Article

Rethinking Neo-Vedānta: Swami Vivekananda and the Selective Historiography of Advaita Vedānta[1]

James Madaio

Oriental Institute, Czech Academy of Sciences, Pod Vodárenskou věží 4, Prague 18208, Czech Republic; madaio@orient.cas.cz

Abstract: This paper problematizes the prevalent model of studying the "Neo-Vedānta" of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) principally in terms of an influx of Western ideas and nationalism. In particular, I demonstrate how scholarly constructions of "Neo-Vedānta" consistently appeal to a high culture, staticized understanding of "traditional" Advaita Vedānta as the alterity for locating Vivekananda's "neo" or new teachings. In doing so, such studies ignore the diverse medieval and early modern developments in advaitic and Advaita Vedāntic traditions which were well-known to Vivekananda and other "Neo-Vedāntins". Redressing this discursive imbalance, I propose that close attention to the way in which Swami Vivekananda drew from Indic texts opens up a wider frame for understanding the swami and the genealogy of his cosmopolitan theology.

Keywords: Swami Vivekananda; Neo-Vedānta; Advaita Vedānta; Advaita; modern Hinduism

1. Introduction

Reconsidering the study of Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), perhaps the most influential architect of global Hinduism, is instructive for shedding light on certain problematic trends in the analysis of precolonial and colonial period *advaita* related movements. It also calls reflexive attention to the way in which interpretations of Vivekananda's life and teachings can often be implicated in what H. White calls the "practical past" (White 2014); that is, readings of the past that are ideologically pursued in the service of the present. Widely considered a national hero, and cited as an inspiration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Vivekananda is increasingly, albeit selectively and anachronistically, appropriated into the rhetoric and mediascapes of the political right in India; in turn, he has also become the subject of the left's intellectual critique. The legacy of Vivekananda, linked with notions of Hindu nationalism and muscular Hinduism, is, in that way, a locus of contemporary disputes that can be as much about the trajectory of India's future as an authentic understanding of the past.

The concern of the present paper, however, is not with how contemporary politics or a priori suppositions influence the unfurling of historical narratives (or, for that matter, with broader postmodernist critiques of history); rather, the aim is to de-stabilize the predominant explanatory model at the basis of numerous depictions of the swami in scholarly literature.[2] This widespread, interpretative approach locates the etiology and development of Vivekananda's theological innovativeness in terms of colonial period nationalism and, in particular, Western influence. Vivekananda's thought emerges

---

from this type of inquiry as an eclectic derivative of the colonial encounter. What is key for our interests here is how this assessment is repeatedly reinforced by appealing to earlier Indological scholarship that portrayed Vivekananda's "Neo-Vedāntic" theology as a rupture from "traditional" or "classical" Hinduism, particularly the "orthodox" Advaita Vedānta of the eighth century Śaṃkara.

While there are certainly insights to be gained from scholarship carried out within the horizon of the above approach, such a reading does, however, entirely omit from consideration theological developments in medieval and early modern Indic traditions.[3] This is remarkable because Swami Vivekananda, not unlike other "Neo-Vedāntic" figures, repeatedly references pre-colonial Indian philosophical works.[4] Vivekananda's orientation toward Indic sources is evident, for example, in a letter to Alasinga Perumal: "In translating . . . pay no attention . . . to the orientalists . . . Explain according to our sages and not according to so-called European scholars" (Vivekananda [1942] 2008, pp. 268–69). Vivekananda had a great deal of admiration for non-Indian scholars, but this remark is certainly a sign that he rejected wholesale purchase of Western exegesis and ideas.

In the discussion that follows, I argue that scholarly interest in historical origins and certain high culture forms of "traditional" Advaita Vedānta underrepresents the multivocality and diversity of advaitic theology. And it is precisely the underrepresented periods and text genres which were key sources for "Neo-Vedāntins", such as Vivekananda. In my view, the failure to take seriously developments in medieval and early modern advaitic traditions is paralleled by an inadequate recognition of the ways in which colonial period Hindus recalibrated the apt performance of their inherited tradition in relation to the exigencies of their colonialized and, increasingly, globalized world.[5] Unfortunately, space here allows for only an initial discussion of conceptual and historical links between Vivekananda and his precolonial predecessors. My intention, in that way, is to lay groundwork for future studies to examine how categories and ways of thinking, derived from pre-colonial advaitic and Advaita Vedāntic sources, were critically and creatively employed by Vivekananda in conversation with his global cosmopolitan milieu.

2. Mid-Twentieth Century Indology and the Quest for Origins

The mid-twentieth century disciplinary trend of (mostly European) Indology tended, not unlike its predecessors, toward the investigation of classical texts, often privileging the status of foundational works, commentaries and recensions. With regard to the study of Advaita Vedānta, this type of Indology focused on analysis of the earliest period of the tradition, particularly the quest for the historical Śaṃkara.[6] The Indologist-theologian P. Hacker, for example, argued on behalf of a methodology for adjudicating which, out of the many works attributed to Śaṃkara, were actually composed by the historical, that is, *ādi* or first, Śaṃkara of the eighth century (Hacker 1947).[7]

---

[3]　The remarks of R. Inden (Inden 2000, pp. 3, 25) are à propos: "postcolonial scholarship seems to have reinscribed a major divide in colonialist discourse, the divide between the traditional...and modern . . . It has shifted people's attention away from the practices and institutions of the past before the advent of colonialism, and onto a fanciful remote past that seems to have little to do with their everyday life . . . "

[4]　Paradoxically, the need to take serious such sources, and their transmission into the colonial period, is as significant a lacuna as it is obvious. If Vivekananda's own citations were not enough, even a cursory examination of the educational and publishing activities of the Ramakrishna Mission—or other "Neo-Vedāntic" groups, such as the Chinmaya Mission or the Divine Life Society (to say nothing of the teachings of the Śaṃkarācāryas at the so-called "traditional" *maṭha*s)—reveals an overwhelming emphasis on precolonial sources, including hymns, hagiographies, independent works, as well as texts such as the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, *Āṣṭāvakragītā*, *Avadhūta-Gītā*, *Adhyātma-Rāmāyaṇa* (particularly the *Uttarakāṇḍa*), and so on. Indeed, the publications of such organizations provide a useful map for detecting the advaitic, yogic and narrative traditions that not only helped to build their respective outlooks but which were broadly popular on the eve of colonialism.

[5]　Helpful here is Talal Asad's (Asad 1996) account of a discursive tradition, albeit put forth in a much different context.

[6]　The issue is a complicated one, but I intend here Indological scholarship *after* the orientalist period. Medieval vedāntic traditions were indeed influential in shaping the understanding of Hinduism and Indian philosophy among orientalist scholars such as H. T. Colebrooke, E. B. Cowell, Max Müller, Albrecht Weber, Richard Garbe, P. Deussen, A. E. Gough, among others.

[7]　Hacker's approach included consideration of whether a text had been quoted by Śaṃkara's immediate disciples as well as the manner of attribution in colophons. With regard to the latter, if a work was attributed to the more ambiguous

The conclusions reached by scholars such as P. Hacker, S. Mayeda ([Mayeda 1965a](#); [Mayeda 1965b](#)), among others, identified the works of the historical Śaṃkara as limited to commentaries on the *Brahma-Sūtra*, early Upaniṣads, and the *Bhagavad-Gītā*, as well as the independent work *Upadeśasāhasrī*. As important as these findings are, they have functioned, at least in the Western academy, as a kind of precedent for what counts as "authentic" Advaita Vedānta. In that way, the mid-twentieth century Indological concern for philosophically reconstructing early Advaita Vedānta, as well as the historical biography and authentic works of Śaṃkara, brought about a perhaps unintended consequence: later Advaita Vedāntic works, particularly texts attributed to Śaṃkara but of later authorship, are all too often judged against the "authenticity" of the Śaṃkarite commentarial corpus. This judgement, in fact, carries with it the subtle sense that such texts—and their soteriological and hermeneutical modalities—are *in*authentic beyond the issue of authorship. Indeed, scholarly trends are not objective enterprises but indexes of value that construct frames of reference via explanatory, historiographical models.

The penurious state of scholarly knowledge about Advaita Vedāntins after the Śaṃkarite period calls into question what the reference points are for drawing out difference and change in a tradition that spans at least fourteen centuries. Many works of post-Śaṃkarite Advaita Vedāntins, in fact, remain little explored. This is, perhaps, partly why scholars too often concretize a static school, conflated with the historical Śaṃkara, as the alterity for Neo-Vedāntic borrowings and inventions. This frame of reference, which overlooks medieval and early modern developments, is largely indebted to the problematic model proposed by the aforementioned P. Hacker which distinguished "traditional" from so-called Neo-Hinduism/Vedānta ([Hacker 1995](#), pp. 227ff.). Hacker influentially argued that Neo-Vedānta was a nationalistic movement dependent on the "assimilation" of Western ideals.[8] The category "Neo-Vedānta", in that way, entered mainstream academic discourse as a pejorative term—indiscriminately used in reference to a number of different Hindu thinkers who held variant theological views—and connoting a sense of inauthenticity because "continuity with the past has been broken" ([Hacker 1995](#), p. 232).

What is important to the present discussion is that Hacker's understanding still constructs the range of vision for the majority of contemporary scholarly accounts. This horizon, in other words, is provided by the two-track method of analyzing Vivekananda in terms of Western influence and/or contrasting his westernized "eclecticism" to a vaguely defined "orthodoxy" typically associated with the historical Śaṃkara of the eighth century. Although Bimal Krishna Matilal did not mention Hacker by name, it is obvious that it is precisely this bifurcation he had in mind when he insightfully comments that " . . . the Indologist's frequent construction of a 'neo-Hinduism', distinct and distinguished from 'traditional Hinduism' by the influx of Western ideas and ideology . . . is . . . to be taken with a pinch of salt. The tradition was self-conscious. It has been interpreting and re-interpreting itself over the ages. It is hardly a new phenomenon. The myth is tied up with the Indologist's romantic search for a classical, pure form of Hinduism . . . and is little better than a dream . . . " ([Matilal 2002](#), p. 40). In light of Matilal's assessment, when Hacker claims that "continuity with the past has been broken", we are indeed wise to interrogate what version of the past is in play.

"Śaṃkarācārya", which was also the title held by the pontiffs, or *mahants*, of the ritual-learning institutions (*maṭha*s) linked to Śaṃkara, it was considered less authentic than the more reverential title used for Śaṃkara by his contemporaries (such as Bhagavat, Bhagavatpāda, and Bhagavatpūjyapāda). While Hacker's conclusions have shaped subsequent European and North Atlantic scholarship, most Indian scholars are either unaware of, or have ignored, Hacker's publications. Interestingly, Hacker's approach appears, in fact, to be indebted to earlier work by Svāmī Saccidānandendra ([Suthren Hirst 2005](#), pp. 4–5). Saccidānandendra, notably, set out to distinguish the method of the (historical) Śaṃkara, who wrote the foundational vedāntic commentaries, from later additions and, on his account, misrepresentations.

[8]   I elaborate elsewhere ([Madaio, forthcoming](#)) on Hacker's theological premises and inclusivism.

3. The Problematic Alterity of "Neo-Vedānta"

Hacker's popularizer, the prodigious Indologist W. Halbfass, noted the limitations of Hacker's model but was also largely responsible for reifying his categories. In his magisterial *India and Europe*, Halbfass points out that Vivekananda was " ... acquainted with the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* and *Aṣṭāvakragītā*, Vedānta texts outside of Śaṅkara's 'orthodox' tradition" (Halbfass 1988, p. 229).[9] Although he did not, unfortunately, develop the point, Halbfass was certainly right to draw attention to medieval advaitic texts, but he also imposes a notion of orthodoxy that does not hold up.[10] For example, Vidyāraṇya, the fourteenth century Śaṃkarācārya at Śṛṅgeri, a figure that Vivekananda lavishly praised (Vivekananda [1926] 1958, p. 330), shaped the soteriological project of his *Jīvanmuktiviveka* (JMV) around the (*Laghu-*)*Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, a work influenced by the *advaita* of Kashmiri Śaivism. After the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*'s rise to prominence as an authoritative source text in the Advaita Vedāntic text tradition in the fourteenth century, the work was authoritatively utilized, or commented on, by later important Advaita Vedāntins, such as Prakāśānanda (fl. 1505), Mādhava Sarasvatī (fl. 1515), Madhusūdana Sarasvatī (fl. 1570), Mahādevānanda Sarasvatī (fl. 1645) and so on. One is left to wonder, then, the relationship of these figures to "orthodox" Advaita Vedānta (and what "orthodox" means for traditions without a fixed canon or creed).

Notably, Hacker's and Halbfass's reliance on the historical Śaṃkara as the backdrop for drawing out the newness of Neo-Vedānta, while overlooking medieval and early modern developments, exemplifies the explanatory framework of the majority of scholarly approaches (Bharati 1970; Rambachan 1994; Sil 1997; Hatcher 1999; De Michelis 2005). For example, consider N. Sil's characterization of Vivekananda's theology: "Unfortunately, his [Vivekananda's] success as a Vedantist in the West owed to his **distortion** of the **traditional** Advaita system as expounded by Shankaracharya...Vivekananda's emphasis on the super-conscious state, that is, *nirvikalpa samādhi*, has no *imprimatur* from the Upaniṣads, the primary source of Vedanta" (Sil 1997, pp. 156–57, bold my emphasis). By casting Vivekananda's teachings on non-conceptual absorptive concentration (*nirvikalpa samādhi*) as an inauthentic deviation from "the traditional Advaita system", Sil discredits or ignores scriptural developments not only during the medieval period, such as the saṃnyāsic and yogic Upaniṣads drawn on authoritatively by "traditional" Advaita Vedāntins, but also the polyvalent voices of medieval Advaita Vedāntic theologians.[11] Indeed, what Advaita Vedāntins of different sampradāyic allegiances share is not a uniform theology—whether in terms of philosophical positions, praxeology, pedagogical strategies or hermeneutical practices—but rather, common "architectural elements".[12]

---

[9] Since the texts that Halbfass mentions did not originate in Vedānta traditions (*sampradāya*s), it would be more accurate to call them "*advaita*" texts rather than "*vedānta*" texts. In that way, it is possible to speak of sanskritic and vernacular advaitic texts (which are either explicitly non-dualistic or permit a non-dualistic reading) and "Advaita Vedānta" texts which originate within *sampradāya*s that claim an Advaita Vedāntic lineage. This, then, avoids the obfuscating tendency to subsume advaitic but non-vedāntic works under a "Vedānta" or "Advaita Vedānta" umbrella.

[10] "He [Vivekananda] is not willing or able to see how far he has removed himself from the position of Śaṅkara ... " (Halbfass 1988, p. 242). It is important to note, however, that Halbfass omits from consideration not only the medieval works attributed to Śaṃkara but also the well-known hagiographies about him. The historical Śaṃkara, who is the subject of Indological articles, has, of course, very little to do with Śaṃkara as he is understood on the ground. What might be called the "hagiographical Śaṃkara", inherited by Neo-Vedāntins, and certainly well-known at Advaita Vedāntic *maṭha*s, entails a cluster of archetypes from a broad range of traditions: the paradigmatic brahmin-*smārta*, the model ascetic-renouncer, and the goddess worshipping *tāntrika*. Śaṃkara was also well-known as a yogic *siddha*, composer of *stotra*s and, of course, as a virtuoso debater. It should be noted that the reach of the "hagiographical Śaṃkara" would not have been limited to the sectarian spaces of patronized *paṇḍita* circles, certain *smārta* brahmin communities, or householders with allegiance to Śaṃkarite *maṭha*s, but also, the diverse and inerrant, *daśanāmī* renouncers. I must defer pursuing the implications of this issue for a later publication.

[11] Sil, while apparently operating under the premise that the germination of a tradition is more authentic than later developments, cites a paper by M. Comans (Comans 1993) to prove his point. Ironically, Comans, in the last two pages of that paper, provides a few examples indicating the importance of *samādhi* in Advaita Vedāntic works during the medieval period. It is also worth pointing out that the works that Comans cites (not unlike the JMV) have all been published by the Ramakrishna Mission.

[12] I adapt here L. McCrea and P. Patil's "text tradition" model (McCrea and Patil 2010, pp. 3–7), originally employed in their treatment of the late eighth century Buddhist philosopher Jñānaśrīmitra.

Such structural commonalities include lineages of teachers and their works, as well as a paradigmatic understanding of authoritative scriptural genres. This framework allows for innovative theological engagements such as the appropriation of new scriptural corpora—which, in fact, need not be of "vedāntic" origin or from the highest category of scripture (i.e., *śruti*) to serve as authoritative, as the utilization of the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* and *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* by (early and late) medieval Advaita Vedāntins make plain.

Returning to Sil's assessment, we might ask how Vivekananda's teaching on *nirvikalpa samādhi* would look in the context of, say, the "yogic advaita" ([Fort 1988](#)) of the JMV which not only holds meditational *yoga* as essential to both realizing non-duality and securing it post realization but also identifies *nirvikalpa samādhi* with the highest stage of liberation-while-living (*jīvanmukti*) (JMV 4.1.57 in [Goodding 2002](#)). The JMV, in fact, draws repeatedly on the *Yoga-Śāstra* as an authoritative text and, at the behest of the fictive interlocutor (*pūrvapakṣin*), inclusively argues that the *samādhi* taught in the *Yoga-Śāstra* leads to the realization of pure consciousness or *ātman* (JMV 3.10.1–8 in [Goodding 2002](#)). In fact, the soteriological utilization of *yoga*, and, in particular, stages of *samādhi*, extends across a range of medieval Advaita Vedāntic works, including popular independent treatises (*prakaraṇa*) attributed to Śaṃkara such as *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi* (VCM) and *Aparokṣānubhūti*. For example, VCM, a work frequently drawn on by Vivekananda, as well as at "traditional" Advaita Vedāntic ritual-learning institutions (*maṭha*s), but largely ignored in scholarly discussion[13], conceives of *nirvikalpa samādhi* as the premier method of Self-realization over and above the well-known vedāntic discipline of listening, reflection and deep contemplation (VCM 362-365 in [Comans 1993](#), p. 31). The diversity of Advaita Vedāntic interest in *yoga*, in fact, extends even beyond the absorptive meditative practices of Patañjali and the yogic disciplines pertaining to the *prāṇa*-mind nexus taught in the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for example, certain Nāth and *haṭha* yogic texts, which are amenable to an advaitic reading, were also viewed as authoritative on *yoga* by Advaita Vedāntins ([Bouy 1994](#)).

The diachronic integration of *yoga* with Advaita Vedānta, and its flourishing in the late medieval and early modern period, has, however, eluded recent publications on the history of *yoga*. Following the approach of Sil and others, E. De Michelis's account of Vivekananda's "revisitation of yoga history", for example, interprets the development of Vivekananda's theology in terms of Western influences and in contradistinction to a vague notion of "classical Hindu approaches" ([De Michelis 2005](#), p. 3). When pointing out Vivekananda's " . . . attempts to integrate the Advaita tradition . . . into his yoga framework" ([De Michelis 2005](#), p. 169), De Michelis neglects to mention this is not typologically innovative. There are, indeed, important Western and theosophical elements in Vivekananda's approach; however, to elide medieval and early modern advaitic and Advaita Vedāntic works from the discussion presents a rather one-sided account.

Other issues that have been identified as the fault line between "traditional" and "neo" (Advaita) Vedānta include Vivekananda's decentralization of scripture and his concomitant valorization of experience. Although I cannot unpack these arguments here, it is worth underscoring that such comparisons repeatedly conflate Advaita Vedānta with the eighth century Śaṃkara. The picture, of course, is more nuanced when post-Śaṃkarite traditions, which were well-known to Vivekananda, are taken into consideration. For example, is the VCM's ambivalence toward scripture (VCM 59 in [Madhavananda 1921](#)) and its explicit declaration that experience (*anubhūti*) is a *pramāṇa*, or means of knowing (VCM 474 in [Madhavananda 1921](#)), a kind of Neo-Vedāntic mysticism? Is the integration of Advaita Vedānta with Śākta tantrism among Southern Advaita Vedāntic *maṭhas* after the seventeenth century ([Fisher 2012](#)) a type of Neo-Vedāntic eclecticism? How "new" are Neo-Vedāntic models of Hinduism in light of what M. Müller, in 1899, called "a certain freedom

---

[13] A. Rambachan, for example, relegates VCM to a footnote: " . . . his [i.e., Vivekananda's] understanding of Śaṃkara was influenced by *questionable* works like Vivekacūḍāmaṇi . . . " ([Rambachan 1994](#), pp. 139–40, f.8, emphasis mine). One is left to ask: *questionable* to whom?

of thought" ([Müller 1899](), p. 108) in medieval doxographical depictions?[14] When the great sixteenth century Advaita Vedāntin Appayya Dīkṣita ([Ramesan 1972]()), in his *Caturmatasārasaṃgraha*, pays homage not only to Śaṃkara but also to Madhva, Rāmānuja and Śrī Kaṇṭha—is this Neo-Vedāntic ecumenism?

4. Neglected Traditions and Genres

The continuing persistence of an over-generalized "traditional" versus "neo" framework is due, in part, to a selective historiography of the Advaita Vedāntic text tradition. Just as periodization involves hidden theories and value judgements, the scholarly privileging of some text genres over others is part of a long history of over-emphasizing not only the Śaṃkarite period but also a specialist scholar or *paṇḍita* informed image of Advaita Vedānta. There are, however, other patterns of praxis, theological textures and text genres which do not conform to either the systematic exegesis (*mīmāṃsā*) or logical-dialectical (*nyāya*) mold emphasized in the majority of scholarly studies.

The dismissive treatment of Advaita Vedāntic hagiographies, which are often viewed as pseudo-history for the informed scholar to debunk, is an issue that is indeed caught up in the Indological notion of a philosophically "pure" Advaita Vedānta. Regardless of the fact that the hagiographies of Śaṃkara likely emerged during or after the fourteenth century, not unlike the *maṭhas* in their current institutional form ([Clark 2006]()), they have shaped the lived tradition of Advaita Vedānta on the ground. The outlines of the multiple hagiographic lives of Śaṃkara serve as an organizing and orienting narrative structure for internal "histories" of the tradition.

The overlooking of medieval *prakaraṇa*s and hagiographies is similarly related to the ignoring of the vast array of Advaita Vedāntic *stotras* or devotional hymns (and hagiographies, such as the *Śaṃkara-dig-vijaya*, include *stotra*s in narrativized contexts). Vivekananda was, in fact, familiar with works from those genres and the theological articulations within them which challenge scholarly depictions of an Advaita Vedānta unconcerned with experience and ethics. Even though the *stotras* are perhaps the most pervasive genre of Sanskrit literature ([Raghavan 1969]()), theistic devotion (or *bhakti*), and the practical role it plays in post-Śaṃkarite Advaita Vedāntic traditions, has barely provoked scholarly interest.[15] As the bliss-laden *stotra*s ([Gussner 1976]()) bear witness, the rhetoric of experience and devotion, was not newly integrated with Advaita Vedāntic commitments in the colonial period. The "Advaitic theism" ([Sheridan 1986]()) of the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* (c. 10th century), for example, was authoritative not only for the Gosvāmis of Vrindavan but also among Advaita Vedāntins from Karnataka to Orissa. Notably, as early as the fourteenth century, the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* was drawn on authoritatively by Vidyāraṇya and was later the source text of an influential commentary by Śrīdhara (c. fifteenth century), an understudied renunciate linked to the Advaita Vedāntic *maṭha* at Puri ([Sheridan 1994]()) and a figure to whom, incidentally, Swami Vivekananda refers ([Vivekananda [1942] 2008](), p. 54). The *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* was also formative to the theology of the mid-sixteenth century Advaita Vedāntin Madhusūdana Sarasvatī who argued on behalf of a complete and independent path to liberation by means of *bhakti* ([Gupta 1966](); [Nelson 1988]()). Also of interest here is the utilization of the *Śāṇḍilya* and *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras* in Advaita Vedāntic lineages in the seventeenth century—such as in the work of the Advaita Vedāntin Nārāyaṇa Tīrtha ([Miśra 1967](); [Venkatkrishnan 2015]())—an issue of particular interest since

---

[14] M. Müller ([Müller 1899](), p. 108), who had himself met Vivekananda, argues that the Advaita Vedāntin Madhusūdana Sarasvatī as well as the Bhedābheda Vedāntin Vijñānabhikṣu " . . . are bent on showing that there is behind the diversity of Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, and Nyāya one and the same truth, though differently expressed; that philosophers, in fact, may be many, but truth is one". Vivekananda was, indeed, familiar with the commentaries of Vijñānabhikṣu (e.g., [Vivekananda [1942] 2008](), p. 270) and one finds it hard to imagine he was unaware of Madhusūdana whose *Gūḍārtha-dīpikā* would later be rendered into English by the prolific translator Swami Gambhirananda, the 11th President of the Ramakrishna Mission. With regard to Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's *Prasthānabheda*, J. Hanneder, for example, noted the work " . . . addresses the issue of integrating various religious and philosophical systems within the framework of Vedism and would therefore hold as a forerunner for a modern conception of Hinduism" ([Hanneder 1999](), p. 575). See the excellent aforementioned work by [Nicholson]() ([2010]()) on medieval doxographies which incisively develops the wider implications involved.

[15] H. Stainton ([Stainton 2013](), p. 44) rightly points out that " . . . the *stotra*s attributed to Śaṅkara represent a significant weakness in the scholarly understanding of India's religious history".

Swami Vivekananda utilizes both the *Śāṇḍilya* and *Nārada Bhakti Sūtras* as sources for his well-known *Bhakti Yoga* lectures.

The development and democratization of advaitic ideals in vernacular works is also an understudied, but relevant, issue. Distinguishing between "classical" Advaita Vedānta and "Advaita in the Vernaculars", R. Balasubramanian, for example, notes that "it is wrong to think that the development of Advaita has stopped by the sixteenth century A.D. One should read the writings of the mystic-philosophers of the different regions to see the development of Advaitic thought, to understand the new applications of Advaitic principles, and to appreciate the liberalization of Advaitic discipline" (Balasubramanian 2000, p. xlix).[16] Regional and pan-Indian articulations of non-dualistic thought are certainly implicated in a number of currents of colonial period Hindu religiosity. Pointing in precisely this direction, M. Lederle (Lederle 1976, pp. 261 *ff.*), for example, argued against P. Hacker's claim that the colonial period teacher and politician Bāl Gaṅgādhar Ṭilak (1856–1920) derived his non-dualistic approach to ethics from Arthur Schopenhauer.[17] Lederle noted that Ṭilak was also directly influenced by the advaitic informed ethics evident in the work of the influential thirteenth century Vārkarī saint Jñāneśvar, legendarily known for having opposed the caste system and for writing the first commentary on the *Bhagavad-Gītā* in a vernacular language.[18] Not unlike Ṭilak, Vivekananda's citations similarly indicate familiarity with regional saints; for example, arguing that it is "vain . . . to attempt the lines of action that foreign societies have engrafted upon us" (Vivekananda 1932a, p. 219), he cites the model of exemplary precolonial "reformers", including the *nirguṇī* poets Dādū Dayāl and Kabir. Vivekananda, indeed, explicitly understood Kabir's teaching as "attempting to raise the lower classes of India" (Vivekananda 1932a, p. 290).[19] Vivekananda also advised Alasinga Perumal to pursue research on "the lives and works of Tulsi Dâs, Kabir, Nânak, and of the saints of Southern India" (Vivekananda 1936, p. 89).[20] Indeed, Vivekananda's theological approach can be profitably understood as a kind of vernacular *advaita*. For example, while Vivekananda draws on the inclusivistic and legitimating categories of Śaṃkarite Vedānta, his teaching, delivered to a broad and varied audience, is not limited to the "classical" texts of that tradition nor is it epistemologically circumscribed by the *pramāṇa* system and the horizon of *varṇāśramadharma*.[21]

---

[16] My thanks to R. Balasubramanian for conversations on this and other issues in Kaladi, Kerala in 2010. Also relevant here is M. Allen's (Allen 2013) positioning of the work of Niścaldās (1791–1863), and a plethora of understudied texts in Hindi, as part of what he calls "Greater Advaita Vedānta".

[17] Hacker also influentially claimed that Vivekananda had lifted a non-dualistic, Schopenhauerian ethics from P. Deussen. T. Green (Green 2012), however, argues that Vivekananda formulated his approach before coming into contact with Deussen.

[18] Jñāneśvar was likely influenced by the Nāth tradition in Maharashtra, as evinced in his advaitic *Anubhavāmṛt* (Chitre 1996). Movements linked to the understudied Maharashtrian Nāth tradition were formative to a stream of contemporarily popular "*advaita*" associated with the teacher, and Bombay merchant, Nisargadatta Maharaj (1897–1981). Similarly, the *Avadhūta Gītā*, a popular text among colonial period *advaita* related groups, and a work cited by Vivekananda (e.g., Vivekananda 1927, p. 70), is also related to the broad Nāth tradition (Rigopoulos 1998).

[19] Vivekananda also refers to a Hindi work entitled *Vicār-Sāgar* written by Niścaldās, a Dādūpanthi from the region of Haryana. Vivekananda boldly asserts that Niścaldās's text " . . . has more influence in India than any that has been written in any language within the last three centuries" (Vivekananda [1942] 2008, pp. 154, 160). What is interesting to note here is that Niścaldās, in a number of self-disclosures, was reflexive in his writing about social circumstances that limit access to salvific knowledge, such as caste discrimination and language barriers, which he faced first-hand (Pahlajrai 2009).

[20] Swami Śivananda (1887–1963), founder of the Divine Life Society, who traces his familial lineage to the great Advaita Vedāntin polymath Appayya Dīkṣita, would later publish two volumes, in 1941 and 1947 respectively, on the lives of saints. While he did not limit his account to Indian or Hindu saints, Śivananda's work is helpful for reconstructing the kind of vernacular traditions inherited by so-called Neo-Vedāntins. While dedicating considerable ink to South Indian saints, Śivananda could also make the emphatic claim that the seventeenth century Maharashtrian Rāmdās, well-known for his advaitic work *Dāsbodh*, "was one of the greatest saints of the world" (Śivananda 2009, p. 195).

[21] There are, of course, Sanskritic advaitic texts, which did not emerge within vedāntic *sampradāya*s, that provide a model for this kind of approach, such as the *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*, which influenced not only Swami Vivekananda (e.g., Gupta 1974, p. 978) but also Swami Rama Tirtha (1873–1906) (Tirtha 1951, p. 79, 130) and Swami Śivananda (Śivananda 1963).

5. The Transmission of Advaitic Philosophy into the Colonial Period

The absence of any contextualizing discussion of medieval and early modern advaitic and Advaita Vedāntic traditions in many scholarly presentations can leave the impression that advaitic theology was resurrected from an ancient past in the service of nationalism, thereby laying the foundation for contemporary Hindutva politics (e.g., Sharma 2013). One of the problems with this kind of depiction is that advaitic traditions were not "fossilised" artefacts unearthed by the Royal Asiatic Society, as if Egyptian coffin texts, but thriving on the subcontinent before and after, say, the naval Battle of Swally off the coast of Gujarat in 1612.[22] Indeed, it was in the medieval and early modern periods that the intellectual production of Advaita Vedāntic traditions amassed an " . . . enormous quantity of modern Sanskrit literature" (Shastri 1912, p. 7). In his recent social history of Advaita Vedānta, C. Minkowski, for example, points out that from the sixteenth century to the colonial period "Advaitin sannyāsins and householders occupied positions of prominence in the literate institutions and public spaces of Banaras" (Minkoswki 2011, p. 218). Notably, out of the seven dominant *paṇḍita* families in Vārāṇasī on the eve of colonialism, all except one held Advaita Vedāntin commitments. In other words, "the intellectual scene in Banaras" was dominated by Advaita Vedānta so much so that it can be considered "the establishment position in the city" (Minkoswki 2011, p. 218). Further, H.P. Shastri has noted: "In 1791, the Benares Sanskrit College was established and the Dakshiṇī Brāhmaṇas were its principal professors. Even at the present moment, the Dakshiṇī element preponderates in the staff of that College" (Shastri 1912, p. 12). These "Dakshiṇī Brāhmaṇas" (or brahmins "from the southern country," i.e., the Deccan) are, indeed, the brahmin *paṇḍita* families, of overwhelmingly Advaita Vedāntin allegiances, mentioned above.

Important in this context is the Anglo-Sanskrit professor at Benares Sanskrit College, Pramadadas Mitra. Mitra, although not a brahmin (nor a traditional *paṇḍita*), hailed from a wealthy merchant family and was a major intellectual figure at the College and in the city. Well-versed in Advaita Vedāntic traditions, he was connected to the *paṇḍita* community and also an associate of Swami Vivekananda. The letters sent from Vivekananda to Mitra document their close relationship and Vivekananda's eventual, but indeed explicit, break from the perceived parochialism of Mitra's traditionalism (Jitatmananda 1982). They also record a number of Vivekananda's queries, such as those related to concordances across Indian traditions, texts on Sanskrit grammar, and comments on a range of philosophical–theological issues. Vivekananda's questions include those about Advaita Vedānta's relationship to the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* of Mahāyāna Buddhism and how, for example, the *nirvāṇa* of the *Avadhūta-Gītā*, and important *advaita* text, tallies with the *mokṣa* of the Advaita Vedāntic *Brahma-Sūtra* (Vivekananda [1942] 2008, pp. 7–11). Such curiosity reveals an inquisitive and complex individual grappling with the diversity of Indic sources in order to verify and refine his own theological understanding.

It can be safely asserted that Vivekananda deepened his awareness of advaitic and Advaita Vedāntic traditions in multifarious forms during his renunciate travels across the subcontinent after the death of Ramakrishna, including multiple visits to Kāśī where he stayed at the house of Pramadadas Mitra. This, of course, includes, broadly speaking, yogic traditions, such as the one Vivekananda encountered during his brief tutelage under the "Raja yogin"[23] (Vivekananda 1926, p. 202) Pavhari Baba, who lived for some time in a cave in Girnar, Gujarat, a region, Vivekananda notes, that was "sanctified by the stay of the great Avadhuta Guru Dattâtreya" (Vivekananda 1932b, p. 235). Scholarship to date, however, has largely overlooked the ways in which Vivekananda was informed by Indic sources. Indeed, rarely discussed in articles on Vivekananda is his study of Sanskrit and broader

---

22　J. Sharma (CNN-IBN 2013), for example, problematically suggests that "substantial portions of his [i.e., Vivekananda's] work . . . are a call to a dead, fossilised tradition".

23　Elsewhere, Vivekananda notes that Pavhari Baba's "Raja Yoga", which apparently indicates a mediational *yoga* that culminates in *samādhi*, also includes some sort of postural practice: "I had heard that Pavhari Baba knew the science of Hatha-Yoga" (Vivekananda 1927, p. 240).

Indian philosophical works, whether during the nascent period of the Ramakrishna Mission, at the makeshift *maṭha* at Baranagar, or under the guidance of Indian scholars.[24] Importantly, Vivekananda's corpus indicates significant familiarity with the neglected text genres discussed above that fall outside specialist practices of *paṇḍita* circles or the arcane intellectuality of sectarian dialectics.

6. Swami Vivekananda as Cosmopolitan Theologian

What is important to keep in mind, however, is that Vivekananda's "Neo-Vedānta" was not a passive project of assimilation but rather a critical and constructive one. Not unlike Christian thinkers who have reshaped and reframed their received tradition in relation to political economic exigencies, modern science, religious pluralism, feminism, post-humanism, etc., Vivekananda can be fruitfully regarded as a kind of cosmopolitan theologian. His cosmopolitanism is evident in, for example, his willingness to imbibe and engage multiple intellectual vistas. "My motto", he declares, "is to learn whatever good things I may come across anywhere" (Vivekananda 1926, p. 203). Thus, rather than advocating a simplistic return to a pure golden age, Vivekananda freely adopts what he considers as positive in foreign cultures while also proffering "internal" criticisms of certain elements of Indian society and religiosity. His approach, however, is undergirded by a sense of rootedness that engages other worldviews while remaining committed to certain theological premises and non-negotiable positions. In other words, Vivekananda implicitly situates himself in a stream of inherited tradition, upon which he brings to bear an advaitic hermeneutics shaped by a reverential loyalty to a beloved *guru* and his nascent *sampradāya*. And so while he draws from Western modes and models, he does so only to a certain degree, as indicated in his critiques of Christian doctrines and the philosophical views of the likes of Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and even Paul Deussen. In this way, Vivekananda carried out an agential and active process of Hindu philosophical theology within a global intellectual forum.[25] In the context of the colonial occupation of India, Vivekananda articulated ways in which an advaitic theological framework could speak to both contemporary and proleptic concerns. In carrying out such an agenda, he also initiated a different kind of discourse from that of Ramakrishna, the illiterate priest and Kālī devotee at Dakshineswar. And it would indeed be the discourse of Vivekananda, which accommodated the globally dominant philosophical and scientific currents of his day, that would come to typify a generation of Indian thinkers that succeeded him.

7. Conclusions

In making a provisional gesture at the historical transmission of ideas, this paper does not argue that Vivekananda lacked innovation or that he was somehow uninfluenced by *bhadralok* sensibilities or the global episteme of his colonialized milieu. I do argue, however, that the current understanding of Vivekananda's innovations, and his epistemic discontinuity with precursor Hindu traditions, is proportional to the limited consideration of the diverse (and, in particular, post-"classical") Indic traditions he critically and creatively engaged. Indeed, there remains much work to be done in thinking through the way in which "Neo-Vedāntic" figures such as Vivekananda were informed by, and repurposed, precolonial Indic sources. A closer examination of neglected periods and genres reveals, in fact, theological currents that prefigure, and are echoed in, important aspects of Swami Vivekananda's "neo" theological perspective.

---

[24] Such scholars include, Pramadadas Mitra, Pandit Shankar Pandurang of Porbandar, Pandit Narayan Das, and Pandit Sunderlal Ojha of Khetri. The biography of these figures, and the exact nature of their relationship with Vivekananda, remains an issue yet to be adequately documented.

[25] Given the nature of Vivekananda's "collected works", it is also not a theology that is most fruitfully approached through a lens of systematicity, considering that much of Vivekananda's corpus consists of talks and dialogues, many of which were pedagogical encounters, situationally tailored to a broad range of audiences of different educational and cultural backgrounds.

If we take a balanced approach to the cumulative tradition of Advaita Vedānta: that is, not privileging certain periods over others, not imposing evaluative judgements on high and low points of "philosophical" flourishing, and not marginalizing certain text genres over others—and combine this with more serious consideration of developments and practices related to the lived tradition of Advaita Vedānta on the ground—then a de-essentialized, polyvalent and theologically expansive Advaita Vedānta emerges. From this vantage point, which is sensitive to the appropriation of advaitic but non-vedāntic traditions and their varied historical and linguistic contexts, essentialistic and dichotomous classifications, such as traditional and neo, orthodoxy and distortion, or blanket claims about ruptures with the past, are seen for what they are: neither particularly meaningful nor helpful. It is within the space that this recognition affords, that scholarship on Swami Vivekananda, a key cosmopolitan theologian of the nineteenth century, and a pioneer of cross-cultural pedagogy, can move beyond ossified categories and comparisons.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

Allen, Michael S. 2013. The Ocean of Inquiry: A Neglected Classic of Late Advaita Vedānta. Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA.

Asad, Talal. 1996. The Idea of an Anthropology of Islam. In *The Social Philosophy of Ernest Gellner*. Edited by John A. Hall and Ian Jarvie. Amsterdam: Rodopi, pp. 381–403.

Balasubramanian, Rajangam. 2000. Introduction. In *History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian civilization: Volume II Part 2 Advaita Vedānta*. Edited by Rajangam Balasubramanian. Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations.

Bharati, Agehananda. 1970. The Hindu Renaissance and its Apologetic Patterns. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29: 267–87. [CrossRef]

Bouy, Christian. 1994. *Les Nātha-Yogin Et Les Upaniṣads*. Paris: Diffusion de Boccard.

Chitre, Dilip. 1996. *Shri Jnandev's Anubhavamrut: The Immortal Experience of Being*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi.

Clark, Matthew. 2006. *The Daśanāmī-saṃnyāsīs: The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into An Order*. Leiden: Brill.

CNN-IBN. 2013. Vivekananda Was the Father of Political Hinduism: Jyotirmaya Sharma. Available online: http://ibnlive.in.com/news/vivekananda-was-the-father-of-political-hinduism-jyotirmaya-sharma/379625-40.html (accessed on 1 October 2013).

Comans, Michael. 1993. The Question of the Importance of Samādhi in Modern and Classical Advaita Vedānta. *Philosophy East and West* 43: 49–71. [CrossRef]

De Michelis, Elizabeth. 2005. *A History of Modern Yoga: Patañjali and Western Esotericism*. London: Continuum.

Fisher, Elaine. 2012. "Just Like Kālidāsa": The Śakta Intellectuals of Seventeenth-century South India. *Journal of Hindu Studies* 5: 172–92. [CrossRef]

Fort, Andrew O. 1988. *Jīvanmukti in Transformation: Embodied Liberation in Advaita and Neo-Vedānta*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Goodding, Robert. 2002. The Treatise on Liberation-in-Life Critical Edition and Annotated Translation of the Jīvanmuktiviveka of Vidyāraṇya. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX, USA.

Green, Thomas John. 2012. Vedānta and Secular Religion in the Works of F. Max Müller and Swami Vivekananda. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.

Gupta, Sanjukta. 1966. *Studies in the Philosophy of Madhusūdana Saraswatī*. Calcutta: Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.

Gupta, Mahendranath. 1974. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. Translated by Swami Nikhilananda. Madras: Sri Ramakrishna Math.

Gussner, Robert E. 1976. A Stylometric Study of the Authorship of Seventeen Sanskrit Hymns Attributed to Śaṅkara. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96: 259–67. [CrossRef]

Hacker, Paul. 1947. Śaṅkarācārya and Śaṅkarācāryabhagavatpāda. *New Indian Antiquary* 9: 1–12.

Hacker, Paul. 1995. *Philology and Confrontation*. Edited by Wilhelm Halbfass. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Halbfass, Wilhelm. 1988. *India and Europe: An Essay in Understanding*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Hanneder, Jürgen. 1999. A Conservative Approach to Sanskrit Śāstras: Madhusūdana Sarasvatī's '*Prasthānabheda*'. *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 27: 575–81. [CrossRef]

Hatcher, Brian. 1999. *Eclecticism and Modern Hindu Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Inden, Ronald. 2000. Introduction: From Philological to Dialogical Texts. In *Querying the Medieval: Texts and History in South Asia*. Edited by Ronald Inden, Jonathan Walters and Daud Ali. New York: Oxford University, pp. 3–28.

Jitatmananda, Swami. 1982. Swami Vivekananda and Pramadadas Mitra. *Prabuddha Bharata* 87: 177–88.

Lederle, Matthew. 1976. *Philosophical Trends in Modern Maharāṣṭra*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

Madaio, James. 2013. Retrieving Medieval Voices: Swami Vivekananda and the problematic alterity of 'Neo'-Vedānta. Paper presented at the DANAM Panel at the National Meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Baltimore, MD, USA, 22 November 2013.

Madaio, James. 2014. The Contested Category of 'Neo-Vedānta': Swami Vivekananda and the Multivocality of Pre-Colonial Advaita Vedāntic Traditions. Paper presented at the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies, Oxford, UK, 16 May 2014.

Madaio, James. 2015. [james.madaio@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk]. Re: [RISA-L LIST] Monism and Sympathy [February 3, 2015]. RISA-L [risa-l@lists.sandiego.edu]. *RISA-L Archives*. Available online: https://msuweb.montclair.edu/~adarkara/r-indexes.html (accessed on 1 October 2016).

Madaio, James. *Competing Inclusivisms: The theological Indology of Paul Hacker and Swami Vivekananda*, Forthcoming.

Madhavananda, Swami, trans. 1921, *Vivekachudamani of Sri Sankaracharya*. Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama.

Matilal, Bimal Krishna. 2002. *The Collected Essays of Bimal Krishna Matilal: Ethics and Epics*. Edited by Jonardon Ganeri. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Mayeda, Sengaku. 1965a. The Authenticity of the *Bhagavadgītābhāṣya* Ascribed to Śaṅkara. *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Süd- und Ost-asiens* 9: 155–97.

Mayeda, Sengaku. 1965b. The Authenticity of the *Upadeśasāhasrī* Ascribed to Śaṃkara. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85: 178–96. [CrossRef]

McCrea, Lawrence J., and Parimal G. Patil. 2010. *Buddhist Philosophy of Language in India: Jñānaśrmitra on Exclusion*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Minkoswki, Christopher. 2011. Advaita Vedānta in early modern history. *South Asian History and Culture* 2: 205–31. [CrossRef]

Miśra, Adya Prasad. 1967. *The Development and Place of Bhakti in Śānkara Vedānta*. Allahabad: University of Allahabad.

Müller, Friedrich Max. 1899. *The Six Systems of Indian Philosophy*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

Nelson, Lance. 1988. Madhusudana Sarasvati on the 'Hidden Meaning' of the *Bhagavadgītā:* Bhakti for the Advaitin Renunciate. *Journal of South Asian Literature* 23: 73–89.

Nicholson, Andrew J. 2010. *Unifying Hinduism: Philosophy and Identity in Indian Intellectual History*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Pahlajrai, Prem. 2009. Vernacularisation and the Dādūpanthi Niścaldās. In *Patronage and Popularisation, Pilgrimage and Procession*. Edited by Heidi Rika Maria Pauwels. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, pp. 51–64.

Raghavan, Venkatarama. 1969. Introduction. In *Stotrasamuccaya: A Collection of Rare and Unpublished Stotras*. Edited by K. Parameswara Aithal. Madras: Adyar Library, pp. ix–xvi.

Rambachan, Anantanand. 1994. *The Limits of Scripture: Vivekananda's Reinterpretation of the Vedas*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Ramesan, N. 1972. *Sri Appayya Diksita*. Hyderabad: Srimad Appayya Dikshitendra Granthavali Pakasana Samithi.

Rigopoulos, Antonio. 1998. *Dattātreya: The Immortal Guru, Yogin, and Avatāra*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sharma, Jyotirmaya. 2013. *A Restatement of Religion: Swami Vivekananda and the Making of Hindu Nationalism*. Delhi: Harper Collins.

Shastri, Haraprasad. 1912. Dakshini Pandits at Benares. *The Indian Antiquary* 41: 7–12.

Sheridan, Daniel P. 1986. *The Advaitic Theism of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Sheridan, Daniel P. 1994. Śrīdhara and His Commentary on the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. *Journal of Vaiṣṇava Studies* 2: 45–66.

Sil, Narasingha. 1997. *Swami Vivekananda: A Reassessment*. Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press.

Śivananda, Swami. 1963. *Stories from the Yoga Vasishtha*. Rishikesh: Divine Life Society.

Śivananda, Swami. 2009. *Lives of Saints*. Rishikesh: Divine Life Society.

Stainton, Hamsa. 2013. *Poetry and Prayer: Stotras in the Religious and Literary History of Kashmir.* Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA.

Suthren Hirst, Jacqueline. 2005. *Śaṃkara's Advaita Vedānta: A Way of Teaching*. London: Routledge Curzon.

Tirtha, Swami Rama. 1951. *In Woods of God-Realization or the Complete Works of Swami Rama Tirtha*. Lucknow: The Rama Tirtha Pratisthan, vol. VII.

Venkatkrishnan, Anand. 2015. *Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, and the Bhakti Movement.* Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA.

Vivekananda, Swami. 1958. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, vol. VII, First published 1926.

Vivekananda, Swami. 2008. *Letters of Swami Vivekananda*. Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, First published 1942.

Vivekananda, Swami. 1926. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, vol. VI.

Vivekananda, Swami. 1927. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, vol. VII.

Vivekananda, Swami. 1932a. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Mayavati: Advaita Ahsrama, vol. III.

Vivekananda, Swami. 1932b. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, vol. IV.

Vivekananda, Swami. 1936. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*. Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, vol. V.

White, Hayden. 2014. *The Practical Past*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.