védānta Philosophy by Sadānanda Parivrājākāchārya." *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* XIV, Part I (1845): 100–136; Translated from the Original Sanscrit by E. Roer, Librarian to the Asiatic Society of Bengal.
- Röer, Eduard Hans Heinrich. "The Kaṭha Upanishad." In Tatya, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, 404–37.
- Röer, Eduard Hans Heinrich. "The Muṇḍaka Upanishad of the Athara Veda." In Tatya, *The Twelve Principal Upanishads*, 639–68.
- Roukema, Aren, and Allan Kilner-Johnson. "Editorial: Time to Drop the 'Western'." *Correspondences* 6, no. 2 (2018): 109–15.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "The Aryan-Arhat Esoteric Tennets on the Sevenfold Principle in Man." 3, no. 4 (1882): 93–98.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "A Personal and an Impersonal God." *The Theosophist* 4, no. 5 (1883): 104–5.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "A Personal and an Impersonal God." *The Theosophist* 4, no. 6 (1883): 138–39.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "Gurus and Chelas." *Supplement to the Theosophist* 4, no. 11 (1883): 2.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "Prakriti and Purusha." *The Theosophist* 4, no. 10 (1883): 248–51.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "Sri Sankaracharya's Date and Doctrine: Question VIII." 4, no. 12 (1883).
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "The Constitution of the Microcosm." *The Theosophist* VIII, no. 92 (1887): 504–11.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "The Constitution of the Microcosm." *The Theosophist* VIII, no. 95 (1887): 699–707.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. *Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita: To Help Students in Studying Its Philosophy*. Bombay: Theosophical Publication Fund, 1888.
- Row, Tallapragada Subba. "The Occultism of Southern India." *The Theosophist* X, no. 112 (1889): 227–32.
- Rudbøg, Tim. "Helena Petrovna Blavatsky's Esoteric Tradition." In *Constructing Tradition: Means and Myths of Transmission in Western Esotericism*. Edited by Andreas B. Kilcher, 161–77. Aries Book Series., 2010.
- Rudbøg, Tim. "Point Loma, Theosophy, and Kathrine Tingley." In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*, 51–72.
- Salles, Ricardo. *God and Cosmos in Stoicism*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Śaṅkara, T. R. Srinivasa Ayyangar, and S. Subrahmanya Sastri. *Saundarya-Laharī (The Ocean of Beauty) Of Śrī Śaṅkara-Bhagavat-Pāda*. Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1937.
- Santucci, James A. "Theosophical Society." In Hanegraaff, *Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism*, 1114–23.
- Schlagintweit, Emil. *Buddhism in Tibet: Illustrated by Literary Document and Objects of Religious Worship*. Leipzig, London: Brockhaus, Trübner, 1863. With an Account of the Buddhist Systems Preceding It in India.

- Schreiner, Peter. "Yoga: Rāja Yoga." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Sharma, Arvind. *Classical Hindu Thought: An Introduction*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Sharma, Arvind. *Advaita Vedānta: An Introduction*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2004.
- Sharpe, Eric John. *The Universal Gītā: Western Images of the Bhagavadgītā*. London: Gerald Duckworth, 1985. A Bicentenary Survey.
- Shastree, Rama Misra. "The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayen, Sec'Y." *The Theosophist* I, no. 11 (1880): 287–88.
- Shastree, Rama Misra. "The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayen, Sec'Y." *The Theosophist* II, no. 3 (1880): 55.
- Shastree, Rama Misra. "The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayen, Sec'Y." *The Theosophist* II, no. 4 (1880): 83–84.
- Shastree, Rama Misra. "The Vedanta Philosophy: Expounded by the Society of Benares Pandits, and Translated for the Theosophist by Pandit Surya Narayen, Sec'Y." *The Theosophist* I, no. 8 (1880).
- Shohat, Ella. "Notes on the 'Post-Colonial'." *Social Text* 31/32 (1992): 99–113.
- Simonis, Linda. "Esoterische Bildung: Suchende Schüler und ihre Lehrmeister bei den Freimaurern, esoterischen Bünden und Geheimbündroman des 18. Jahrhunderts." In Renger, *Meister und Schüler in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 285–303.
- Sinnett, Alfred Percy. *Esoteric Buddhism*. London: Trübner & Co., 1883.
- Stenzler, Adolf Friedrich, Richard Pischel, Karl F. Geldner, and Albrecht Wezler. *Elementarbuch der Sanskrit-Sprache: Grammatik, Texte, Wörterbuch*. 19th rev. enl. ed. De-Gruyter-Lehrbuch. Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2003. Fortgeführt von Richard Pischel. Umgearbeitet von Karl F. Geldner. 19., durchgesehene und verbesserte Auflage von Albrecht Wezler.
- Stietenron, Heinrich von. "Hinduism: On the Proper Use of a Deceptive Term." In *Hinduism Reconsidered*. Edited by Günther D. Sontheimer and Hermann Kulke. New Delhi: Manohar, 1991.
- Strube, Julian. "Esoterik und Rechtsextremismus." In *Handbuch der Religionen: Kirchen und andere Glaubensgemeinschaften in Deutschland*. Edited by Michael Klöcker and Udo Tworuschka, 1–20. Landsberg am Lech: Günter Olzog, 2018.
- Struve, Karen. *Zur Aktualität von Homi K. Bhabha: Einleitung in sein Werk*. Wiesbaden: Springer, 2013.
- Stuckrad, Kocku von. *Was ist Esoterik? Kleine Geschichte des geheimen Wissens*. München: Beck, 2004.
- Suhrud, Tridip. "Narrations of a Nation: Explorations Through Intellectual Biographies." PhD. Diss, Gujarat University, 1999.
- Sur, Shyamali. "Rajendralal Mitra as a Historian: A Revaluation." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 35 (1974): 370–78.
- The Swami of Almora. "In Re Adwaita Philosophy." *The Theosophist* 4, no. 6 (1883): 128–30.
- The Swami of Almora. "The Swami of Almora to His Opponents." 4, no. 10 (1883): 246–48.
- Tamson, Pietsch. *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World 1850–1939*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014.

- Tatya, Tookaram, ed. *A Compendium of the Raja Yoga Philosophy: Copmrising the Principal Treatises of Shrimat Sankaracharya and Other Renowned Authors*. Bombay: Suboda Prakash Press, 1888.
- Tatya, Tookaram, ed. *The Twelve Principal Upanishads: (English Translation)*. Bombay: The Bombay Theosophical Publication Fund, 1891; With Notes From the Commentaries of Sanarâchârya and the Glos of Ānanagîri.
- Taylor, Anne. *Annie Besant: A Biography*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Telang, Kâshinâth Trimbak. "Śankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic." *The Theosophist I*, no. 3 (1879): 71–72.
- Telang, Kâshinâth Trimbak. "The Life of Sankaracharya, Philosopher and Mystic." *The Theosophist I*, no. 4 (1880): 89–90.
- Telang, Kâshinâth Trimbak. *The Bhagavadgîtâ with the Sanatsugâtîya and the Anugîtâ*. The Sacred Books of the East 8. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882.
- Terry, W. H. "Fragments of Occult Truth." *The Theosophist* 3, no. 1 (1881): 17–22.
- Thaker, Dhirubhai. *Manilal Dvivedi*. Makers of Indian Literature. New Delhi, Calcutta, Madras, Bombay: Sahitya Akademi, 1983.
- The Theosophical Congress Held by the Theosophical Society at the Parliament of Religions, World's Fair of 1893, at Chicago, Ill., September 15, 16, 17: Report of Proceedings and Documents*. New York: American Section Headquarters, 1893.
- The Theosophical Publishing House, ed. *Sanâtana-Dharma: An Elementary Text Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1939.
- The Theosophical Publishing House, ed. *Sanâtana-Dharma: An Advanced Text-Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*. Madras: The Theosophical Publishing House, 1940.
- Thomson, J. Cockburn. *The Bhagavd-Gîtâ: Or, a Discourse Between Kṛiṣhṇa and Arjuna on Divine Matters*. Hertford: Stephen Austin, 1855. A Sanskrît Philosophical Poem.
- Tillett, Gregory. *The Elder Brother: A Biography of Charles Webster Leadbeater*. London, Boston, Melbourne, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Tollenaere, Herman A.O. de. "The Politics of Divine Wisdom: Theosophy and Labour, National, and Women's Movements in Indonesia and South Asia, 1875–1947." Ph.D. Dissertation, Katholieke Universiteit Nijmegen, May 21, 1996.
- Tylor, Edward Burnett. *Primitive Culture: Resaerches into the Developement of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion Language, Art and Custom*. 2nd ed. London: John Murray, 1873.
- Tyndall, John. *The Scientific Use of the Imagination: A Discourse Delivered Before the British Association at Liverpool on Friday Evening, 16th September 1870*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1870.
- University of Chicago Press. *The Chicago Manual of Style: The Online Edition of the Chicago Manual of Style*. Seventeenth edition. Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Vasu, Sris Chandra. *A Catechism of Hinduism*. Benares: Freeman & Co., Ltd., 1899.
- Veer, Peter van der. *Imperial Encounters: Religion and Modernity in India and Britain*. 2001. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2006.
- Viswanathan, Gauri. "Theosophical Society." In Jacobsen et al., *Brill's Encyclopedia of Hinduism Online*.
- Ward, William. "Vedânt Sâra of Sadânda Swâmi." In Tatya, *A Compendium of the Raja Yoga Philosophy*, 83–161.
- Weber, Max, and 1864–1920. *Grundriss der Sozialökonomie III. Abteilung: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1922.

- Wenzlhuemer, Roland. *Globalgeschichte schreiben: Eine Einführung in 6 Episoden*. Konstanz, München: UVK Verlagsgesellschaft, 2017.
- Wessinger Lowman, Catherine. *Annie Besant and Progressive Messianism (1847–1933)*. Studies in Women and Religion 26. Lewiston N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 1988.
- Wessinger Lowman, Catherine. "The Second Generation Leaders of the Theosophical Society (Adyar)." In Hammer; Rothstein, *Handbook of the Theosophical Current*.
- West, Geoffrey. *The Life of Annie Besant*. 1929. London: Gerald Howe Limited, 1933.
- White, David Gordon. *The Yoga Sutra of Patanjali: A Biography*. Lives of Great Religious Books. Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014.
- Wilkins, Charles. *The Bhāgvat-Gēētā, or: Dialogues of Krēṣhṇā and Ārjōṅ, in Eighteen Lectures; with Notes*. London: The East India Company (C. Nourse), 1785. Translated From the Original, in the Sānskrēēt, or Ancient Language of the Brāhmāns.
- Wilson, Horace Hayman. *Essays and Lectures Chiefly on the Religion of the Hindus: Miscellaneous Essays and Lectures*. Works by the Late Horace Hayman Wilson II. London: Trübner & Co., 1862.
- Wilson, Horace Hayman. *Vishṇu Purāṇa: A System of Hindu Mythology and Tradition*. Works by the Late Horace Hayman Wilson Vol. II. London: Trübner & Co., 1865. Translated From the Original Sanskrit, and Illustrated by Notes Derived Chiefly From Other Puraṇas.
- Winchester, Jake. "Roots of the Oriental Gnosis: H.P. Blavatsky, W.E. Coleman, & S.F. Dunlap." MA Thesis, Geschiedenis van de hermetische filosofie en verwante stromingen, University of Amsterdam, June 2015. Accessed February 28, 2019.
- Windisch, Ernst. *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*. Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde 1. Band, 1. Heft. Strassburg: Karl J. Trübner, 1917. Erster Teil.
- Windisch, Ernst. *Geschichte der Sanskrit-Philologie und indischen Altertumskunde*. Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde 1. Band, 1. Heft B. Berlin, Leipzig: Vereinigung Wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1920. Zweiter Teil.
- Winternitz, Moriz. "Bühler, Johann Georg." In *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*. Edited by Historische Kommission bei der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 339–48 47., 1903.
- Yao, Steven. "Taxonomizing Hybridity." *Textual Practice* 17, no. 2 (2003): 357–78.
- Young, Robert J. C. *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race*. London, New York: Routledge, 1995.
- Young, Robert J. C. *The Idea of English Ethnicity*. Malden, Oxford, Carlton: Blackwell, 2008.
- Zander, Helmut. "Theosophische Zeitschriften in Deutschland bis 1945." In *Aufbrüche – Seitenpfade – Abwege: Suchbewegungen und Subkulturen im 20. Jahrhundert; Festschrift für Ulrich Linse*. Edited by Judith Baumgartner and Bernd Wedemeyer-Kolwe, 99–120. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2004.
- Zander, Helmut. *Anthroposophie in Deutschland: Theosophische Weltanschauung und gesellschaftliche Praxis 1884–1945*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007.
- Zander, Helmut. "Rezension Zu: Hammer, Olav; Rothstein, Mikael (Hrsg.): Handbook of the Theosophical Current. Leiden 2013." News release. November 15, 2013. <https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-19893>.
- Zander, Helmut. "What is 'Esotericism'? Does it Exist? How Can it be Understood?" In Mühlematter; Zander, *Occult Roots of Religious Studies*, 14–43.

List of Figures

- Figure 1** Besant lecturing in front of a large crowd in Bombay — 85
- Figure 2** Order of the Servants of the Lord — 142
- Figure 3** Besant at the Vasantha Pathashala, Karachi — 143
- Figure 4** Theosophical Convention 1884 — 173
- Figure 5** Theosophical Convention 1885 — 203
- Figure 6** Manilal Dvivedi (1858–1898) — 241
- Figure 7** Elphinstone College in the late 19th century — 245
- Figure 8** Sanakdas College at the end of the 19th century — 246
- Figure 9** Tallapragada Subba Row (1856–1890) — 283
- Figure 10** Nine states of consciousness according to T. Subba Row — 319
- Figure 11** Annie Besant and Bhagavan Das in front of Shanti Kunj, Benares — 333
- Figure 12** Detail, The Seal. From *The Central Hindu College Magazine* — 334
- Figure 13** Around 1904. Advertisement page. From *The Central Hindu College Magazine* — 335
- Figure 14** Cover page of *The Central Hindu College Magazine* — 337

List of Tables

- Table 1** Relationizing — 64
- Table 2** Parts of “hybridization” — 77
- Table 3** Preconditions for initiation according to Besant — 158
- Table 4** The stages of initiation according to Besant — 165
- Table 5** The steps of initiation according to Blavatsky — 194
- Table 6** Comparison Translation of *Chândogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1 — 215
- Table 7** Comparison of the first and second edition of *Râja-Yoga* — 275
- Table 8** Overview of the Translations of BhG 16, 1–3 — 368

Historical Persons Index

Page numbers for references to the main treatment of a subject are in boldface

- Anquetil-Duperron, Abraham Hyacinthe (1731–1805) 207
- Arnold, Edwin (1832–1904) 184, 191, 246, 257
- Arundale, Francesca (1847–1924) 129, 335
- Besant, Annie (1847–1933) 3–9, 20–57, 75, 81, 83–87, 92, 97–99, 103–105, 109, 112–115, 119, 122–135, 139, **141–235**, 242–268, 274–290, 280–282, 286, 288–290, 299, 301–311, 321–322, 327, **329–377**, 380–382, 387
- Bhashyacharya, Pandit N. (? -?) 231, 233
- Blavatsky, Helena Petrovna (1831–1891) 3–9, 17–32, 53, 83–93, 97, 105, 113, 116, 120–134, 139, 141, 146, 150–154, 164, 167–168, **171–198**, 201, 203–206, 216, 221–225, 230, 234–235, 240, 243, 248–249, 253–257, 268, 275, 278, 281–292, 295, 298, 300–305, 315–324, 342, 352, 356, 365, 377, 381–382, 387
- Bright, Ursula (c.1830–1915) 332–333
- Bühler, Georg (1837–1898) 246, 277, 355
- Bulwer-Lytton, Edward (1803–1873) 25, 131
- Carlyle, Thomas (1795–1881) 211, 359
- Coleman, Emmet (1843–1909) 174–176, 240
- Cooper-Oakley, Alfred John (1855–1899) 230–233, 235, 310
- Cousins, James Henry (1873–1956) 332
- Cowell, Edward Byles (1826–1903) 207, 209–212, 217, 235
- Darwin, Charles (1809–1882) 103–104, 106–107, 110–115
- Das, Bhagavan (1869–1958) 3, 100, 144, 327, 330, 332, 335, 338–340, 343, 346, 351–353, 358, 361, 367, 369, 377
- Datta, Narendranath (Swami Vivekānanda, 1863–1902) 255
- Deussen, Paul (1845–1919) 207, 299
- Dvivedi, Manilal Nabhubhai (1858–1898) 3–6, 9, 42, 52, 57, 100, 105, 116, 119, 146, 154, 168, 171, 175, 177, 179–184, 190, 193, 196, 201, 209, 213–214, 217, 221, 234–237, **239–280**, 288, 292, 301, 305, 308, 322, 342, 352, 357, 361–363, 372, 377, 381
- Edkins, Joseph (1832–1905) 175–177, 182–183, 185–186, 188–190, 195
- Gandhi, Mohandas Karamchand (1869–1948) 26–27, 85, 98, 141, 143–144, 240, 245, 374
- Ghosh, Aurobindo (1872–1950) 94, 100–101
- Gough, Archibald Edward (1845–1915) 213–214, 226, 234–235, 237
- Hardy, Robert Spence (1803–1868) 42, 89, 175–178, 188–189, 195, 197
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1770–1831) 213, 262
- Hume, Allan Octavian (1829–1912) 83–84, 262, 294
- Huxley, Thomas Henry (1825–1895) 111
- Johnston, Charles (1867–1931) 33, 208, 279
- Judge, William Quan (1851–1896) 3, 124, 129, 172
- Kingsford, Anna Bonus (1846–1888) 27, 295
- Krishnamurti, Jiddu (1895–1986) 30, 141, 338
- Lamarck, Jean-Baptist (1744–1829) 107
- Leadbeater, Charles Webster (1854–1934) 20–21, 24, 126, 133, 155, 201, 230, 295, 322, 338, 380
- Malaviya, Madan Mohan (1861–1946) 141, 143, 338–339

- Mavalankar, Damodar K. (1857–?) 17, 173, 204, 255
 Mead, George Robert Stow (1863–1933) 175, 201, 208, 217, 242, 341, 343, 351
 Mill, John Stuart (1806–1873) 151, 296–297
 Mitford, Godolphin (1844–1884) 255
 Mitra, Babu Pramadas (?–?) 224, 226
 Mitra, Rajendralal (1822–1891) 27, 93, 207, 209, 212, 216–217, 224–228, 234–237, 292
 Müller, Friedrich Max (1823–1900) 22–23, 26, 207, 209, 211, 214, 216–217, 278, 307
 Nehru, Jawaharlal (1880–1964) 97–99, 129, 143–144, 154–155
 Olcott, Henry Steel (1832–1907) 3, 24–30, 83–92, 116, 120, 134, 203–206, 223–226, 229, 234–235, 240–241, 248, 255, 282, 287, 303, 320, 323
 Oxley, William (1823–1905) 290–291
 Patañjali 222, 255
 Prakasa, Sri (1890–1971) 332, 334–335
 Röer, Hans Heinrich Eduard (1805–1866) 207, 209–210, 217, 235, 298
 Row, Tallapragada Subba (1856–1890) 3, 5–6, 9, 17–22, 32, 42, 53, 93, 100, 119, 154, 171, 201, 204, 230–232, 268, **281–324**, 342, 351, 353, 360–363, 382
 Roy, Rammohun (1772–1833) 45, 117–118, 207
 Śaṅkara 6, 116, 118, 120, 159, 161–162, 206, 208, 210, 220, 227–231, 242, 246, 249–250, 254, 259, 276, 288, 293, 300, 318, 321, 370
 Saraswati, Dayananda (1824–1883) 24, 119–120
 Schlagintweit, Emil (1835–1904) 175–176, 184, 187, 189, 195
 Schopenhauer, Arthur (1788–1860) 207
 Shastree, Rama Misra (?–?) 87, 123, 201, 218–222, 234–235, 292
 Sinnett, Alfred Percy (1840–1921) 83–84, 123–125, 201, 295, 316
 Spencer, Herbert (1820–1903) 32, 105–107, 111, 116, 151, 228, 247, 264
 Swami of Almora (?–?) 290–291, 321
 Tagore, Debendranath (1817–1905) 118
 Tatyā, Tookaram (1836–1898) 209, 217, 235, 240, 251, 268–269, 274–275, 281, 286, 298, 300
 Telang, Kashinath Trimbak (1850–1893) 228–229, 235, 292
 Thibaut, George Frederick William (1848–1914) 116, 224–225, 234–235, 237
 Tingley, Katherine Augusta Westcott (1847–1929) 91
 Tylor, Edward Burnett (1832–1917) 168–169
 Vasu, Sris Chandra (1861–1918) 41, 341–343, 358
 Wilson, Horace Hayman (1786–1860) 32, 209–211, 299, 307

Person Index

- Baier, Karl 26–33, 122, 129, 131, 255–256
Bergunder, Michael 13–14, 26–29, 31, 33, 204–205, 240, 254, 268, 284, 286, 383
Bernier, Ulrich 59, 61–64, 68, 170, 184
Bhabha, Homi Kharshedji 37, **39–54**, 59–61, **64–75**, 94, 102, 116, 170, 177, 196–197, 236–237, 323–324, 379, 384–386
- Campbell, Bruce F. 8, 84, 86, 89, 173, 283
Chajes, Julie (née Hall) 31–32, 105, 284, 303, 365
Chakrabarty, Dipesh 55–57
Conrad, Sebastian 54–55, 69
- Faivre, Antoine 11–12, 14–15, 121, 268, 305
- Godwin, Joscelyn 8, 19, 128, 154, 172, 240, 284, 301
Goodrick-Clarke, Nicholas 21, 29–30
- Hall, Stuart 12, 41
Hammer, Olav 16–17
Hanegraaff, Wouter 9–13, 26
- Lubelsky, Isaac 22–26, 240, 303
Lütt, Jürgen 332, 338–339, 344
- Malinar, Angelika 25, 345, 374
Moritz, Maria-Sofia 30–33
- Nethercot, Arthur Hobart 84, 144–145, 171–172, 284, 331–332, 339
Neufeldt, Ronald 268, 285, 308
- Patridge, Christopher 16, 21–22
Pécasting-Boissière, Muriel 145
Prothero, Stephen 86, 91, 204
- Renold, Leah 332, 338–339
- Said, Edward Wadie 15, 21–22, 31, 40
Santucci, James 16–17
Sharpe, Eric 223, 254, 268, 284, 300, 313
Shohat, Ella 40, 44
Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty 39–40
- Taylor, Anne 144–145, 331–332, 334, 339
- Viswanathan, Gauri 16–19
- Wenzlhuemer, Roland 54, 58, 69–76, 111
Wessinger, Catherine 20, 84, 145–146, 331–332
- Young, Robert 43–44, 379
- Zander, Helmut 14–16, 19, 90–91, 104, 112, 172, 205–206

Publications Index

- A Catechism of Hinduism* 341
A Personal and an Impersonal 296–297
Avatāras 24, 149
- Bhagavadgītā* 5, 14, 26, 98, 196, 201, 206–207, 228–230, 240, 254, 268–274, 276, 282, 284–286, 288, 290, 298, 300–307, 312, 314–315, 319, 321, 338, 346, 352–355, 366–367
Bibliotheca Indica 207, 210–212
Brahmasūtras 276, 298
Buddhist Catechism 90, 205, 341
- Central Hindu College Magazine* 8, 87, 92, 99, **331–334**, 340
- Death and After?* 146, 149, 346
Discourses on the Bhagavat Gita 288, 300–305, 315, 382
Dwaita Catechism 92
- Esoteric Buddhism* 29, 123, 295, 300, 316
Esoteric Christianity 21–25
Evolution of Life and Form 147, 349
- Fragments of Occult Truth* 316
- General Presentation of Theosophy to the Parliament* 150
- Heroes and Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* 359
- In the Outer Court* 24, 125, **146–148**, 180, 201, 208, 369, 377, 381
Isis Unveiled 9, 25, 31, 131, 174, 249, 291, 294–295, 316
- Karma* 32, 146, 149, 157, 161, 311, 342
- Lucifer* 87, 149, 208, 217, 242, 256–257, 277, 282, 320
- Mahābhārata* 103, 205, 210, 301, 338, 358–359, 371–372
Man and His Bodies 146–147, 190, 346
Manusmṛiti 205, 300, 355, 366–369
Monism or Advaitism? 242, 246, 357, 372
- New India* 8, 87, 99
- Occult Chemistry* 20, 126, 134
Old Diary Leaves 225, 240
- Purāṇas* 278, 300
- Rāja-Yoga* 181, 240, 243, 246, 251, **254–270**, 274–275, 280–281, 308, 357, 372, 377, 381
Rāmāyaṇa 338, 358–359, 371–373
- Sanātana Dharma, An Advanced Text*
Book 339–340, 343, 345, 347–350, 353, 358–359, 364–367, 369–371, 374, 376
Sanātana Dharma, An Elementary Text
Book 339, 346, 348, 353, 358, 362, 367, 371
Sanātana Dharma Catechism 90, **339–347**
Sanātana Dharma Text Books 2–5, 98, 126, 146, 154, 179, 196, 201–202, 223, 227, 308, 324, **329–378**, 380, 382
Shrī Rāma Chandra 358
Some Problems of Life 148
- The Ancient Wisdom* 24, 113–114, 146–148, 162, 168, 201, 346, 357
The Dream of Ravan 175, 184, 191
The Elixir of Life 255
The Indian Theosophist 87, 99
The Light of Asia 184–185, 191
The Link 87, 129
The Lives of Alcyone 127
The Occult World 16, 123, 201
The Oriental Department Papers 208
The Path of Discipleship 24, **146–167**, 172, 179, 190, 201, 208, 243, 357, 361, 371, 376–377, 381

- The Perfect Way* 291, 295
The Sacred Books of the East 228, 307
The Science of the Emotions 343, 351–352
The Secret Doctrine 9, 21, 25, 31–32, 113, 182, 201, 283, 294–295, 300, 318, 356
The Seven Principles of Man 113, 146, 149
The Story of the Great War 358
The System to Which we Belong 201
The Theosophist 29, 32, 86–87, 99, 115, 171, 204–234, 240, 242–243, 248, 250–255, 269, 274–282, 286–287, 290, 294, 300, 315–318, 320, 341, 344
The Twelve Principal Upanishads 209, 213–217, 234–235, 237
The Vahan 129
The Voice of the Silence 5, 9, 33, 127–128, 137, 144, 167, 171–197, 201, 216, 243, 275, 301, 377, 381
Theosophy and its Practical Application 149
Thought Power 147–148
Thought-Forms 20, 126, 134
Upaniṣads 196, 201–220, 231, 235, 276, 298, 321
Vākya Suddhā 250, 253, 274
Viṣṇu Purāṇa 205
What Theosophy Is 148–149
Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 246, 276–277
Zanoni 131, 301
Zauberflöte 130–131

Subjects Index

- Academia 5, 28, 46, 112, 239, 243, 279–280, 344
- Acceleration 5, **147–166**, 289, 304, 312, 353, 380, 382
- Actors 19–23, 33, 41, 55–58, **69–78**, 93–94, 97–102, 117, 166–167, 177, 209, 214, 225, 238–239, 253, 281–282, 348, 377, 379, 382–383, 386
- Adeps **123–125**, 156, 164, 182–183, 192, 195, 259, 288–289, 295, 302, 316–320
- Advaita Vedānta 5, 21, 26, 123, 160, 167, 171, 182, 190, 204, 206, 213, 218–219, 222–223, 227, 231–234, 243–281 (Dvivedi), 284–322 (Row), 342, 351, 370, 381–382
- Already Hybrids 7, 76, 175–178, 193, 196–197, 217, 235–238, 261, 322, 381, 386–387
- Anāgāmin 162, 165, 188, 194
- Analytical Tool 4, 37, 48, 51, 54, 59–68, 91, 170, 176, 236, 281, 322, 378, 381–387
- Ānanda 253, 269, 307, 360–362
- Ancient Wisdom Religion 16, 278, 355
- Arhat 165, 188–189, 194, 293, 295, 298, 300, 316–318
- Arya Samaj 23, 29, 117, 120, 206, 224, 255, 303
- Āśrama 354–357, 378, 382
- Ātman 6, 119, 219, 231–232, 251–252, 262, 268, 346, 361
- Avidya 165, 232
- Benares Hindu University (BHU) 3, 141–142, 327, **329–339**, 380, 382
- Benares Sanskrit College 224–226, 234, 237
- Bhakti* 5, 270–271, 285–286, 311, 315, 321–322, 342, 351, 364, 382
- Bliss 187–188, 192, 267–270, 277, 346, 360–362, 370
- Board of Trustees 340–345, 367
- Brahman* 32, 103, 105, 116, 183, 215, 219, 221–222, 226–227, 231–233, **249–280 (Dvivedi)**, 285, 288, 292, 306, 308–309, 313, 360, 362, 370
- Brotherhood 119, 124, 149–154, 159–160, 165, 168–169, 182, 196, 263, 287, 303–304
- Buddhism 6, 29–32, 86–91, 104, 115, 123, 159, 161, 167, **176–185 (Blavatsky)**, 189, 193, 203–206, 226, 320
- Central Hindu College (CHC) 2–3, 8, 87–92, 99, 142, 223, 321, 327, **329–370**, 380
- Chelas 122, 125, 134, 154, 158–159, 166, 180, 188, 230, 244, 259, 300–302, 316, 381
- Cit* 253, 269–270, 274–277, 280, 289, 306, 346, 350, 360–364
- Colonialism 22, 39, 42–43, 55–56
- Co-Masonry 128–134, 155
- Compassion 130, 163–165, 182, 186, 192, 195, 359, 364, 368, 372–376
- Connections 37, 43, 54–58, 68–77, 91, 93, 99, 101–102, 108, 115, 175, 177, 180, 209, 238–239, 277, 281, 290, 330, 379, 383, 386–387
- Consciousness 95, 105–106, 116–119, 127, 131, **159–167 (Besant)**, 181, 184, 190, 219, 227, 232–233, **252–280 (Dvivedi)**, **288–322 (Row)**, 349, 352, 360, 362
- Daily Practice 152–153, 347
- Dama 156–158, 189, 272, 365–369
- Darwinism 106–107, 117–118
- De- and Recontextualization 77, 169
- Différance* 41, 53–54, 385
- Disciples 4, 121–135, 151–160, 167–169, 179, 181, 185, 187, 189–190, 206, 225, 227, 248, 250
- Discursive Fields 2–5, 14, 70–71, 75–77, 101, 103, 111, 120, 171, 175, 178, 182, 209, 214, 234–239, 253, 277, 281–282, 296, 301, 305, 330, 379, 386
- Divine Will 152, 160, 166, 187, 289, 346–347, 353–354, 371
- Education 5, 27, 56, 85, 89, 91–92, 95, 101, 110–111, 125, 142, 151–154, 165, 167,

- 212, 214, 240, 244, 321–322, **329–339**, 377, 380, 387
- Elements 2, 28, 30, 47, **60–78**, 89, 102, 109, 111, 119, 130, 133, 149, 152–153, 167–169, 171, 175, 177, 183–184, 188, 193, 195, 201–202, 253, 260, 268, 272–273, 281, 285, 301, 352, 356–357, 360, 378, 384, 386
- Elphinstone College 244
- Encounters 1–2, 4, 30, 35, 43, **51–78**, 81, **83–102**, 120–126, 169–170, 177, 184, 189, 193, 196, 202–208, 214, 218, 223, 225, 234–239, 250, 277, 289, 330, 377, 379, 381–387
- Esoteric Section 128–129, 131, 133–134, 155, 256
- Esotericism **8–29**, 44, 86, 109, 121, 154, 268, 284, 384
- Ethical Science 5, 348, 352
- Ethics 344, 347–350, 377
- Evolution 2, 4–5, 14, 20, 32–33, 37, 42–43, 47, 60, 62, 81, **103–127**, 131, 133–135, 137, 139, **141–169 (Besant)**, 171, 174, 180, 185, 187, 192, 196, 201, 204, 206, 216–217, 231–232, 234, **266–277 (Divedi)**, **287–324 (Row)**, **329–377 (Sanātana Dharma Text Books)**, 379–383
- Evolutionism 79, **103–117**, 151, 168, 199, 354
- Freemasonry 21, 123, 127–128, 130–131, 155
- Global Colonial Discursive Continuum 5, 23–29, 43, 45–46, 58, 69, 71, **75–77**, 93, 110, 115, 120, 168, 170, 182, 196, 206, 214, 217, 224, 228, 236, 238–239, 277, 280, 290, 377–378, 383, 386
- Global History Approach (Globalgeschichte) 4, 26, 54, 58–59, 63, 69, 384
- God 109, 114, 117–119, 149, 182, 271, 284–285, 294–295, 300, 302, 309, 342, 351, 359, 363–364, 371–372
- Great Renunciation 164, 166, 183, 185
- Guru 122, 158, 160, 182, 190, 220, 233, 259, 300–302, 321, 381
- Hamsa 162, 165, 372
- Happiness 219, 222–223, 259–260, 265–267, 270–272, 277, 348, 350, 360–362, 370–371
- Hathayoga* 222, 255, 271, 273
- Hero-Worship 352, 357–358
- Higher Knowledge 3, 33, 116, 122, 125, 133–134, 167, 179, 183, 222, 262, 350, 362, 383
- Hindu Thought 204–205, 279, 289, 321
- Hinduism 5–6, 16–19, 25–27, 31–33, 45, 86, 104, 110, 114, 120, 123, 127, 159–160, 167, 193, 196, 199, 203–206, 214, 217–218, 221, 224–226, 228, 230, 234–235, 240, 243, 249–250, 253, 269, 276–282, 284, 289, 291, 294, 296, 301, 308–309, 321–323, 342, 345, 347, 358–360, 365, 372, 374–375, 381–382
- Human Progress 139, 167, 288–289, 305, 347, 349, 353
- Hybrid 19, 23, 44–46, 49, 51–52, 54, 67–68, 76, 91, 97, 101, 116, 120, 122, 146, 167, 175, 177, 186, 193, 195, 197, 205–206, 209, 213–214, 217, 239, 253, 261, 323, 378–379, 381–382, 387
- Hybridities 44, 46, 59, 67–68
- Hybridity 4, 37, 43–46, 48, 51–54, 59–61, 64, 67–69, 73–74, 76, 100, 174, 177, 196–197, 236, 261, 379, 384–386
- Hybridization 1–2, 4, 7, 11, 16, 20–21, 23, 28, 33, 37, 39–78, 83, 94, 97–99, 101–102, 110, 114–116, 122–123, 133, 144, 154, 166–167, 169–171, 175, 177–178, 182–184, 188, 196–198, 202, 209, 225, 230, 235–239, 253, 261, 263, 280–281, 296–297, 305, 321–324, 347–348, 370, 377–379, 381–388
- In-between 16, 46–48, 50, 53, 64, 66, 68, 94, 103, 199
- In-betweens 63, 67–68, 78, 170, 237, 379
- Indian Epics 357–359, 372–373
- Indian middle class (lower case) 81, **83–100**, 117, 277, 379
- Indian Middle Class (uppercase) 79, 81, **83–101**, 115, 144, 171, 183, 202–203,

- 218, 223–225, 234–239, 282, 289,
377–381, 386
- Indian National Congress 83–84, 100
- Indian Theosophists 2–5, 16–31, 46, 81,
84–85, 93, 115, 171, 183, 201, 204, 206,
218, 231, 255, 292, 296, 352, 377, 382
- Indifference 156, 189, 191–192, 194–195,
357, 366
- Initiation 2–3, 4, 5, 9, 21, 33, 37, 98, 104,
110, 120, 123, 125, 127–131, 134–135,
137, 139, **141–202 (Besant, Blavatsky)**,
206–207, 218, 221–222, 233, **243–281**
(Dvivedi), **290–321 (Row)**, 325, 327,
329–377 (Sanātana Dharma Text
Books), 379–384
- Initiations 129, 154–156, 158–159, 233, 256,
259, 300, 306, 312, 319
- Īśvara 190, 346, 349, 351, 353–354, 361, 375
- Jīvanmukta* 125, 163–164, 166, 361
- Jīvanmukti* 165
- Karma* 32, 157–158, 186, 191, 194, 219–220,
273, 311, 349, 372
- Karmic Necessity 169, 289
- Kshanti 191, 195
- Kuṭīchaka 162, 165
- Logos 231–232, 282–321 (Row), 382
- Love 163, 165, 186, 189–190, 194, 210, 228,
253, 275, 277, 313–314, 348, 351–352,
358–360, 362, 364, 371–374, 376
- Mahatma Letters 19, 124, 172
- Mahatma/Chela Relation 122
- Mahatmas 19, 29, 84, 122–127, 133–134,
151–152, 155, 172, 204, 288–289,
313, 321
- Manu 355–356, 378
- Master Paradox 4, 125, 131, 134, 166–167,
179, 380
- Master/Disciple Relationships 4, 121–122,
127–128, 130, 134–135, 154, 156,
158–159, 168, 190
- Masters 4–5, 18, 20, 25, 31, 55–56, 79, 81,
84, **120–135**, 144, 150, **154–172**, 174,
177, 179–197, 204, 248–249, 259, 263,
301, 322, 342, 350, 352, 355–356, 363,
372, 380–381
- Materialism 23, 123, 262, 317, 373
- Mental Powers 113, 153–154, 347
- Mesmerism 21, 243
- Mimicry 46, 49–53, 59, 64–65, 68, 94, 102,
236–237
- Mokṣa* 219–220, 228, 233, 273, 300, 308,
370
- Monad 109, 148, 253, 289, 361
- Morality 112, 114, 125, 166, 189, 249, 258,
271, 322, 325, **349–358**, 380
- Order of the Star in the East 141, 338
- Parabrahmam 297, 305–306, 309, 312–313,
322
- Paramahansa 165, 290–291
- Patience 157, 186–187, 189, 191, 194–195,
272, 369, 376
- Perseverance 186, 194
- Philosophia perennis 159, 186
- Postcolonial Studies 31, 39–40, 42, 54–55,
60
- Preliminary Steps 146, 152, 156, 216, 273
- Purification 152, 155–156, 365
- Rājayoga* 5, 193, 222, **243–274**
- Reincarnation 30, 32, 103, 149–150, 289,
308
- Reincarnations 125, 314, 349, 380
- Relationalization 77, 168, 170, 214, 228,
235–237, 250, 252, 258, 261, 263, 268,
271, 276, 279–281, 290–291, 315, 322,
324, 348, 356, 378, 381, 387
- Relationizing 7, 57, 63–64, 68, 78, 102, 133,
168, 170, 183–184, 193, 197, 218, 237,
249, 253, 259, 261, 263–265, 272,
280–281, 289, 291–292, 294–298, 314,
322, 324, 345, 356, 378, 386
- Relations 1–2, 44, 46, 54, **57–78**, 94, 97–98,
101–102, 121–122, 128, 130, 135, 146,
166–170, 175, 178–180, 197, 214, 237,
253, 267, 296, 301, 322, 324, 348,
374–379, 383–384, 386

- Repetition 50–51, 65–66, 94, 102, 116, 150,
 167–169, 195–198, 217, 239, 357,
 362, 386
 Righteousness 370
 Royal Asiatic Society 176, 209, 211–212, 235
- Sakridâgâmin 162, 165, 188, 194
 Śāṃkhya 222–223, 288, 293, 300, 352, 356
 Sanakdas College 245
Sat 184, 190, 194, 253, 265, 269–270, 275,
 277, 306, 346, 360–362
 Science 16, 28, 31–32, 86, 103–104,
 110–111, 115, 117, 131, 149, 201–202,
 223, 225, 228–229, 231, 242,
 248–249, 254, 256, 258–259,
 261–265, 268, 272, 276, 280, 292,
 301–303, 343, 348, 350–352,
 356–357, 361, 377–378
 Secret Knowledge 127, 134, 207
 Self-development 2, 105, 151, 166, 311, 380,
 384
 Shama 156, 158, 365–366
 Shatsampatti 156, 158, 233, 369
 Shīla 189
 Shraddhâ 158, 372
Siddhis 20, 126–127, 132, 162, 165, 229,
 322–323, 380
Srotâpatti 161, 165, 187–188, 194
 Structures 2, 29, 42–43, 64–65, 68–69,
 73–78, 84, 96, 99, 102, 106, 111, 133,
 167–169, 171, 175, 183, 188, 193, 195,
 201–202, 238, 268, 281, 386
- Teachers 21, 24, 90, 119, **121–142**, 152–161,
 168–169, 180–189, 193, 207, 220, 242,
 244, 259, 263, 273, 281, 290, 292, 294,
 301–302, 320, 334, 338, 347–348, 350,
 371–373, 377, 380
 Theosophical Buddhist Society 88
 Theosophical Journals 8–9, 85, 87–88, 93,
 99–100, 112, 208, 217, 225, 240,
 245, 253
 Theosophical Master Narrative 81, 121, 150,
 167, 301, 350, 355
 Theosophical Schools 85, 91–93, 134, 155
 Theosophical Society 3–4, 5, 8–10, 14,
 16–33, 41, 45–46, 49, 77–88, 90–93,
 97–99, 101, 104–105, 107, 111, 113–117,
 120, 122–131, 133–135, 141, 145, 150,
 153–156, 159, 164, 171, 175, 182, 187,
 193, 195, 197, 203–208, 217–226,
 229–235, 238–242, 249–250, 253–257,
 262, 268–269, 274, 277–296, 298, 300,
 302, 304–305, 308, 315–317, 320–323,
 332–333, 336–342, 352, 354, 363,
 365–366, 379, 381–387
 Theosophists 2–5, 8, 17–24, 28–30, 33, 46,
 81, 83–86, 89, 92–93, 97–100, 111,
 114–115, 120, 124, 127, 134, 155,
 175–179, 185, 201, 205–208, 223, 227,
 229, 234, 237, 250, 278, 281, 290–291,
 294, 300–301, 316, 320, 322, 341, 361,
 379, 387
 Theosophy 3–10, 13, 16–33, 84, 87–88,
 98–99, 103–105, 112, 115–116, 123, 127,
 131, 137, 139, 141, 144–155, 159, 165–173,
 177, 180–183, 186, 188, 192, 195, 197,
 201–207, 224, 232, 240–243, 250,
 258–259, 262, 268, 275, 278–284, 289,
 292–296, 299–301, 303, 315–316,
 322–323, 331–332, 341, 343, 346, 348,
 352, 356, 358, 363, 372, 374, 377–378,
 380–387
 Third Space 66–67, 236
 Thought-forms 191, 363
 Thought-powers 191, 361, 363
 Titiksha 157–158, 192, 195, 369–370
 Tolerance 118, 157, 295–296, 315, 374–375,
 382
 Translation 13, 32, **41–77**, 98, 102–105,
 115–116, 157, 167, 169, 172, 179, 181,
 196, 207–217, 223, 226, 228, 237,
 240–241, 247, 250–276, 279–281,
 288–289, 297–298, 322, 344, 346, 352,
 355, 361–362, 366–370, 376, 378
- Union 26, 84, 149, 222, 225, 233, 247, 253,
 259, 273, 312–314, 321, 350, 370
 Unity 67, 112, 114, 162–163, 165, 190,
 194, 219, 262, 267, 270–271, 273, 308,
 312, 349–351, 353, 361, 364, 370,
 374–375
 Uparati 157–158, 272, 374

- Vairāgya 156, 158, 190–191, 195, 233,
258–259, 351–352, 357, 366, 370
- Varṇa 354–355, 378, 382
- Virtues 2, 98, 131, **182–194 (Blavatsky)**, 319,
**354–376 (Sanātana Dharma Text
Books)**, 380
- Virya 189
- Viveka 32, 156, 158, 233, 250–251, 254, 259,
272, 351–352, 357, 366
- Wisdom 5, 16, 18, 21, 28, 32, 97, 115, 126,
134, 152, 160, 168, 182–183, 188–189,
223, 258, 278–279, 315, 317–318, 345,
350–351, 355, 361, 368, 372, 380
- Yoga 174–175, 180–181, 183, 192, 217, 222,
242–273, 293, 323, 368

