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Author(s): Agehananda Bharati

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The Hindu Renaissance and its Apologetic Patterns

AGEHANANDA BHARATI

ASIAN studies *per se*—without a disciplinary umbrella, appear to be a thing of the past. Young scholars now identify with a discipline; and many, if not most, of the not so young have adapted to this manifestation of the *Zeitgeist*. Pure “indologists”—Sanskritists and historians of ancient India may regard themselves as such—have lost much of their audience; their erstwhile rapport with the humanists of European and early American academies began to erode as the disciplines displaced humanistic studies and eclipsed that wide, general, impressionistic approach which had been the hallmark of a well-rounded scholar. Those who report seriously on Indian culture today are anthropologists, sociologists, historians, cultural geographers, political scientists, or linguists. Perceptive Sanskritists have compromised with the social sciences: Van Buitenen, Daniel Ingalls, and E. Dimock know the parlance of the social scientist.¹

Between the atomistic tendencies of the more diehard anthropologists, who have directed the main thrust of their enquiry at social isolates, castes, villages, and kinship groups, and the interpreters of Indian philosophy, a crucially important cultural syndrome has been all but overlooked. The people who run India and their official works have been studied by political scientists and historians. This essay is an attempt to spot their private place within traditional as well as transitional *ideologies* in modern India. This entire theme is called “the Hindu Renaissance,” in conscious contrast to earlier uses of the term.²

One may in part rely upon the specifically Indianist jargon of anthropology, the “Great Tradition”—“Little Tradition” dichotomy³ as well as the concomitant elucidatory devices of Sanskritization, Hinduization, and parochialization⁴; but though

Agehananda Bharati is Professor of Anthropology at Syracuse University.

¹ Daniel H. H. Ingalls, foreword to Milton Singer (ed.), *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1966); *ibid.*, Edward C. Dimock, Jr., “Doctrine and Practice among the Vaiṣṇavas of Bengal,” pp. 41–63; *ibid.*, I.A.B. van Buitenen, “On the Archaism of the *Bhāgavata Purāna*,” pp. 23–40.

² See D. S. Sarma, *The Renaissance of Hinduism* (Banaras: Hindu University Press, 1944) *pass.*; V. Raghavan, *The Indian Heritage*, 2nd revised edition (Bangalore: Institute of World Culture, 1958) introduction, p. xxi; S. Radhakrishnan, *The Hindu View of Life* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1957), *pass.*

³ See Milton Singer, “The Great Tradition in a Metropolitan Center: Madras,” *Traditional India: Structure and Change*, M. Singer (ed.) (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1959) Mono-

graph no. X, pp. 141–182; M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs in South India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952) *pass.*; A. Bharati “Great Tradition and Little Traditions: an anthropological approach to the study of some Asian cultures,” *Anthropology and Adult Education*, Th. Cummings (ed.) (Boston: Center for Continuing Education, 1968), pp. 72–94.

⁴ See M. N. Srinivas, “A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization” *Journal of Asian Studies*, XV (1956), 481–496; McKim Marriott, “Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization,” in *Village India*, McKim Marriott (ed.), 5th imprint (Chicago, 1963), pp. 171–223; J. F. Staal, “Sanskrit and Sanskritization,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXII (1963), 261–275; Harold C. Gould, “Sanskritization and Westernization: further comments,” *Economic Weekly* vol. 14, no. 1 (Bombay, 1962), 48–51.

aware of the heuristic usefulness of these devices I think they have been overworked. The Hindu Renaissance as a pervasive operational theme seems to frustrate these attempts: there is so much overlap between "Great" and "Little," parochialization and universalization, etc., that these models tend to obfuscate rather than clarify the issues.

This essay is concerned mainly with the *idiom* of the Hindu Renaissance as the linguistic medium of the modern Indian apologetic. That neither anthropologists nor "indologists" have studied this idiom, seems due to some embarrassment to the outsider: the statements which constitute the idiom seem rather amusing, if not at times grotesque. Peter Sellers' persiflage of Mr. Banerji making an Indian version of *My Fair Lady* somehow hits the mark. Anthropologists studying India and "indologists" enjoy the band⁵; few Indian listeners do.

W. H. Morris-Jones suggests a triple taxonomy which may aid the enquiry.⁶ He calls Indian political utterance "modern," "traditional," and "saintly." His identification of the traditional with village parlance, however, does not apply in our wider context. I would use "modern" to connote that part of the apologetic which harnesses technological simile and parable to vindicate or exemplify ancient truths; "traditional" would stand for statements which refer to an actual or legendary Indian past by way of extolling or moralizing; "saintly" would have to refer to the full-time religious practitioners of the Hindu Renaissance, the monks, swamis, sadhus, and a host of monastic and lay exponents of modern religious ideology.

The Indian Renaissance is, by all possible standards, a revival; a revival that began to materialize during the early days of the British Raj and reached its consummation around the time of Indian independence. An astute definition of "revival" was given by Smelser: "A revival as we use the term involves an enthusiastic redefinition of religious methods, but *not a challenge to basic religious values*,"⁷ (italics supplied).

Modern Indians neither challenge nor criticize the diction of the Indian apologetic. They tend to feel that such criticism would entail contempt of the Indian spirit; for however "secular" an English-speaking Indian hopes to be, he does not seriously challenge the words and the works of Sivananda, etc., nor the forensic of the living gurus. We have a striking parallel in the aesthetic repertoire of modern Indians. Travelers and scholars alike are bemused by the incredible polychromes that fill every nook and corner of the subcontinent, representing gods, heroes, politicians, and film actors. No one seems to have any objection to these artifacts, and modern India can hardly be imagined without them. Unless he is a trained artist, the modern Hindu does not seem to posit a distinction between execution and content in a work of art; if it is religious it must be good. Similarly, I would deduce, the oratory of the Indian Renaissance is not challenged because its *contents* are revered, ancient, and profound by ascription.

In India's internal dialogue today, apologetic is extremely important because it forms a common denominator for the Indian intellectual.⁸ I claim that its style of

⁵ *The Best of Sellers*, Angel Records, #35884 (London, 1960).

⁶ W. H. Morris-Jones, "India's Political Idiom," *Politics and Society in India*, C. H. Philips (ed.) (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1962), pp. 123-185.

⁷ Neil J. Smelser, *Theory of Collective Behavior* (New York: Free Press, 1963), pp. 49 *pass.*

⁸ The term "intellectual" when applied to South Asians ought to be wider in its denotation than in its occidental reference; at the same time, certain semantic elements have to be added which are specific to the South Asian situation. Edward N. Shils's suggestions seem to be the most felicitous, see his *The Intellectual between Tradition and*

communication provides important clues for the analysis of Renaissance thought patterns. The Indian pandit respects the swami because the latter fits the *ṛṣi*-model. The *ṛṣi* themselves had not been scholars in the manner of their later commentators—and the pandit regards the sadhu as a primary source, so to speak, a latter-day repeat of the *ṛṣis* who promulgated the canonical texts. The pandit views himself as continuing the commenting *bhāṣyakāra*'s line. The pattern is ubiquitous: If a modern pandit gives praise to Aurobindo, or Satya Sai Baba, or Swami Chinmayananda, he does so because these teachers instantiate canonical statements, thereby giving a new lease to the commentators' activity—and it is commentary, now as in old times, which the pandits continue.

I find myself in agreement with J. F. Staal's argument⁹ and would expand it to cover the Hindu Renaissance: There is a decisively *anti*-Sanskritic trend among the apologists, and this will be elaborated here as a very important part of the apologetic situation. Not only do speakers for the Renaissance not study Sanskrit, but they overtly or covertly discourage followers from doing so. One may, of course, insist that even such counsels as these are a form of "Sanskritization," just as it had been argued that the anti-"Aryan" *Drāviḍa kaṣhagam* movement is but a parochial form of Sanskritization. Such extensions seem labored and they undermine "Sanskritization" as a viable term.

Once this anti-Sanskritization trend has been bared, it now appears that there is a linguistic surrogate pattern, as it were, available to the Renaissance speaker. It selects certain lexemes from Hindi because it was the medium of the most widely read religious lore, the *Tulsī Rāmāyṇa*, the *bhājans* and *ķirtans* of northern India, and even of a section of Bengali devotionalism,¹⁰ and because it was the *lingua franca* of sadhus and pilgrims at the shrines most widely frequented by people from all over India, a medium through which the pilgrims could get their observance accomplished from the Cape to Kashmere. These idiomatic derivations or assimilations are by no means evident to the speakers of Renaissance parlance; but since their professional guides, sadhus and sannyasis, have derived much of their inspiration and their monastic training in *Āryavarta* (the Delhi-Hardvar-Kurukṣetra triangle), along the Ganges, and in adjacent Hindi-speaking areas, Hindi or quasi-Hindi idioms have filtered into Renaissance speech. A Malayalee-speaking swami at a religious assembly deep in Kerala, attended only by Nayers and Brahmins, conducting a *ķirtan* party around the temple of Guruvayur, concluded with the refrain "*bol sab sādhu santan ķī-bol vīr hanumanthan ķī*"¹¹ which was echoed—and no doubt understood—by the participants, none of whom could speak Hindi.

Partly due to the Hindi mythologicals on the screen, partly to the diffusion of Hindu doctrine on the grassroots level, through such highly mobile agents of the Renaissance as the sadhus, the simple, modern Hindu lore has achieved a high degree of exposure. On an even simpler level, villagers who live in cities as factory workers

Modernity: The Indian Situation (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1961), pp. 15–19.

⁹ J. F. Staal, pp. 261–257 (see note 4).

¹⁰ *Brajabulī*, the alleged speech of Kṛṣṇa and his bucolic associates, is much closer to Avadhī and other forms of medieval Hindi than to Bengali.

¹¹ The compounded linguistic confusions in that charming event were at once entertaining and in-

structive: though the apogy of the litany (*ķirtan*) was more or less correct Hindi, the suffix *-than* in *Hanuman-than* was a purely Tamil-Malayalam addition. The standard version, chanted hundreds of times every day on similar occasions in Hindi speaking areas, runs *bol sab sādhu santan ķī (jai)*, *bol vīr Hanumān-ķī ķī (jai)* "say ye Victory unto all sādhus, say ye Victory to the Hero Hanuman".

for any length of time, gather religious material—*bhajans*, *kīrtans*, religious poetry and more *filmī*-piety—during their urban sojourn which they traject into the villages on their occasional or permanent return from the city.

Since the movie is the one pervasive mass medium in India, its role in the promotion of religious activity has yet to be assessed. Many *bhajan*-booklets contain religious poems by the best-loved medieval Indian saints—Mīrābāī, Kabīr, Sūrdās, Raidās, and Brahmānand—“to be sung to *filmī* tunes.” Those booklets are available at stores, temples or even at the railway station for very little money. In lieu of a musical notation, the songs would be headed by an instruction like “to be sung to the tune of *āegā ānevālā* from the film *Mahal*”; on the dust jacket, there would be a polychrome representation of Madhubala, the buxom actress who had played the title role in the movie, or of Bina Roy, another film diva in a simple white sari, prostrating herself before an image of Lord Kṛṣṇa, with *dhūp* (incense), flowers, and the other paraphernalia of formal worship surrounding her.

When we analyze ideological clues in a “Great Tradition” area we must proceed on largely synchronic lines lest the problems be blurred: Renaissance Hinduism is neither what the scriptures of the commentators say, nor what the villagers and the pandits may aver. Their views are marginally relevant, but the special strain of the Renaissance is due to the alienation of its agents, the urbanites we are discussing. I would go farther than this. In line with the approach of the ordinary language philosophers,¹² I suggest that a list of apologetic statements of these agents *defines* the Renaissance, as it exemplifies the apologetic. For an ex post facto evaluation of these statements, as well as for eliciting them from the subjects—modern Indians, that is—I have been using a method with good results which I called a few years ago “Cultural Criticism.”¹³ Playing Peters Sellers’ imitation of Mr. Banerji creating an Indian version of *My Fair Lady*, or presenting polychromes depicting Indian gods, national leaders, and film actors, or reading Sivananda solecisms to the modern Hindu in a critical and discursive manner not only elicits angry responses, but it also brings out more radical and reinforced formulations of the apologetic. I elaborated Gandhi’s puritanism and its social corollaries during a talk at a large midwestern university. An Indian graduate student of chemical engineering got up quite excitedly during the discussion period, and said, “You do not understand Gandhiji. You miss to understand the spiritual depth and profoundness of his actions. He was not a puritan. He was a man of karma-yoga, of selfless action. He denied caste, and you talk about caste as if it still existed. He proved that the *Bhagavadgītā*, our holy book, is nationalistic and socialistic: He not only talked like certain scholars, he went to the house of Harijans and swept them clean himself.” In this short and exasperated harangue, we have an impressive summary of some salient themes of the apologetic: The modern Hindu charismatic is not a puritan, because Western scientists do not like puritans, and because he was “scientific.” The *Bhagavadgītā* fused disparate meanings of such terms as “karma” and “yoga” to suit its epic syncretism; yet karma still meant ritualistic action in the *Gītā*. Furthermore, this particular response implied

¹² I am referring to the tradition inaugurated by Gilbert Ryle, editor of *Mind* at Oxford, continued and perfected by such authors as the late J. L. Austin, R. H. Hare, and Stuart Hampshire.

¹³ A. Bharati, “Cultural criticism as a tool for social studies,” *Quest*, no. 33 (Bombay, 1962), pp. 15–22.

the belief that Gandhi somehow succeeded in extirpating the notion of defilement due to polluting actions when he consciously underwent defilement: Not so, for whatever the charismatic, once established, does, it adds to his greater purity. Finally, that student thought that Gandhi was following the *Gītā*, when he stressed the dignity of physical work. But, as Professor Basham has shown quite recently,¹⁴ respect for physical work is a purely Western import, like so many ideological items. Again, the apologist confuses a fact with a postulate: no doubt the Indian farmer works hard, very hard, and so does the craftsman—a point of sheer survival in a subsistence economy; but once an Indian peasant or laborer has moved out into nonmanual work, as a clerk, a peon, a guard, he will not return to his erstwhile pursuit if he can help it.

A long thread of evaluations thus can follow any statement about India's modern or traditional culture when made by any apologist. Nirad Chaudhuri, Daya Krishna, and a few hundred intellectual mavericks in coffee houses along Chowringee or at the "Embassy" in New Delhi do not fit into this frame, but they are atypical for the Renaissance. Yet it is this tiny group of critics which has recovered the esthetic side of Indian tradition. An Indian student's recent statement overheard at the International House in New York, "I am modern; I don't mind Khajuraho," seems highly significant as an opener of a *new* set of evaluations which are part of the corpus of the Indian apologetic.

We can approach our informants in a simple, well structured manner: any suggestions about religion, politics, humanity, morality, any questions about Hindu society, the adherence to or the abandonment of traditional forms are part of the cultural criticism method, and such questions throw the field wide open. Whatever his claims to detachment from traditional matters, whatever his effort in convincing himself and others that he is not, or no longer affected by religious concerns, by the founders of Renaissance Hinduism, or by their successful devotees (and their sources are virtual dogma), a student at an occidental university, a delegate at the U.N., or a journalist in India does not radically criticize charismatics, like Vivekananda or Subhas Bose, nor the teachings of the *Bhagavadgītā*, since they are linked to the image of those charismatics. "I am not interested in religion. I do not believe these gods," a thirty-two year old Sārasvat Brahman graduate student of journalism told me when I showed her a little Hindu shrine in an American apartment. Yet her roommate told me that pictures of Vivekananda, Ramakrishna, and a polychrome Kṛṣṇa, complete with flute and peacock feathers adorned her dormitory wall. Also, she went to attend church and synagogue services every Sunday, making the rounds to all denominations in town. This young woman was not untypical of modern Indian apologists: statements of the type "I do not believe x, y, z," meaning ritual, traditional doctrine, etc., imply "I do believe in the teachings of the *Gītā*, in the perfection of ascetics like Vivekananda, etc." In fact, animadversion to the teachings of apologetic Hinduism and its literature is quite frequent among people who return to India from abroad, regardless of whether or not they had been drawn to the Renaissance before they left. It seems to me that many modern Indians who do not partake in the dialogue have simply not been challenged to use it: If the modern Indian chemical, mechanical, or civil engineer, or the surgeon, does not enter into discourse with the culture critic, he can abide by science and small talk. But if he

¹⁴ Prof. A. L. Basham lectured on various American campuses in 1967, emphasizing this important

fact in his talks about indigenous Indian influences on Gandhi's thought.

feels he has to make himself known in any sort of identity roll call, he will invariably align himself with the apologetic pattern.

This follows a sociologically predictable route, if we keep our definitions wide enough; again "A revival, as we use the term, involves an enthusiastic redefinition of religious methods, but not a challenge to basic religious values,"¹⁵ states a general rule. The parlance of the Hindu Renaissance deemphasizes ritual, caste, and "superstitions," and it frequently plays down "religion." These are devices of linguistic dissimulation, generated by "basic religious values" as reinterpreted in the Renaissance. They neither imply the rejection of these nor the espousal of new, opposing values.

The modal attitude of the Renaissance is anti-scholarly and anti-intellectual in the sense R. Hofstadter uses this term.¹⁶ It is camouflaged until there is a confrontation with scholarly dialogue within the Indian tradition.

Basically, however, the agents of the Renaissance look at indigenous scholars with considerable suspicion, to wit the late Swami Sivananda:

The study of Sanskrit makes some persons very talkative and forces them to enter into unnecessary discussions with others to show their scholarly erudition. Pedantry (vain display of learning) is a special attribute of some Sanskrit scholars. How much energy is wasted in such loose talks! How much benefit can one derive if he conserves the energy and utilizes it in divine contemplation. He can move heaven and the earth.¹⁷

and,

my advocate friend of the Madras High Court, son of a big Shastri, Mr. R. R. Y. Aiyar, an orthodox Brahmin, will stand up now and speak in emphatic terms in rhetoric, high-flowing and bombastic style: this Swamiji does not know anything of Manusmṛiti of Yajñavalkya Smṛiti. My father knows everything. We would remain as householders till seventy-five and then become Vanaprasthas and at eighty, we should take Sannyasa. Mr. Aiyar is, after all, the son of an orthodox Shastri. He is a bookworm that lives in a small well. He has a very small heart. His circle of life is around the six daughters and five sons. He will talk of high philosophy and will quote scriptures. But, his mind is full of vāsanās (desires).¹⁸

Part of the style of the apologetic is the inclusion of highly coded Sanskrit terms (*śāstri*, a traditional scholar; the *Manu* and *Yajñavalkya-smṛitis*, two important texts on Hindu law and polity; *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*, the two final stages theoretically enjoined on the high caste Hindu) with or without reproachful intent. A limited number of passages from the Upaniṣads, about a dozen *ślokas* from the *Bhagavadgītā*, perhaps some verses by medieval saints like Kabīr, Nānak, Mīrābai, are quoted and may be requoted with impunity; but reference to further texts is frowned upon—for it bespeaks "intellectual jugglery" (Vivekananda's recurrent phrase), pride in traditional learning (which is bad), or it is felt to border on the wide limbo of "supersti-

¹⁵ N. J. Smelser, p. 173.

¹⁶ Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, Vintage Book V-317 (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 7, 18–19.

¹⁷ Swami Sivananda Sarasvati, *Sure Ways for*

Success in Life and God-Realization, The Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy and Divine Life Society (India: P. O. Sivanandanagar, Dt. Hrishikesh U.P., 1941), p. 276.

¹⁸ Swami Sivananda Sarasvati, p. 269.

tion.” Scholars with an orthodox background tend to side with speakers for the apologetic when they are confronted by modernites, probably because identification with the pandits evokes the charge of being stagnant, opposed to innovation and unenlightened even though erudite. This sort of assessment probably continues or resumes the mood of the medieval village saints and their clients who wrote and spoke in the vernacular: their anti-scholastic invectives are reiterated by the modern urban devotee of the Renaissance. The link is quite evident in a historical context: apart from Dayananda Sarasvati, who eschewed the village saints because they had been opposed to Vedic learning per se, the founders of the Renaissance admired and absorbed the poetry of the medieval saints, together with their overt and covert hostility toward traditional, Sanskrit-based learning. “X is an intellectual giant, but . . .” (i.e., he is not “spiritual”) is a charge aimed both at the orthodox pandit of fame and the “materialistic” Westerners or Westernized Indians.

The proposition “x = scientific”—hence, by implication, “modern,” where the variable can be any trait linked to the Indian tradition, leads into a communication pattern peculiar to the Indian Renaissance. The term “scientific” is only one among a very large number of terms which are as Western, hence, as truly “imported” as democracy, nationalism, etc., regardless of whether these terms are used in English or in a revamped Indian vernacular. Where they are used in an Indian language, as in the legislative assemblies on all levels, in the Indian press, and in those educational institutions which use the vernacular as a medium, they are translations from English culled from Sanskrit roots: they are, paradoxically, true neologisms. “Scientific” now translated *vaijñānik*, a perfectly permissible *guṇa*-formation of *vi+jñāna*; but the connotation is quite new, as are all other Indian terms for Western concepts, utilizing Sanskrit morphemes randomly selected. Officially, Western things are not desirable in the Indian cultural universe; but neither are the themes and the works of the tradition which is thought reactionary and obsolete. Yet, one and all, they gather momentum and respect through a process of re-enculturation. I have coined the facetious-sounding term “pizza-effect”¹⁹ for this pervasive pattern. The apologetic use of “scientific”—for Hinduism, Buddhism, Vivekananda, *āyurveda*, instantiates the pizza-effect. So do many other things: Satyajit Ray’s movie trilogy and his other productions were flops in India—the Indian movie goers do not want chunks out of contemporary India’s actual life, unless there is a *sāmājīk* “social” or preferably a “religious” message visibly contained in it. But when those movies acquired fame, with international awards showered on them in foreign lands, things changed—*Pāther Pañcālī* and his other “films” became box office attractions in metropolitan India.

The pizza-effect, however, is much older and much more incisive than these somewhat trivial examples would suggest. Indology, the study of Sanskrit, its religious and poetic literature, after the fashion of those nineteenth century occidental philologists who declared the newly detected Sanskrit as the greatest of all languages,

¹⁹ The original pizza was a simple, hot-baked bread without any trimmings, the staple of the Calabrian and Sicilian *contadini* from whom well over 90% of all Italo-Americans descend. After World War I, a highly elaborated dish, the U.S. pizza of many sizes, flavors, and hues, made its

way back to Italy with visiting kinsfolk from America. The term and the object have acquired a new meaning and a new status, as well as many new tastes in the land of its origin, not only in the south, but throughout the length and width of Italy.

began to be emulated by Indian scholars, and the pandit who knew *only* Sanskrit lost for the time being whatever stature he might still have had. The Indian indologist now plies his trade with increasing success and dignity. In Europe and America, the erstwhile promoters of Indian wisdom were men of various types: scholars like Max Mueller and the other men responsible for presenting much of the primary corpus of Indian literature to the West in an enthusiastic manner. There were also the not-too scholarly, but all the more zealous, lovers of Indian and Asian wisdom. In this country, Paul Carus was very largely responsible for the World Parliament of Religions which convened in Chicago in 1893, and which attracted men like Vivekananda and D. T. Suzuki. We observe a kind of cultural epiphenomenon, and I am tempted to call it a case of inverted pizza-effect: for it was not only the spokesman of the Renaissance in India, nationalists, jingoists, and religious men, who insisted that things Indian had been “scientific,” hence, *really* modern, through the ages. With equal preemption, Carus wrote

Buddha, in so far as we know, is the first positivist, the first humanitarian, the first radical freethinker, the first iconoclast, and the first Prophet of the Religion of Science . . . (Buddha) anticipated even in important details the results of a scientific world-conception.²⁰

Carus, a most prolific writer, had many critics—but they were diehard orientalist.²¹ Quite analogously, the masters of the Hindu Renaissance had had, and still have, their critics among Indian scholars. At this very moment, orthodox Hindu scholars are rejecting the doctrine of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, guru of such a motley assortment of disciples as Mia Farrow and the Beatles—as facile, wrong, and not in line with the tradition.²² But Mahesh Yogi’s attraction for his Indian disciples derived from the pizza-effect, as did Vivekananda’s and the other swamis’ who had inspired Western audiences, and who made it known in India that they had done so.

It might be objected that the pizza-effect comes to the fore in situations which are not central to the Indian Renaissance; but there is at least one instance which impinged on both the political and the religious ideology of twentieth-century India. Indians and sympathetic occidentals alike have come to regard the *Bhagavadgītā* as the Hindu Bible. No challenge against this notion has ever emerged from the spokesmen of the Renaissance, yet this claim is not part of an informed view about Hindu lore. The people who might challenge it are the ones that won’t: The grassroots scholars, the orthodox pandits, cannot participate in the give-and-take of the Indian Renaissance with its English language premises, due to lack of economic and social access to a strictly urban milieu. But the informed Hindu must contest the *Bhagavadgītā*’s Renaissance status: it is not canonical like the Vedas or the Upaniṣads; it is *smṛti*, belonging to a category of texts the acceptance of which is not incumbent on the Hindu. The leaders of the Renaissance have blurred this distinction. Most modern Hindus, unless they happen to be Sanskritists, assume that the *Gītā* is a canonical text. Historically seen, the suzerain status ascribed to it is another paradigm of the pizza-effect. It was Annie Besant’s impressionistic English translation of the

²⁰ Paul Carus, “Buddhism and the Religion of Science,” *The Open Court*, vol. X (Chicago, March 12, 1896), 4845.

²¹ See Carl T. Jackson, “Meeting of East and

West: the case of Paul Carus,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXIX/1 (1968), 73–93.

²² See Swami Krishnananda in *The New York Times* (Sunday Supplement E5, March 6, 1968).

text which impressed Gandhi when he read it in London; no doubt he must have heard about the *Gītā* in the orthodox setting of his Vaiṣṇava childhood—but the conversion which made him espouse this text as the *vademecum* for his political creed, happened at about the time when he read Besant's translation. By that time, B. G. Tilak (1856–1920) had published his *Gītārahasyā* in Marathi, and again, this might suggest to the unwary that the text must have had focal importance. Yet even Tilak chose the *Gītā*, not only because it was a text into which political action might be fitted with impunity—there are dozens of other epic texts which prompt their audience toward activism. There is no doubt in my mind that Tilak knew one or all of the several English translations that had been published by his time and, as we shall presently see, well before that. Charles Wilkins' first translation appeared in London in 1785, roughly one century before Tilak wrote and published his *Gītārahasyā*, a book which became crucial to the nationalist ideology, and well beyond Marathi speaking areas, not because it was a good rendition of the text, but because of its chauvinistic underpinnings: his emphasis was on karma-yoga, and he quite consciously suppressed the final message of the *Gītā*, which extolls *bhakti* and *prapanna*, personal devotion and surrender rather than action. In line with other pandits, Tilak never mentioned any previous sources; but there is no doubt that he was keenly aware of the fact that Western orientalists had chosen this text out of many equally didactic ones. Wilhelm von Humboldt eulogized the *Gītā* as the “profoundest and most sublime (text) which the world had to show.”²³ His knowledge of Sanskrit, contrary to German and Indian belief, was exiguous; Humboldt used Wilkins' translation as a pony.²⁴ Another scarcely known fact, but one that must have been grist to Tilak's polemical mills: no less a person than Warren Hastings had written a preface to Wilkins' first English translation, in which he said that the *Gītā* would last “when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist and when the sources which it once yielded to wealth and power are lost to remembrance.”²⁵ S. B. E. Telang's scholarly English and Burnouf's concurrent French translation in the *Sacred Books of the East*²⁶ appeared in Paris in 1861, when Tilak was just a lad of five years; by the time he embarked on his writing career, this joint effort of Pdt. Telang and Burnouf had been well publicized in Sanskritist circles in India. Another book bespeaking Western self-deprecation, had appeared in London in 1867²⁷; this was one of the first among many books written by admiring Europeans, as fuel to Indian jingoism. Tilak might have seen this book also before he wrote the *Rahasyā*, and probably also Julius Jolly's monumental *Institutes of Viṣṇu*, which includes the *Bhagavadgītā*.²⁸

Modern Indian scholars almost invariably cite European and American eulogies of Indian works, both original and secondary. Professor V. Raghavan, doyen of Indian Sanskritists, prefaces his *Indian Heritage*: “Sir William Jones rediscovered it [i.e., Indian literature and Sanskrit] for the West in modern times, described it

²³ Humboldt's *Briefe an Freiherrn von Gentz*, vol. V., p. 300, dated 1827, in *Schriften Fr. v. Gentz* (ed.) (Mannheim, 1940).

²⁴ Personal communication from the late Prof. Helmut von Glassenapp, Banaras 1953; but see also his *Die Philosophie der Inder*, Kröner's Taschenausgaben (Stuttgart, 1949), p. 6.

²⁵ Charles Wilkins, *The Bhagavadgita* (London, 1775), preface.

²⁶ *Sacred Books of the East*, K. T. Telang (ed.) vol. VIII (Oxford, 1882).

²⁷ J. C. Thomson, *The Bhagavadgita or the Sacred Lay* (London, 1867).

²⁸ *Sacred Books of the East*, vol. VII (Oxford, 1880).

as a language of a wonderful structure more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either."²⁹ Such quotations are not too felicitous, objectively speaking. Sir William Jones was no authority on Greek and Latin, and his statements of praise were sheer oratory. The notion that Sanskrit is somehow a more perfect language than Greek, etc., is often reiterated by otherwise knowledgeable Indian scholars. When asked why and how Sanskrit, and for that matter, any language, could be "superior" to another, answers will range from a statement about the bulk of Sanskrit literature, to the wisdom of Pāṇini and of the Devanāgarī script, with the perennial implication that Sanskrit is a better language because it produced nobler, more spiritual thought.

The use of Sanskrit nomenclature, however neologistic, has aided the Renaissance. The late Professor Raghuvira, in an address to a group of Banarasi pandits,³⁰ made this significant comment: "Our ignorant journalists and governmental papers call Indonesia "Hindeshia," as though the term were to be divided into "India" and "Asia" (*Hind* + *Asia*). The fools! The correct translation of Indonesia is *bhārata-dvīpa*, for *-nesia* derives from Greek *nésos*, island." This seemingly innocuous statement was meant, quite obviously, to feed into the "Greater India" dialectic, the dialectic of Indian cultural imperialism, as the late M. N. Roy used to call it. For *bhārata-dvīpa*, in Hindi or any other vernacular, conveys the meaning of "India-island"!

A radical statement of the tenets of the Renaissance would be: *In nuce*—India has forgotten her marvelous past; this past contained not only material and cultural wealth, it also offered a complete solution of all problems of the individual and of society. There is nothing—material, spiritual, or cultural—which ancient India has not brought forth. All this was lost, partly through the apathy of her people, partly through hostile conquest from outside. India was the home of perfect men—men who owned wealth and renounced it for the quest of wisdom and purity. The modern world—the West, that is, has usurped the things India has lost. India has to go to the West to learn its techniques . . . though these techniques were borrowed they echo of what had long been lost in India. In matters of the spirit, India has retained its superiority—the West has failed, it has misused its powers. India now can and should have both the worlds: She can learn the tricks of the West, but she must live the teachings of perfection as only her ancients knew it. Hence, the man who lives and preaches these truths in a new language, must be sought out and honored. What is the gist of those total-solution yielding teachings? It is all contained in the Vedas and in the *Gītā*, it is all in the words of Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Sivananda, etc.: All religions are one, and the theological differences, the varying concepts of God are unimportant; yet, of all these concepts, the Indian concept is the noblest and the most profound; it is the most "scientific," it is universal. Society is corrupt: The Indian social system is bad, because misinterpretations and willful manipulations of the ancient lore have made India a slave to its divisive tendencies—the true teachings of India deny divisions, deny caste by birth, and teach that one must live in the world and yet seek the truth which is hidden beneath the modern Indian's diffidence. To this final quest everything is of secondary importance—yet, because

²⁹ V. Raghavan, p. xxi (see note 2)

³⁰ On the occasion of Rabindranath Tagore's An-

niversary Celebration at Central Hindu College, Banaras Hindu University, 1952.

karma-yoga is the call of the day, Indians must cast off their slothfulness and achieve the divine through active social engagement.

We cannot separate the agents from the sources within a cultural system, but we have to adduce distinct taxonomies for each of them. Who are the people who set the model for the apologetic? Secondly, what are its written sources? There is a constant overlap between the two, yet they often operate independently. Some of the literary media, including straight news reporting, fall in line with the apologetic, but newsmen and reporters could hardly be called agents of the apologetic, or the Renaissance. Quite obviously, there are "saints"³¹ who are very much in the center of the Renaissance, though they themselves may not phatically contribute to it; see for instance Meher Baba, the late, Parsee born saint who had undertaken a vow of silence until the day when he would tell the Truth to the world. It appears the day had come. Meher Baba spoke and, he spoke in terms of the Hindu Renaissance and its apologetic.

It is the English-speaking sadhu, beyond all doubt, who must be singled out as the cynosure of the Renaissance, being the chief formulator of its apologetic. Anthropologists, Indian and occidental, have used "Sanskritization," "Hinduization," "Westernization."³² Philip Singer recently suggested another term, either additional to this series of heuristic nomenclature, or else perhaps to replace or to reduce to a more basic theme: he calls this process *sadhuization*.³³ I agree with Singer's main thesis, that many of the efforts to recapture the Hindu grassroots, presuppose the "scientific" sadhu as an actual or putative focus for these efforts. The sadhu, as itinerant or *āśram*-bound full-time religious specialist, expert in salvation-giving meditation, as opposed to the ritualistic specialist, the hereditary brahman, who plays a very insignificant part in the Renaissance except as a scapegoat, is indeed at the helm of things. Officially, modern Indians inveigh against the sadhu as the agent for backwardness and "superstition." Nehru warned his audiences not to harbor these worthless parasites any longer; modern Indians will exhort their womenfolk and the older people, directly or not so directly, to turn away from the self-appointed holy man whose sole aim is to nurture and perpetuate outdated traditions and anti-scientific

³¹ The word 'saint', when used by Indians, is a totally different sememe from the Euro-American Christian usage. Probably by an unconscious linguistic-phonetic analogy to the North Indian *sant*, English 'saint' is used by English speaking sadhus when they refer either to themselves or to other sadhus, and also by Hindu laymen when they talk about sadhus. The moralizing Christian notion that the term should have 'genuineness' as its semantic component is out of place. North Indians use the term *sant* or the English 'saint' quite unhesitatingly for any full-time religious specialist of the monastic type and a statement like 'Sant so-and-so is a rogue...' is not contradictory in the Indian and Indian-English language usage. Most pervasive in the Panjab, *sant* is the title of quite a few political leaders (e.g., Sant Fateh Singh). It is a term of professional ascription and reference, and not of hieratic content, analogous, say to "Dr. X" stating

that the person has an M.D., and *not* whether he is a good or a bad physician.

³² See McKim Marriott, "Social structure and change in a U.P. village," *Economic Weekly*, IV (Bombay, 1952), 869-874; Milton Singer, "The Indian Joint Family in Modern Industry," *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohn (eds.) Chicago: Aldine Publishers, 1968), pp. 423-454; M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs in South India* (London: Oxford University Press, 1952), *pass*; B. S. Cohn, "Changing Traditions of a Low Caste," *Traditional India: Structure and Change* (Philadelphia, 1959), pp. 207-215.

³³ Philip Singer, *Sadhus and Charisma*, doctoral dissertation submitted to Syracuse University in 1961 (Bombay and New York: Asia Publishing House, 1970).

attitudes, in order to preserve his place in society, as one who feeds off people without working. The fact that the people of the village, the urban laborers as well as white collar workers sponsor and seek out the sadhu adds heat to the official argument: so long as these no-goods are fed by society, it cannot really advance. However, the lady does protest too much. True, the modern Hindu disavows the “old-fashioned,” non-English speaking, peregrinating or *āśram*-bound sadhu who does not contribute to modern life. The “old-fashioned,” parasitic sadhus, are the orthodox, regardless of whether they are poor and theologically untutored, or whether they are *mahants*, *maṇḍalesvars* (abbots), or other ecclesiastics with considerable wealth or scriptural knowledge or both. Yet, all “modernites” overtly or covertly admire and venerate the “scientific,” “modern” man who wears monastic robes: Swami Vivekananda is an undisputed culture-hero not simply of all modern Bengali Hindus when they reflect on their heritage; his photogenic poses adorn the walls of homes, theaters, tea shops, and offices of the subcontinent, as well as many Hindu homes in Africa and Southeast Asia. I shall go a step further: Modern Hindus derive their knowledge of Hinduism from Vivekananda, directly or indirectly. There are, of course, competing schools within the Renaissance: Dayananda’s *Ārya Samāj*, and the ideologically almost defunct Bengali *Brahmo Samāj*. Their followers obtain their ideas about Hinduism and the Indian tradition from such sources as the *Satyārtha Prakāśa* (“Light of Truth”) by Dayananda³⁴; while the more highly motivated followers of a large number of new sects, Radhasoami, Sai Baba, and of regional institutions would no doubt quote their specific teachers. Yet it was Vivekananda and his latter day imitators, including the late Sivananda Sarasvati, who really created the diction and the style of the apologetic. We can arrange the *āśramites* and their lay and monastic retinue on a scale of ascending sophistication; but when the sadhus are viewed as a total category, they certainly represent the most powerful bloc of agents of the Hindu Renaissance. This is corroborated in their own self-image: Although each one in the monastic elite is keenly aware of his or his group’s status within the hierarchy, all of them present a homogeneous front toward the outsider. Let me emphasize that it is operationally irrelevant whether modern Indians censure or praise the sadhus—so long as one or several are regarded as the true charismatics of the age, it is quite beside the point whether these form a one percent minority in an institution which people call anything from “useless” to fraudulent. “What is the difference between that Mahātmā X and an ordinary man like my brother or the men in this house” (i.e., her husband and her affinal relatives), an *Ārya Samājī* lady who did not know English asked; “He eats better than most of us, has more *ārām* (comfort) than we and gets angry at the very things other people get angry.” Such statements are frequent. Yet, the unspoken implication is that there are indeed *some* sadhus who *are* different—Dayananda, Vivekananda, Sivananda, Aurobindo—whoever they are or were. Sadhus are different even if only a few are known to be excellent. The matrix retains its peculiarly Indian shape: *Brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati*, (the

³⁴ The bible of the *Ārya Samāj*, the book was first published in Hindi in 1880 (published by the long defunct Virajananda Press, Lahore). Since then, roughly forty imprints have been made in Hindi. The book has been translated into all Indian languages, and into most European languages [e.g., Pdt. Daulat Ram Dev *Das Licht der Wahr-*

heit (Berlin, 1927)]. It is the summation of the polemics of Swami Dayānanda, founder of the *Samāj*. For an excellent study of the role of the Swami, his followers, and the *Samāj*, see Kenneth W. Jones, “Communalism in the Panjab,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXVIII (Nov. 1968), 39–55.

knower of brahman is the brahman), the Upaniṣad says; though this passage is known to relatively few, modern Hindus know the stance. The sadhu is, by definition, the brahman-specialist—not the *purohit* or ritualistic practitioner. Hindus feel the eschatological escape complex, basic to all Indian thought, remains the ultimate target, whatever intermediary benefits the modern age may penetrate.

The political charismatics, by and large, paid homage to Vivekananda; Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's relation to the Ramakrishna Mission is not too well known outside Bengal, but the fact is that he wanted to join the mission as a monk, when he was a very young man. Rakhal Maharaj (Swami Brahmananda), dearest disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, told the young seeker: "No my son, you have other things to do." Thus, the legend inside the Ramakrishna Mission.³⁵ Dilip Roy makes similar claims,³⁶ and so did the late Sarat Chandra Bose, oldest brother of Netaji.

Politicians are secondary agents of the Renaissance. Again, Morris-Jones³⁷ formula is relevant: The use of "saintly" language is very much part of the political leader's forensic on all levels of government. A test was made, though it had not been planned: Let a political leader radically criticize any of the founders of the Renaissance—Dayananda, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, even Sivananda of Hrishikesh. In the first place, hardly any party men including communists who have to denigrate the nonsecular professionally, would see any reason to actually do so—because politicians view the monastic founders very much in the light their clientele does. To my knowledge, no Indian political leader has ever tried to downgrade Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Sivananda either overtly or covertly. All Indian political leaders would agree that sadhuism was bad for India; but without saying so, they also agree that *some* sadhus not only had and have what it takes to be modern, but that in addition to it, they are seen as prompters toward political action. Shivaji's guru was a sadhu; and that he advised him on military and political actions is constantly pointed out by Maharashtrian leaders. Very few sadhus have political ambitions of this sort and the few who do—Nehru was opposed in one general election by sadhu Prabhudatt Brahmachari from his own constituency—do not succeed. The rhetoric of the politician is antagonistic. The sadhus, organized or single, are parasites and baneful to Indian society—this has been pointed out in many speeches by leaders including Nehru³⁸; yet members of the Ramakrishna Mission and other nonorthodox monastic institutions are respected and sought out by various local governments to run famine relief and other critical programs. Somehow, those monks who can identify with the leaders of the Renaissance, especially Vivekananda, are not "that sort of sadhu;" they are a cultural focus for all who would lead, and although very few of them dissociated themselves from the wider monastic hierarchy as a matter of principle, the modern apologetic does not see them as part of sadhuism. When Swami Nikhilananda, head of the Ramakrishna Vivekananda Center on New York's east side lectured at Banaras Hindu University in the early nineteen fifties, the then Pro-Vicechancellor, Dr. V. V. Narlikar said in his introduction to an audience of over four thousand students and teachers: "We have learnt to be suspicious, in fact we

³⁵ Personal communication from the late Swami Madhavananda, president of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission (1951).

³⁶ Dilip K. Roy, *The Subhash I Knew* (Calcutta, 1952).

³⁷ W. H. Morris-Jones, pp. 142-148.

³⁸ See A. Bharati, *The Ochre Robe* (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1961), p. 127.

are fed up with the sadhus that roam the cities and the countryside, depleting the people's wealth. But if a real sadhu comes, a man like our guest, that is an entirely different matter." An unsophisticated interpretation might assess such statements as an instance of a universal formula: "institution X is bad, but A, though part of the institution, is good." Not so. Correct psycho-cultural analysis suggests the very opposite: institution X is good, but perverted by most of its members—A is good, because he is a true representative of institution X." When thumbing through primary school texts in Hindi, and presumably in other Indian languages, some culture heroes cited as paradigms of the patriotic, active, moral life are without fail, monastics. The monastic culture hero makes an early debut. In a second year elementary school Hindi primer there was a drawing of loin-cloth clad, bald-headed, sturdy man holding back a horse and cart with his right arm—the horses were pulling in the other direction, and the horseman had landed his whip on their backs—but the cart does not stir. "Who is this man who can stop two horses?" The legend under the drawing said, "It is Swami Dayananda Sarasvati. The power of *brahmacharya* made him strong. It will make you, boys, strong, too." The power of *brahmacharya* is not further explained, and it is unlikely that children come to hear about the importance of the retention of semen before they are much older. But it is not by formal instruction that cultural themes are introjected; it is through processes of deuterio-learning, that the culture-typical notions become part of the cognitive makeup of the person-in-culture.³⁹ Swami Vivekananda, Rāmacandra, Subhas Chandra Bose, King Prithivī Raj, and a host of saints, singers, heroes, monks, *avatāras*, and politicians are held out as *ādarś* (example, model) to the children of India, in a perfectly synchronic fashion. An occasional Livingstone, Edison, or Einstein may appear but with the growth of patriotism in education—a lot which seems to befall all "new" nations—the homegrown models predominate.

The lay devotee, inasmuch as he is an intellectual in Shils' sense,⁴⁰ is the runner-up to the sadhu and the politician as an agent of the Hindu Renaissance. It is he who writes, talks, travels, and finances the visible and the invisible institutions of the sadhu. Mrs. Bh., a wealthy widow, started a subscription to create a "Swami Chinmayananda Yātrā Train"⁴¹; she contributed the lion's share, and made an arrangement with the Indian Railways to obtain a regular private train which would take his devotees thousands of miles to the great shrines of India. A Panjabi banker finances a printing press to start the publication of all the Swamiji's speeches; the press is usually cooperative—the movements of famous sadhus are faithfully reported in the papers, aided by letters to their editors from a wider, nonjournalistic public.

Finally, with some reluctance, we must list certain traditional pandits as agents of the Renaissance. I hesitate to include all of them: The tens of thousands of brahman specialists who have a fair grasp of orthodox material, ritualistic and ideological, which is paired of course with an impressive amount of rote learning for the purpose of actual or potential recitation, have not changed significantly in their approach to things, and they take little note of what is going on in the world

³⁹ Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1936), pp. 475–479; John J. Honigman, *Personality in Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 263–266.

⁴⁰ E. Shils, pp. 15–18.

⁴¹ *yātrā* (Sanskrit) is the 'Great Tradition' vernacular term for 'pilgrimage'; see A. Bharati "Pilgrimage Sites and Indian Civilization," *Chapters in Indian Civilization*, vol. I., Joseph W. Elder (ed.) (Madison, Wis., 1967), pp. 85–100.

of the Sanskrit scholars exposed to Western models. It was chiefly against these men that great reformers, and most of the founders of the Renaissance directed their criticism. Thus, Vivekananda wrote "A country the leaders of which bothered for many centuries what size of a ladle they should use for a certain ceremony or whether to use the right or the left hand, will do best to kick the customs out,"⁴² and this is clearly directed against ritualistic specialization, the job of the *purohitas*. But there is a section of traditionalists who share the idiom of the Renaissance: on top of it, we would have to list scholars like V. Raghavan, the late Pdt. Sukhtankar, the late S. N. Dasgupta, and a dozen more—people who know the orthodox tradition including "whether to use the right or the left hand."⁴³

I regard the Indian teachers of Indian philosophy in English as chroniclers of the Hindu Renaissance. Again on top, the illustrious Dr. Radhakrishnan—not a grass-root thinker by any means, nor a pandit by orthodox standards, but the foremost interpreter of that segment of Indian thought which has seeped through to the Renaissance; some five hundred other scholars, and lecturers at Indian colleges, where Indian philosophy is taught on the basis of translations and of textbooks written by the most eminent among them, including Radhakrishnan.

From here, there is a gradient to popular religious engagement—the English speaking lay devotees, who either follow a specific charismatic leader or who practice neo-Hinduism on their own. A wealthy Sindhi householder in New Delhi, almost retired from his duties, had a *satsaṅg*⁴⁴ conducted in his house in Jorbhag, a residential part of the city, every evening: "Anything but the Name of the Lord is evil; any other activity is a waste of time, waste of time, and of this precious body given to us for God-realization."⁴⁵ He spoke English to a one hundred percent Indian audience. This is Renaissance talk. He and many hundreds like him, monastic and lay, address and impress those who run, or will run India.

Let me now turn to the written sources of the Renaissance. Canonical and quasi-canonical sources as the *Bhagavadgītā* no doubt constitute an historical and a homiletic base for the apologetic. Monks or *engage* laymen will quote *yadā yadā*

⁴² R. C. Majumdar, *Swami Vivekananda: A Historical Review*, (Calcutta: General Printers & Publishers, 1965), p. 138.

⁴³ *Ibid*; see also *Swami Vivekananda Memorial Volume*, R. C. Majumdar (ed.) (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary, 1963) and *Parliament of Religions* (Calcutta: Swami Vivekananda Centenary Committee, 1963–64). These two volumes, containing contributions from a wide cross section of contemporary writers, provide excellent samples of Renaissance apologetic. (A very limited number of these books was printed; they are available at Advaita Ashrama, 4 Wellington Lane, Calcutta-12.)

⁴⁴ literally "assembly of the good"; this is the most general term for any meeting, at a shrine or at home, where nonformalized religious group activities are carried out. The stress is primarily on *bhajan* and *kīrtan* (litanies, group chanting) and, secondarily, on *kaṭhā* (reading and explanation of religious texts) and sermon.

⁴⁵ A pervasive Indian-English neologism in Renaissance parlance. It is not clear to me which Indian term, if any, the word is supposed to translate; but its use is quite different from any British or American use of the word 'realization'. The meaning of the Indian-English term is something like 'consummation of religious experience'. Possibly, the term might first have been used by neo-Vedāntins in a semi-technical sense: if you *realize*, by an act of guided intuition, that you are one with the absolute (brahman), you have *ipso facto* reached the goal of religious life. The most striking example of this use is the title of the collected works of Swami Ramtirtha, M.A., who followed Vivekananda's itinerary a short time after the latter's demise. See Swami Ramtirtha, M.A., "In Woods of God-Realization," *The Complete Works of Swami Ramtirtha, M.A.*, 8 vols. (Delhi: IMH Press, 1910–1935).

*hi dharmasya*⁴⁶ at any possible occasion in order to establish or corroborate the arrival of an avatar—Ramakrishna, Dayananda, Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Subhas Bose; any apologist has at his disposal nonspecific passages supporting the softline Vedānta which is the dialectic nucleus of the apologetic, such as *om pūrṇamīdam . . . to pūrṇamudacyate*.⁴⁷ The choice was generated by recent charismatics. It so happened that the first cosmopolitan swamis, particularly Vivekananda, took a liking to these verses, using them consistently in their sermons in India and abroad. During the past thirty years, very few new selections have been added on the level of the apologetic. Vivekananda introduced “scientific simile,” and his subsequent emulators add some intended modernisms every decade or so—direct and oblique references to some simple technological paradigm; the incorporation of gadgetry language is now part of the religious homiletic. “Swamiji is an electric powerhouse,” a Ramakrishna monk said to a rapt, elegantly dressed audience in New Delhi: “And the various *āśrams* all over the world are like the power substations, or the transformers.” He pointed to a lit-up globe indicating the locations of the Ramakrishna Mission Centers. He had his audience captured—there was deeply enthusiastic breathing and nodding in the room.

Along with oral sermon, there is an unrelenting amount of pamphleteering literature in India, in English and in the vernaculars, distributed either from monastic and other *āśram*-type centers or by individuals who have achieved the religio-charismatic status of the part-time specialist. All this literature—its output exceeds two thousand publications per month—is hortative, pietistic, and reformist in the sense that it does not presuppose, nor indeed intend to refer to, the corpus of primary religious literature, canonical or commentary.

The cover of a monthly journal *Peace* has as its seal the grapheme *Om*, resting on a lotus which again rests on water—above and inside the *Om* there is a cross, and precariously balanced on top of it, the Muslim crescent. Beneath this emblem, it says *God is One worship him universally*—a conscious analogy to one of the constantly recurring canonical quotes *eḷaṃsad viprā bahudhā vadanti* “Truth is one, wise men call it by various names.” This text and the perfunctory translation had been picked by Vivekananda and milked for all its worth ever since. In the Christmas issue, there is a “Prayer to Jesus” by Sister Sushila Devi, a devotee of Swami Omananda, founder, president, publisher, and editor of *Peace*:

O! RAY OF LIGHT (capitalized in the text),
that ever came
To save men by thy Holy Name,
Through Yugas, Thou Anointed One
Who lit decaying Dharma’s sun,
O! Brooding Love, that raised the dead,
On sinning sick, kind healing shed,
Christ, quelling demons by Thy Might

⁴⁶ *Bhagavadgītā*, IV, 7, 8. The passage means “whenever *dharma* degenerates, and when anti-*dharma* comes to prevail, I (i.e., the godhead) create myself anew—for the protection of the good, and the destruction of the wicked, I incarnate myself in every age.”

⁴⁷ This is the ‘invocation for peace’ (*śāntipāṭha*) at the beginning of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*, though it occurs in other, later Upaniṣads as well. It means “this is (the) whole, that too is (the) whole, the totality of things is all this: and if you remove the whole from the whole, yet the whole remains.”

And filling multitudes with Light.
 We long to see Thee come again,
 To gather and transfigure men!
 Hail! Avatar of Holy Birth,
 Come, reign in Peace and Love on earth.
 Om! Om! Om!

In his editorial, Swami Omananda complains that recipients of free copies of *Peace* do not take the trouble to ever acknowledge receipt, and he concludes his statement with "The world is our Home⁴⁸; all people in it are our Sisters and Brothers. To love and to serve them is our religion."⁴⁹ Later on, a devotee, Dr. L. V. Subba Rao, B.A., MBBS, adds "Random Reflections" such as "The sex instinct of man and woman elevated through the infilling of a spiritual value is the basis of the institution of marriage."⁵⁰

A very small fraction of this literature approaches learned orthodoxy. In its most refined form, there is hardly a trace of the eclecticism of the apologetic; thus, in the writings and the dialogues of the late Ramana Maharishi of Tiruvannamalai, we find solid scriptural diction, though many if not most of the followers of that specific teacher are very much part of the general apologetic—witness the fact that Paul Brunton, one of its most tireless occidental spokesmen, espoused Ramana as his guru. The Ramana literature is limited in size, and the output of the *āśram* has decreased year by year, after the death of Ramana. When we read such instructions as "this ego, which is the apparent self, a reflection of the Real Self in the vital-mental stuff called the subtle body appropriates the latter to itself, becomes it, as it were, and as a consequence the subtle body is subject to the sanction of the ego which is the immediate center, so to speak"⁵¹ we have indeed an example of genuine "Great Tradition" Hinduism. Statements like these must use the English translation jargon which has come into vogue through Vivekananda, but the content is of a very different type. For such statements could have been made at any time, long before the Renaissance, and in any *śāstrārtha* or doctrinal buzz-session which has provided the setting for genuine theological talk for ages.

Ministers in the central and the state governments, government servants, officers of the armed forces, not excluding the rank of brigadier and higher, choose as their preceptors those teachers of the Renaissance who did not use Sanskrit or any primary source for their sermon. For again, any use of Sanskrit originals beyond the standard quotations and the elongated chanting of *OM* in which modern audiences exalt, makes its use suspect.

The seemingly boundless gullibility of the modern devotee baffles occidental scholars. A British trained Indian surgeon at Nairobi and a top-ranking economic consultant at the United Nations, quite independently of each other, claimed without any hesitation that Satya Sai Baba, the present-day *avatāra* of Sāi Bābā, can and does heal incurable diseases like cancer from a distance just by concentrating on the

⁴⁸ A takeoff from the Upaniṣadic formula *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* "the whole world, verily, is kin to us."

⁴⁹ *Peace*, A monthly journal devoted to Universal Peace, Totapalli Hills P. O., via Sankhavarān, Godavari Dt., Andhra State, India. Pub-

lisher & Editor: His Holiness Swami Omananda, p. 345.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

⁵¹ Ramana Maharishi, *Sat-Darshana-Bhashya and Talks with Maharishi*, compiled by "K." (Madras: The Jupiter Press, 1953), p. 16.

patient; and that the Baba gives *bhasma* (consecrated sandelwood and other wood-ashes) to thousands of devotees from his palms, without any visible material supply, out of nothing. Both of these men claimed that they witnessed these events in person, several times. There is hardly any need for sampling the less sophisticated—with them, of course, such occurrences are part of the continuing hagiography of the Hindu Renaissance. Reports about miracles as having been witnessed by contemporaries and by people with Western ideas, are part of the apologetic parlance.

Renaissance speakers and their votaries resist particularization. The parlance of the apologist contains constant disparagement of the type of theology which had been germane to the pandits at all times. It equally opposes modern Western dialectic, particularly of the *analytic* type. I found it almost impossible to introduce modern analytic, linguistically oriented philosophy into the post-graduate curriculum of Banaras Hindu University; with great caution and some trickery, my erstwhile colleague, Professor J. L. Mehta, and I succeeded in bootlegging Gilbert Ryle, A. J. Ayer, and some basic Wittgenstein into accepted reading. I see the modern Indian desire for total solutions as an intellectually inhibiting factor: professional philosophers, presumably the best minds of the day, espouse Berkeley, Bradley, Spinoza, Hegel, and other thinkers of the European past who propounded total solutions of one kind or the other. Analytic philosophy does not; it works piecemeal, and it does not promise, nor even claim to look for total solutions. I think that the apologists' antagonism both against indigenous learning and Western analytical philosophy derives from the same source: defiance of any quest which is not a quest for totality, for holistic solutions, ultimately convertible into terms for *muḳti* (salvation), negotiable in the redemptory frame of the neo-Vedanta diction of Renaissance thought. Right down the line, we now see that existentialism in some form is quite acceptable; Professor J. L. Mehta just published the first comprehensive analysis of Martin Heidegger in India⁵²—a substantial work, and quite significantly published by Banaras Hindu University, the stronghold of modern Hindu apologetics since its inceptor, Pdt. Madan Mohan Malaviya. Every year, Indian philosophers, or rather, Indians who study or teach philosophy at Indian universities, and who publish their doctoral theses in English, produce works whose captions reveal the generalistic predilection of the Renaissance; token captions of these numerous works are of the kind "Wisdom and Love in Kant and Vedānta," "Liberation in Pringle—Pattison and Buddha," "Concept of Truth in Śaṅkarācārya and Bradley." On the quasi-philosophical side, the apologetic has developed a mode of juxtaposing Western authors and ideas with Indian texts and their authors, historical or mythical. Going through notes prepared by some Indian colleagues teaching philosophy at Banaras, I constantly found such quaintly anachronistic and solecistic parallels as "whereas Bradley thinks x, y, and z, Buddha thinks a, b, and c"; "Fichte was wrong when he said x, but Rāmānuja was right when he said y. . . ." Such pronouncements as these instantiate the apologist's trend to check intellectual particularization through diffuse inclusion: The traditional pandit does not allude to Western authors, not only because he does not know them, but because their views are really beside the point in the process of conventional *śāstrārtha* (theological dialogue). This leads to an amazing paradox, which has probably no parallel anywhere outside the subconti-

⁵² J. L. Mehta, *The Philosophy of Martin Heidegger* (Banaras: Banaras Hindu University Press, 1968).

ment: The orthodox pandit's approach to exegesis and to the use of the scripture converges with the Western indologist's to the extent that the primary text is taken as the base from where both proceed. The agents of the Renaissance mistrust and dislike both, and they replace them by nontextual, generalized, impressionistic peroration of the type set forth by Vivekananda and the other scions of the Renaissance and its apologetic.

Apart from the political and ideological alienates who write for and read such publications as *The Radical Humanist*, *Quest*, and *Thought*, any writing which does not offer total solutions is unpopular and tends to be ignored.

Antagonism toward scholastic, traditional, and primary-source oriented Hinduism goes so far that non-Hindu religious idioms are frequently preferred to orthodox parlance. Simplistic statements about the love of Christ, the renunciation of Jesus, or *sūfi*-Islamic mystics occur rather more frequently in Renaissance talk than reference to the brahmin masters of the commentary. Not only the Ramakrishna Mission Centers, but most of the less prominent *āśrams* which cater to the modern apologist refer to the Cross with greater ease than to the theological categories of Sanskrit commentary.

A hypertrophic eclecticism pervades the apologetic of modern Hinduism. Evidently, the nationalistic jargon, the apparently anti-occidental "materialism"-charge does not prevent the modernite from incorporating Western doctrines, moral and religious, if they happen to chime in with the *lectio faciliior* of the few texts used by the Renaissance, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the poems of the medieval saints foremost among them. But the traditional, classical, erudite, and poetic idiom of brahmin India is kept at bay as menacing, hostile and renegade, as reactionary and "superstitious." The latter label sticks to such widely disparate things as ritual, funerary customs, marriage selection, classical vocal music and the performance of *bharata nāṭyam* by the women about the shrines of the premodern south and by modern women without any such affiliation. The Hindu Renaissance is indeed "all-embracing," to use a Renaissance phrase: Anyone who identifies with it shares its parlance, regardless of his religious background—Hindu, Muslim, Parsee, even Christian. "All religions are one" is a key notion of the Renaissance.

We may now look for an even more radical cause of the restraints which the Indian Renaissance imposes on the individual, thereby impeding his choice of personal, experiential variegation and of wider cultural loyalties. I believe it is to be found in Hindu India's fear of loss of power, epitomized by the fear of the loss of semen. Historically, this syndrome is not new at all—Patāñjali and the classical yoga spoke of *ojas*, a sort of hierogenetic power residing in, or embodied by the semen which has not been shed. Recently, scholars of very different interests have become alert to this all-India syndrome, shared by Hindus and non-Hindus, but no doubt derived from a Hindu matrix. P. Spratt oversimplifies the situation in a grandiosely Freudian manner, but if we want to use psychologisms, it can no doubt be said that the Hindu "cathects his libido on his semen." I think Smelser once more provides us with such a formula:

a norm-oriented movement is an attempt to restore, protect, modify, or create norms in the name of a generalized belief.⁵³

⁵³ N. J. Smelser, p. 270.

Smelser was after a definition of a norm-oriented movement. We are not suggesting any "movement" at all, yet his specifications apply directly to our case. Any apologetic presupposes a belief system, to use a more properly anthropological term following M. Spiro,⁵⁴ and this is what I understand "generalized beliefs" to stand for in Smelser's diction. If we list the monastic leaders of the Renaissance, who are *ipso facto* the main proponents of its apologetic, on our imagined continuum from the least religio-ideological complexity with the largest mass appeal, to the highest degree of sophistication which attracts relatively few, we would have to put teachers like Chellaram,⁵⁵ Swami Omananda of *Peace*, and some of the vernacular *satsang* groups in Northern India at the beginning, and say, Maharishi Ramana and Aurobindo at the upper end of the continuum. Close to the center, we would list the works and words of that most prolific and jovial saint who passed on to supreme abodes only a few years ago, Swami Sivananda M.A., MBBS, etc., of the Divine Life Society and the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy, who spelled it all out:

The world is nothing but sex and ego. Ego is the chief thing. It is the basis. The sex is hanging of the ego [*sic*]. Man—master of his destiny—has lost his divine glory and has become a slave, a tool in the hands of sex and ego, on account of ignorance. . . .

. . . passion is reigning supreme in all parts of the world. The minds of people are filled with sexual thoughts. The world is all sexy. The whole world is under a tremendous sexual intoxication.

. . . the sexual energy must be transmuted into spiritual energy or Ojas Sakti by the practice of *Japa*,⁵⁶ prayer, meditation, study of religious books, *Pranayam*,⁵⁷ *Asana*⁵⁸ etc. Then only the sexual desire will be annihilated. . . .

. . . Sexual pleasure is not pleasure. Sex-pleasure is the most devalizing and demoralizing of pleasures. Sexual pleasure is not pleasure at all. It is mental delusion. It is false, utterly worthless, and extremely harmful.⁵⁹

W. T. Stace⁶⁰ suggested that the classical Vedāntic notion of the individual soul's merging with the brahman, losing its identity at the point of consummation, was not compatible at all with the imported concept of the "infinite value" of the human individual. The classical Vedāntic soul *is* the Absolute, the brahman, and "infinite value" can hardly be intended to refer to this Absolute. The brahman is not the

⁵⁴ Melford E. Spiro, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation," *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, M. Banton (ed.), A.S.A. Monograph no. 3, (New York: F. J. Praeger, 1966), pp. 85–126.

⁵⁵ Virtually unknown outside Sindhi, Cutchi, and Gujarati speaking Hindu society, Chellaram (died 1946) has become the tutelary "saint" of the *banyā*, Lohana, and other castes in the area. His teachings differ in no way from those of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism; Chellaram himself like many Sindhis, was a *sahajdhāri Nānakpanthī*, i.e., a follower of Guru Nānak, *not* bearded and turbaned like the Panjabi Khālāsā Sikhs. The legends told about Chellaram are in line with the semi-miraculous tales about medieval saints of the *bhakti*-tradition, of which he was a latter-day representative. See Dada Chellaram, *Niraguna Patra* (Saproon,

India: Niraguna Balik Satsang Mandal, 1964).

⁵⁶ The repetition, silent or aloud, of a divine name or of a sacred formula (*mantra*); see A. Bharati, *The Tantric Tradition* (London: Rider & Co., 1965) pp. 101–164.

⁵⁷ Control of the vital force (*prāna*), but more specifically, the various techniques of breath control, common to yoga and other psycho-experimental systems in India.

⁵⁸ Meditative posture; as each human being has a different type of body, he has to find the *āsana* that suits him best for the sake of undisturbed meditation.

⁵⁹ Swami Sivananda Sarasvati, *Bliss Divine* (Sivanandanagar, see note 17), pp. 451–459.

⁶⁰ W. T. Stace, *Mysticism and Philosophy* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1961), pp. 320–323.

object of sociocentric action or reflection. Since the Indian Renaissance transplanted the Western notion of the value and dignity of the individual into the language of Indian modernity, the monistic doctrine of the *Vedānta*, the most highly prestigious philosophy of India's intellectual leadership for about a thousand years, had to be drastically modified. The interpretational focus was shifted from the canonical, monistic texts and their commentaries to noncanonical literature, particularly the *Bhagavadgītā*.⁶¹ Here, the individual remained intact, its absorption into the brahman being presented as a secondary, and slightly inferior choice. The man of the Indian Renaissance can identify with Arjuna and he can neglect those passages which represent the canonical, quietistic stream which submerged the individual, as it were, before it could acquire the value and the dignity humanism had generated, not alongside the Judaeo-Christian tradition but *against* it. The modified Vedānta complex typifies the position of urban Hindu sermon: the individual approaches divinity, potentially to merge with It some day. For the time being, however, it is real in the ontological sense, hence amenable to social control. Most importantly, there is no longer the opprobrium of being an alien ideological import, say, like technology or parliamentary democracy. The newly established dignity of an empirical, social, and autonomous individual is a tender growth: It must not be tampered with; and if we define humor as the capacity for radical cultural self-persiflage, its absence may well be explained by the delicate novelty of the Renaissance ego.

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⁶¹ See A. Bharati, "Gandhi's Interpretation of the *Gita*," *Gandhi and Gandhism: an International Symposium*, S. N. Ray (ed.) (Melbourne: The University Press, 1970).