

*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (One World Family): Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements  
as the Expansion of Hinduism through Globalization

By

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A Thesis Submitted to  
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia  
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
The Degree of Masters of Arts in Theology and Religious Studies

December, 2012, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Date: December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012

## **Abstract**

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Abstract: This study explores the religious phenomenon of Hindu-Inspired meditation movements. The question of how these movements should be interpreted in the context of religion in North America is examined in association with the current academic conversation involving American Buddhism, and responded to from the perspective of Hindu religion, British colonial influence on the tradition, and related aspects of globalization theory.

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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***Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (One World Family):***  
**Hindu-Inspired Meditation Movements as the Expansion of Hinduism**  
**through Globalization**

**Chapter 1: Introduction**

In this thesis, I will participate in the scholarly conversation about Hindu-inspired meditation movements in North America. Are these movements best characterized as a new form of religion, or are they best seen as an extension of a globalized Hindu tradition? This thesis will argue the latter by examining British colonial influences on Hinduism, select examples of post-colonial Hindu tradition, and ways globalization theory helps to explain Hindu-inspired meditation movements (HIMMs).

My interest in the academic conversation of Hinduism in North America is a personal one. Twelve years ago, as a young man newly undertaking my academic study of religion, I walked into a bookstore. As always, I made a beeline for the section entitled *Spirituality*. In the bottom right corner of the shelf, a soft covered orange book caught my eye: *Autobiography of a Yogi*. I didn't realize it at the time, but this account of Paramhansa Yoganada was soon to change the direction of my life.

I purchased the book and went home to read the fascinating tale of this Hindu monk. I was so intrigued by his story that I read it five times and soon began taking lessons from his organization, Self-Realization Fellowship. During the next two years, I

spent most of my time alternating between my meditation cushion and my studies at university with the intention of becoming a contemplative monk with the Self-Realization Fellowship after completing my degree. At the time, I was not aware that there was a small community of people in Halifax, Nova Scotia also practicing Yoganada's teachings. Mine was a solitary practice. However, at some point in my discipline, I became frustrated. I felt a strong desire to have a living teacher; it was during that time that I discovered H.H. Sri Sri Ravi Shankar and the Art of Living Foundation. I was so impressed with the integrity of this man, and his ability to live and speak simply about things I considered to be profound, I accepted him as my spiritual teacher, my *guru*, and I have been with his organization ever since.

During my last decade with the Art of Living Foundation, I have lived several years in their Canadian and Indian ashram, and undergone training to be a teacher for the organization. I have traveled, organizing and teaching courses throughout Canada, and participated in events throughout the U.S.A and within India. I am very actively involved in the organization, and the philosophies proclaimed by the foundation actively shape the way I interact with the world daily. Both my practice and my involvement in the Art of Living Foundation have contributed to the perspective I bring to this study.

In fact, as I write this I am currently at the Art of Living North American centre. It is here that I sit in a large hall. In the front center of the room, which seats about 3000 people, is a stage of three levels. On the middle level sit four Vedic pundits chanting sacred mantras from the Vedas and performing a ritual *yagya* around an enclosed fire. They are dressed in white *dhotis*, a sacred thread covers their bare chests, and they have ash and other coloured powder smeared in different areas of their bodies (such as their

arms and forehead). The pundits throw incense, water, rice, special herbs, flowers, among other things into the fire while they chant in monotone fashion. Above them on the highest level of the platform sits our Guru. He is a charismatic figure dressed in white, sitting in lotus posture with a sublime smile on his face, adorned with long hair and a beard. Below this staging sit a couple thousand attendees; some sitting cross-legged, others using cushions or back-jacks to support their seat on the floor, still others sit in chairs. They are an eclectic group of people composed mostly of Caucasians and Indians (though if you look carefully you can find people of African, Asian, and First Nation descent). Some dress in western clothing, others dress in Indian garb (though this attire might not bare any ethnic connotations). All of this takes place in Northern Quebec, on the outskirts of a small little village called St. Mathieu De Parc.

In the morning, crammed into a small room below the main meditation room, sat a couple hundred people. In the front of the room sat Guru Sri Sri Ravi Shankar. Just below him several pundits performed an *upanayanam*, a sacred rite of passage. The giving of the sacred-thread has been a symbol of passage from childhood to adulthood in the brahmanical tradition of Hinduism, a rite heralded for the upper class citizens of the caste system. The cultural connotations of this rite are very Hindu, yet I observed this taking place in Canada. A 16-year-old boy sat with his parents dressed in traditional Indian garb. What stood out for me was the fact that the father was Caucasian. It was a strange sight to see, a Canadian Caucasian man wearing a traditional Indian outfit. The boy undergoing the ceremony was half Indian/half Caucasian himself and has grown up in a very Western upbringing. Yet this rite of passage had great significance for the family. The priests took the boy through the mandatory steps of the ceremony and

initiated him into the *Gayatri* mantra. This mantra is said to be one of the most sacred mantras in Hinduism containing the full extent of the Vedas.

The events described above are significant when considering Hinduism's contribution to the religious landscape of North America. In both cases, the scene looks like it could be taken directly out of India, with the exception of the physical environment and the western crowd. Several times a year, I find myself returning to this experience. I visit this place whenever H. H. Ravi Shankar decides to be there. This ashram is one of his many centers around the globe. I come here for meditation retreat, spiritual guidance, or often just to help with the organization of the events. Previous to writing this thesis, I, like many of the people I know who also visit the ashram, have never considered myself to be Hindu though I participate extensively in the organization.

The Art of Living Foundation's activity draws on the philosophies and practices of yoga, stems from a lineage of Hindu gurus, and follows the initiative of a stream of Hindu-inspired meditation movements that have bridged the ocean traveling from India across the globe into other areas of the world over the past century. I spiritually identify with the Art of Living Foundation. Therefore, if HIMMs are Hindu then I must be Hindu too. Many participants of HIMMs however claim that these organizations are not religious, and though they are inspired by their tradition of origin, HIMMs have broken away from Hinduism and represent a secular form of spirituality that can compliment any religious belief system. Is this true? My hypothesis is that it is not.

What is the place of Hindu-inspired meditation movements in the context of religion in North America? This is the question I will address in this thesis. I will do so examining the Hindu religion itself, British colonial influence on the tradition, and related

aspects of globalization theory. This question has arisen out of my own experience and attempt to come to terms with how to label my personal practice. This experience in turn led me to look at the phenomena of HIMMs and how to interpret, classify, and understand them and their relationship between their religion of origin and their practice in North America. My personal experience is one thing that contributes to this thesis question, but so too does the academic conversation about HIMMs. The task of this thesis is to examine the current state of this conversation.

**Problem:**

As members of various ethnic communities continue to immigrate into North America, they bring with them their own cultural and religious traditions, their rituals and practices, languages and social habits. This has created new opportunity for North Americans to explore and, in many cases, embrace the traditions of other cultures. Indeed, Asian religions are attracting much attention within Western culture as a result. This is certainly the case with respect to Hinduism.

Many Hindu spiritual teachers have crossed the divide between East and West to create movements such as the Self Realization Fellowship, Transcendental Meditation Movement, Siddha Yoga, the Art of Living Foundation and many others. These movements have provided a more “Westerner friendly” version of their tradition focusing on the philosophies of yoga. The popularization of yoga and meditation in society has supported the growth of these organizations. USA Today reported that one out of eleven Americans tried meditation in 2007 alone (Marilyn Elias, 2009, para. 3). Although these



organizations have interested many in the West, they have been given little attention by the academy. The academy has tended to understand them as New Religious Movements. The globalization of Hinduism has thus not been as widely studied as its Buddhist counterpart. I want to argue that globalization deserves more scholarly attention. The literature available presents a debate regarding the labeling and interpreting of the phenomena, and I plan to participate in this debate.

I will address HIMMs in the context of religion in North America. I will examine if HIMMs are best defined as their own particular form of religion, or as part of a larger phenomenon of globalization occurring within the Hindu tradition. I will be addressing specifically the work of Lola Williamson (2010). She argues that HIMMs constitute a new form of religion within America. I will argue against her position claiming that HIMMs constitute an expansion of Hinduism in a global context.

### **Scholarly Context of the Question:**

The question about whether HIMMs are a new North American religion or an extension of Hinduism has its roots in the interpretation of Buddhism in North America. The scholarly opinions regarding Western Buddhism as part of global Buddhism is a model that can be useful to interpret Western Hinduism as “Hindu.” With regard to western Buddhism, there is a general agreement that Buddhism has changed in the West but the cause is generally unstated. Previously, scholars such as James William Coleman (1999), Charles Prebish (1999), and Richard Seagar (2002) have argued for an “American Buddhism.” They argue that American Buddhism is distinct from the Buddhism of other

cultures. However, recent scholarship, by Alexander Soucy (2010) and Victor Sogen Hori (2010) for example, suggests that the changing landscape of American Buddhism stretches beyond the Western world to a global phenomenon. Soucy's argument is that American Buddhism is a continuation of multiple Buddhist responses evident in globalization, as different lineages in Asia react to Western colonialism and migrate to North America.

This conversation developing around the globalization of Buddhism is an important one. Lola Williamson (2010) and Polly Trout (2001) have undertaken a similar project regarding Hinduism. Williamson argues that HIMMs embody a religious turn of events that draw on both Hindu and American religious traditions. Essentially, she is stating what many scholars and practicing Buddhists have said about Buddhism in North America. There is an American form of the tradition that is taking shape, and it is therefore something new in the North American context. However, she differs from scholars of American Buddhism when she suggests that North American practitioners of HIMMs combine aspects of the Hindu tradition with aspects of their own American religious and cultural heritage to structure a new form of religion itself.

While I agree with Williamson that an interaction between Hindu and American religious cultures has taken place, I am critical of her claim that it constitutes a new religion. I believe HIMMs are better understood in the context of the globalization of Hinduism itself. I think that the literature addressing the issues of globalization and Buddhism in America can be used to help us understand the issues occurring in relation to Hinduism and HIMMs. This literature can help us to see that HIMMs are a North American product of the globalization of Hinduism.

## **Chapter Outline:**

HIMMs participate in the globalization of Hinduism. To explain and develop this argument, I will begin by providing Lola Williamson's claim that HIMMs are best understood as a new religion. I will then proffer a counter position using Alexander Soucy's (2010) work on the globalization of Buddhism as a comparative model. I will demonstrate how the literature associated with Buddhism in North America can provide a context and example of how to view a similar occurrence within Hinduism in North America and HIMMs. The issue in debate, between Williamson and I, is one of continuity vs. discontinuity within Hinduism.

In my third chapter, I will continue with this theme of continuity and draw upon religious globalization theory to support the idea that a tradition can be carried on in the face of change. I will examine the work of scholars such as Peter Beyer (2006, 2007), Roland Robertson (1995), Arif Dirlik (2003), and others, all of which have contributed greatly to the academic conversation regarding globalization and religion. Beyer takes the position that Western cultural structures constitute a dominant force in the globalization process and, as a result, have imposed these forms upon other cultures. This is evident in Hinduism's response to British colonialism as Hindu's remodel their religion in opposition to the Western influence. The four-fold typology on glocalization, offered by Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) and used to define types of religious global exchange, will be addressed and examined in light of how Hinduism in North America develops in the context of its new environment. This chapter will lay the groundwork necessary to interpret HIMMs as an expansion of Hinduism through the process of globalization.

In my fourth chapter, I will further develop the issue of continuity within Hinduism. Here I will examine how globalization has been an active process in Hinduism since its origin. The diversity of Hinduism will be examined with the purpose of acknowledging a unity within this diversity and the continuation of a tradition throughout time. While scholars such as Frykenberg (1989) and King (1999) argue that Hinduism is a recent construction, I will use the work of such scholars as Lorenzen (1995) and Doniger (2010) to argue that Hinduism is an ancient tradition that continually undergoes transformation. I identify the changing face of Hinduism in order to argue that HIMMs are a continuation of this process. The response to British colonialism in India helped create a foundation for HIMMs and the platform for a global Hinduism.

The fifth chapter will provide an analysis of HIMMs as an expansion of Hinduism. I will provide a description of HIMMs and demonstrate how there is sufficient crossover between Hinduism and HIMMs with regard to philosophy, belief, and practice to consider it as a western version of the tradition. I will also examine the role of lineage in providing a direct link to the historic tradition.

Finally, in the conclusion I will weave together the ideas put forth in the earlier chapters addressing my thesis question: in the context of religion in the modern world, how do we view Hindu-inspired meditation movements? In doing so, it is my intent that you will concur that HIMMs are best considered as an expansion of global Hinduism and not as a new religion.

## Chapter 2 – The Debate

This thesis asks the question, ‘How are we to understand the phenomenon of HIMMs in North America?’ The debate that arises out of this question sees HIMMs either as a new form of religion, which is the position of Lola Williamson, or as an aspect of the global expansion of Hinduism. The latter is supported by globalization theory and reference to parallel academic research on American Buddhism. This chapter will focus on this debate considering the two sides of the argument in order to prepare the ground to argue our thesis. In presenting this information, I will lay the foundation for the following chapters, which will contribute to our understanding of HIMMs as an expansion of Hinduism through globalization.

HIMMs are a particular religious phenomenon that stem from colonial influence in India and the process of globalization that occurred as a reaction to this influence. They originate in North America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. It was during this period that Hindu gurus, inspired by colonial change<sup>1</sup>, acted to bring the teachings of their spiritual lineages to a global stage promoting a universal spirituality<sup>2</sup>. Confronted with issues of globalization, these teachers and their followers acted to adapt their organizations to emulate the cultural criteria of their host culture. These teachers drew upon their tradition for authenticity and used their movements to provide an outlet for religious continuity within a foreign environment.

Polly Trout (2001) argues that the intentions of these gurus were not to establish a cultural foundation for the Hindu religion globally; instead, their aim was to develop the

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 4: Continuity and Colonialism.

<sup>2</sup> See Chapter 5: HIMMs.

foundation for a universal spirituality that transcended culture and could lead all of humankind to spiritual perfection. She states, “The gurus had hoped to transcend the confining grid of cultural assumptions...” (p. 2). The aim was to leave superstition behind and establish a “science of religion,” a framework for spirituality that was based upon reason, experimentation, and direct perception of spiritual truth on an individual and personal level. In doing so, the founders of HIMMs and their followers set out to create an appearance for their organizations that would be appreciated and accepted by a global audience. Thus they created an institutional format that emulated European and North American institutions. These organizations make use of contemporary methods of marketing and advertising to promote their teachings and broaden the reach of their movement. Furthermore, they adapt to their appropriate setting using language and ideals that will appeal to the common culture. A primary method used to achieve this aim is the use of scientific research (Woodrum, 1982, p. 95).

Despite the attempt to integrate into their new environments, their idea of a universal spirituality that transcended culture was complicated by the fact their universal worldview was inherently Hindu. This complication arose from a collision of cultures, the Hindu worldview with the local North American. Trout (2001) speaks to of this interaction claiming, “...(The local disciples of the gurus) hijacked their vision to help build a worldview that was unmistakably American” (p. 2). What Trout means by this statement is that we now have a new formula in which the teachings of Hinduism are presented, interwoven within North American culture and less as teachings of Hinduism. Forsthoefel and Humes (2005) second this thought stating that the Hindu founders of HIMMs bring with them a “conceptual and cultural matrix that has interfaced with a

dominant American cultural matrix” (p. 2). The results of this interaction have led to a number of interesting developments, some of which act to reshape and redefine the tradition of Hinduism in response to its North American subjects. It is this redefinition that we address when we speak of HIMMs<sup>3</sup>.

The problem this thesis addresses is how to best understand this phenomenon of HIMMs: is it Hinduism, is it American religion, or is it something entirely new? Lola Williamson (2010) claims that HIMMs should be seen as a new religion and are not an expansion of Hindu religion. She states, “HIMMs comprise a new cultural and religious phenomenon that arose in America...” (p. 4). Her claim originates from a position of locality. She sees the phenomenon as an isolated incident. It is an attempt to come to terms with the phenomena of HIMMs from the perspective of American religion. She considers what HIMMs are for North Americans as a happening within North America. Her argument is that the interaction between North American culture and Hinduism within HIMMs is a process that acts to remove HIMMs from their roots within the Hindu tradition creating an entirely new religion.

Williamson therefore claims that these movements are not based so much upon the beliefs and tradition of the founders of these organizations. She states that they are a combined effort of those who follow these Hindu gurus. Her position is that these participants create a system of meaning that has several interwoven components. It is these components that differentiate them from the tradition of their founders. Whereas she acknowledges that these movements draw on Hindu sources for inspiration, she asserts that these movements maintain a belief which is altogether different from the

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<sup>3</sup> A description of HIMMs will be provided in more detail in Chapter 5.

religion itself. HIMMs will, for the most part, not touch on anything that is to be considered incongruous with mainstream thought and culture. Thus, special emphasis is given to karma yoga (service) and raja yoga (contemplation) rather than systems of devotion (Williamson, 2010, p. 217). Furthermore, while she maintains that these meditation movements are largely inspired by Vedanta philosophy and faith in a guru (which both stem from traditional Hindu lineages), she continues to argue that the religious phenomena of HIMMs are far from traditional. She suggests that the weaving together of Hinduism with the tradition already present in North America creates something entirely new. For her, HIMMs are the synthesized result of Hindu and American religion as they came into contact with each other in North America and not a continuity of a process already occurring in India as a response to globalization. It is because of this combined effort that she claims it should be regarded as its own new form of religion.

In referring to HIMMs as a religion, Williamson is aware that such a categorization can be problematic. HIMMs do not have the broad religious scope that Hinduism and many other religions construct. As a result, she (2010) states, “some might argue that the concept of HIMMs is not broad enough to merit a separate category and could better be considered a subset of Hinduism” (p. 6). Williamson however refutes this claim stating that if it is to be considered a subset of anything, it should fall under the category of “American religion.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, with regard to the term ‘American religion’, she

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<sup>4</sup> With respect to ‘American religion’ Williamson does not make herself particularly clear as to what exactly American religion is. She (2010) does claim, “American religious ethos derives primarily from Protestantism” (xi). Furthermore she states that Protestantism emphasizes a personal, ecstatic religious experience. She goes on within her work to discuss the groundwork laid out previous to the introduction of HIMMs in North America by movements such as *Transcendentalism, Theosophy, and New Thought* (Williamson, 2010, p. 28-34). These movements develop this Protestant emphasis on personal experience



concedes that it is much too broad to have any relevant meaning. Williamson therefore concludes that it is better considered as a separate category. Doing so gives it more heuristic value.

Williamson (2010) furthers her claim that HIMMs should be considered as a new religion suggesting that they maintain all the characteristics that make up religions. She states:

A cursory examination of these Hindu-based movements reveals that they display all of the characteristics of what is normally associated with religion. Practitioners of meditation choose to privilege the experiential element without realizing the extent to which this element is intertwined with outer religious expression. (p. 13)

However, the categorization of HIMMs becomes problematic when you consider that each maintains its unique qualities. Thus she deems HIMMs as a collective worthy of being considered a new religion. She states, “It is the aggregate of all of these groups that I consider a religion. While each movement has unique characteristics, taken together, they have enough family resemblances and enough differences from other religions to be considered a new category” (p. 14).

Why she doesn't extend this “family resemblance” between HIMMs and Hinduism itself is perplexing. Her narrow perspective, insisting that HIMMs be observed within the closed context of North America, fails to acknowledge the larger global phenomenon at work as well as the history of change within the Hindu tradition. It is precisely for this reason that it is necessary to analyze HIMMs from the perspective of globalization theory.

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and appear to be the foundation for what Williamson alludes to as ‘American Religion’, a term which she herself incidentally claims is far too broad to have any relevant meaning.

What is it that globalization theory can offer us in our understanding of HIMMs that allows us to view the phenomenon from a broader perspective than Williamson's local position? Globalization theory creates an opportunity to analyze local happenings from a global perspective. It is from this position that we are able to see the continuity between Hinduism and HIMMs.<sup>5</sup>

The literature on Buddhism in North America is useful for our analysis of HIMMs because it demonstrates the fact that globalization is so compelling that it refutes the notions of American Buddhism or American Hinduism and speaks to a much broader sense of tradition. Thus, in the following section I will provide a discussion of Buddhism in North America as a comparative model for the discussion of HIMMs in North America to follow in later chapters. The academic conversation regarding Buddhism in North America (which is more advanced than the current dialogue concerning Hinduism in North America) also provides the groundwork to counter Lola Williamson's claim. This discussion has a particular direction; I am not attempting to change the current conversation on Buddhism, but using it as an already established model which points to my own argument. It is important to note that this discussion on Buddhism is not the central argument of this thesis but a model for which to understand the central argument. This conversation parallels and models the issue we are dealing with concerning HIMMs and demonstrates that I am opting for a global theory as first applied to Buddhism. Understanding American Buddhism in this context of globalization thus grants us a foundation to do the same with HIMMs as the globalization of Hinduism. It is also necessary to mention that I have relied on the work and analysis of other's for the

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<sup>5</sup> Globalization theory will be discussed in *Chapter 3: Globalization Theory and Continuity*.

purposes of this conversation, a thorough critique of which is beyond the scope of the present work.

Therefore, in the following section I will provide an account of the two major forms of Buddhism, as they exist in North America, 'Ethnic' and 'American'. In doing so, I will demonstrate how American Buddhism is the expansion of an ongoing process of Buddhist globalization in response, in part, to European colonialism. I suggest that Ethnic and American Buddhism are comparable to Hindu diaspora and HIMMs respectively. Thus, an understanding of American Buddhism demonstrates not only the power of globalization but also lays the framework for an understanding of HIMMs and American Hinduism as defined in the chapters to follow.

There are a wide variety of Asian immigrants in North America. Members of these cultures bring with them a variation of Buddhism representing their ethnic background. In short, Ethnic Buddhism exists as a religious expression in these diaspora communities. Depending on the cultural heritage of these groups, the expression can look very different from one and another. However, for the most part, there is a particular format that they each embrace. They seek collectively as a community to preserve in their new environment the cultural institutions, practices and meanings of the country they left behind. Ethnic Buddhism acts not only to meet the community's spiritual needs but also, as in many diaspora communities, it acts as the centre for social and ethnic fulfillment.

I will use the Buddhist Churches of America (BCA), a branch of the Japanese Jodo Shinshu tradition, and more specifically the Southern Alameda County Buddhist Church (SACBC), as an example of Ethnic Buddhism. Using this example, we can categorize the forms of Buddhist practice in three groups: memorial services, study

classes, and Sunday services. Memorial services for the group can be defined as those functions that have a close relationship with ancestor veneration and are particularly emphasized by the community. In the SACBC, roughly half of the member families actively participate in these services while not making their presence known at other religious functions. The community holds the study classes on weekday evenings. Only about ten percent of the community of the SACBC takes part in these classes. It is attended essentially by the most spiritually motivated of the group (Tanaka, 2007, p. 119). Finally, an example of worship practice in the Jodo Shinshu North American community is the Sunday service at the SACBC. Tanaka (2007) provides us with the following details of a typical hour-long Sunday service:

- Tolling of the bell to signify the beginning of the service in the Buddha Hall
- Greetings by the chairperson of the service
- Quiet sitting or meditation (five minutes)
- Sutra chanting of verse sections (ten minutes)
- Gatha or song
- Recitation of the “Three Treasures” or “Golden Chain”
- Dharma talk by the resident priest or guest speaker (twenty to thirty minutes)
- Voluntary sharing of experiences and insights by anyone in attendance
- Another gatha or song
- Announcements of temple activities
- Individual offerings of incense by those lining up at the front of the Buddha
- Hall (p. 119)

The Sunday service provides us with a direct example of the emphasis Ethnic Buddhism places on cultural form and devotional practices. The chanting of sutras and religious song, as well as offerings made to the Buddha, are emphasized more than personal meditation practice. Furthermore, Tanaka (2007), drawing on his three years of experience as a priest for the community, claims that, besides some of the more senior members who make offerings at their home shrines, the only time when worship happens outside of the temple is when members express their gratitude before and after a meal (p.

120). Thus, we can observe a form of Buddhism that is very much centered on the activity of the temple, where community and ethnic modes are placed above individual Buddhist practice. One's personal identity as a Buddhist is associated with a community through physical presence. In this way, we see how ethnic Buddhism can be said to be comparable to ethnic Hindu communities existing in diaspora.

What we can take away from this interpretation of Ethnic Buddhism in North America is that the tradition undergoing the globalization process does not always adapt to the cultural norms of its new environment. A religious tradition can react to globalization in the negative, resisting change and placing emphasis on reliving the tradition that they left behind in their homeland. As a result, there is a cultural emulation of their previous way of life. In these cases, contribution and participation to the community is valued over individual spiritual life. The focus is on culture and its preservation. In this way, Ethnic Buddhism, and Diaspora Hinduism, grant us a perspective of their native tradition that allows us to perceive in contrast other forms of globalization and change within these traditions, such as American Buddhism and HIMMs. From a negative point of resistance, we are able to view more clearly positive reactions to change and globalization that occur within a tradition in these later forms<sup>6</sup>.

American Buddhism and HIMMs are mainstream, having abandoned aspects of the cultural Agenda of ethnic Buddhism and Hindu diaspora. For this reason, they are more popular in North America. Not only are they more successful in drawing North American followers to their organizations, but they also present Buddhism in an entirely

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<sup>6</sup> The terms 'negative' and 'positive' here do not reflect a view that one particular reaction to globalization is better than the other, merely they respectively represent a 'rejection' or 'acceptance' of the new cultural container globalization offers. A negative reaction to globalization therefore is neither to be considered as 'good' or 'bad' in comparison to a positive reaction to globalization.

different format. Unlike ethnic Buddhism, which focuses on ritual worship and communal gathering, the focal point in American Buddhism is often the individual. American Buddhism is practiced mostly in a private space and is centered on meditation. There is a rational framework developed around self-understanding and individualism in which the ritual worship and cultural practices of Ethnic Buddhism are not required and are often looked upon as superstition. For this reason, Prebish (1999) notes that, “more than a few observers of the American Buddhist tradition have remarked that American converts treat Buddhism as if it were a ‘onfold path,’ focusing on meditation and little, if anything, else” (p. 63). Whereas, in Asia the ritual of daily meditation is mostly limited to practicing monks and nuns, in North America it has become the principle undertaking of American Buddhists. This is evident as the monastic emphasis on meditation is practiced in Dharma centers and retreats through out North America. With regard to the rigorous devotion that Western practitioners have towards meditation, Suzuki Roshi, a well-known pioneer in American Buddhism, commented, “You Americans are not quite monks and not quite laypeople” (Fields, 1998, p. 201).

The practice of meditation is, for the most part, a private discipline done at home, though western practitioners are encouraged to participate in retreats as well as group sitting practice. When a group does meet, the practice is often accompanied by ‘dharma talks’ and the study of traditional Buddhist philosophy. This study is associated with furthering the practice and understanding of meditation. Participants are also encouraged to reflect on Buddhism at home by reading books or articles relating to the topic.

The goal of the practice of American Buddhism is often to come to a self-realization and an awareness of nirvana, a state of liberation. This is much different from

the desired end of cultural preservation and community found in ethnic Buddhism, but happens to be the same desired goal of HIMMs. American Buddhist organizations stem from lineages of Buddhist teachers and view themselves as continuing these lineages. Jack Kornfield, a founder of Insight Meditation, states that the goal these traditions are to achieve “liberation within our bodies and minds, in the midst of this very world” (Fronsdal, 1998, p. 172). Thus, in American Buddhism the practice becomes very relevant for the everyday lay-practitioner. It is a rational form of religion focused on individual spiritual growth and self-understanding within the context of the modern world.

Thus we can see that major point of separation between ethnic and American Buddhism is the emphasis on community versus individual. Ethnic Buddhism focuses on the preservation of culture and community worship, whereas American Buddhism is often individual and emphasizes meditation and self-liberation. However, as is the case with defining any sort of complicated social phenomenon, there is always going to be debate revolving around the accuracy of the categorization. This holds true with regard to the scholarly conversation developing around American Buddhism. It is evident when reading Victor Hori (2010) and Alexander Soucy (2010) that there are complications involved in maintaining the classifications of ethnic and American Buddhisms. However, it is also evident that they would not deny that Buddhism’s confrontation with Western individualism has brought about a new approach to the tradition. It is this new approach that these categories are trying to ascertain. Here we can observe a synthesis of cultural practice and meaning, and at times the birth of entirely new institutions and meanings. Whether or not these definitions prove to accurately describe the phenomenon is beyond the point for the purposes of our desired end in this thesis. What is important is that there

has been a definite change in the practice of Buddhism due to this encounter that we can refer to as American Buddhism. The interesting thing about this categorization is that it is not unique to North America, nor is it, for that matter, unique to its counterparts in Europe. The latest scholarship would suggest that the style of Buddhism portrayed by American Buddhists is something much broader in its scope. Soucy (2010) declares that many of the changes accredited to American or Western Buddhism first occurred in Asia. This was a response to Western Imperialism and Christian missionization (p. 52). Under the present context, those Buddhists that were introduced to this model embraced aspects of European values, such as rationalism and individualism. They, in turn, accommodated these values into the practice of their own tradition. The result is the beginning of a global Buddhism. Those who traveled to North America and founded schools of Buddhism were those who obtained a western education and modeled their idea of religion on the European mode<sup>7</sup>. They valued highly western ideals of rational thought, self-reflection, and individualism, and contributed to their tradition in a way that suited them best. Their reformed style of Buddhism was then adopted and taken in by American practitioners. Therefore, we must extend our vision beyond American Buddhism and look at how Buddhism is spreading around the world.

American Buddhism, opposed to being something entirely new, is just the latest addition to a chain of Buddhisms that have been undergoing modernization for the last hundred years. In the conclusion of Soucy's book, *Wild Geese*, the editors mention that, "the forms of Buddhism that exhibit these characteristics – regardless of location – have more similarities with each other, globally, than any of them have with traditional

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<sup>7</sup> We shall see in chapter 5 on HIMMs a similar occurrence with regard to the founders of HIMMs.



practices” (p. 402). It is part of a much larger movement that is happening worldwide. In Asia, just like in North America, one can observe the reformation of Buddhism that continues to exist alongside other traditional forms.

The role that British colonialism had in defining this new system is critical in the study of any religious globalization. Euro-cultural modes were supported and passed along through the process of globalization with colonial factors being a major contributor to this spread. The accommodation of Western imperialism, rationalism, and individualism within a Buddhist framework creates a cultural hybrid that has shaped a new form of the tradition. However, this transformation that occurs within Buddhism in response to globalization does not sever it from its roots. That which came from traditional Buddhism and exchanged with colonial thought, though changed, remains Buddhism. It is from this perspective that the concept of a American Buddhism must be studied, from a broadened point of view as a global phenomenon, more specifically the globalization of Buddhism. Likewise, it is also from this perspective that HIMMs must be studied as a form of global Hinduism within North America.

Lola Williamson fails to do this. She neglects to acknowledge the global connections between similar movements occurring around the world (in fact many of these HIMMs function globally and not just within North America), and therefore fails to grant proper consideration to the process of globalization involved in the development of HIMMs. When it comes to Hinduism in North America, she observes it as an ethnic phenomenon, much in the same way Ethnic Buddhism has been observed by the academy. However, unlike the academic perspective on American Buddhism (which sees American Buddhism as a form of Buddhism), she deems its Hindu counterpart, in the form of

HIMMs, as a new religious phenomenon separating it from the tradition of its birth. To agree with her is counter to the argument put forth by countless scholars with concern to American Buddhism. Williamson differentiates HIMMs from Hinduism by means of their followers claiming that there is a difference between those who grow up in Hinduism and those who incorporate parts of the tradition into their religious lifestyle. In the first case, it seems that those who are raised in Hinduism assume rituals, the foods, prayers, and ethics as a second nature, whereas those who incorporate aspects (such as the Himm participants) are not immersed in the tradition in its entirety (Williamson, 2010, p. 4).

Whereas I acknowledge that she has a point regarding the interaction of Hinduism with American culture, and that this interaction acts to transform the practices of Hinduism, her insistence in separating HIMMs from Hinduism stems from an isolated perspective that fails to acknowledge the global scope of the phenomenon. When we broaden our view to include globalization, it allows for religious change within the tradition. Therefore, the issue in debate here is continuity vs. discontinuity within a tradition in the face of this change. Lola Williamson argues that the transformation that has occurred in HIMMs disconnects it from Hinduism, whereas the latest scholarship on globalization and American Buddhism support a notion of continuity through globalization. An analysis of globalization theory and how it relates to the globalization of Hinduism therefore further supports this argument for continuity. For this reason, we will turn our attention to globalization theory in the next chapter. Moreover, in order to fully appreciate the truth in this later position of continuity, it is important to understand that Hinduism has always been a tradition of change. Thus it is this issue of the historical

continuity and change within Hinduism that the remaining chapters will address. In addressing this issue, we seek to lay the foundation to acknowledge HIMMs as one form of change within a greater series of ongoing transformations within the tradition.

## Chapter 3 – Globalization Theory and Continuity

In the previous chapter we saw how the scholarly debate about American Buddhism exists as one of the interpretive models for understanding American Buddhism as a version of global Buddhism. It is our contention that there should be a similar scholarly conversation about HIMMs. It is important therefore to show that there has been a similar process occurring in India in response to colonialism creating the framework for a global Hinduism that later resulted in the spread of HIMMs globally. The presence of colonialism in the globalization of both Buddhism and Hinduism is no coincidence. European colonialism played a critical role in the globalization of a religious structure. Because of its role in creating and transmitting this religious framework onto the global stage, colonialism became a crucial aspect of religious globalization theory. In this chapter, we will examine the key contributions European colonialism has made to religious globalization theory, as well as how globalization theory develops our understanding of continuity within change in a religious tradition, more specifically within Hinduism. This then lays the foundation to understand HIMMs as a continuation of this globalization process within Hinduism.

Globalization refers to the manner in which the world we live in becomes increasingly smaller. As George Thomas (2007) states, “ With globalization, civilizations are not parallel worlds that have various degrees of contact; rather, they are closely interdependent, even if contentious, within one world” (p. 36). Essentially, what Thomas is arguing is that worldviews are constantly confronted with each other and do not exist as independent realities ignorant of each other’s perspectives. This interdependence has

significant implications for the way in which various religious identities, individual and collective, interact and develop alongside of each other. In other words, the idea that Hinduism or HIMMs exist as a unique development, isolated in one geographical area or another, ignores the fact of global contacts and interactions. My thesis proposes to focus on the global interaction to explain the local adaptations of HIMMs in North America.

Beyer (2006) characterizes the process of globalization in three significant phases, or what he terms “logical moments.” Beyer argues that globalization consists of the simultaneous and sequential operation of these three logical moments. In Beyer’s own words, he distinguishes the process in the following manner:

There is (1) the spread of various particular social forms across the globe, which constitutes their universalization. Those forms were at one point in their development the particular products of a certain region or a certain subgroup, albeit frequently already with reference to matters outside that region or subgroup (see moment 3). These universalized forms, however, do not simply spread as such, but (2) become particularized to various other local situations. That particularization of the universal repeats the universal, but also transforms it, thus relativizing the original. Such transformation, in turn, can become the particular subject of (3) another universalization, which in turn becomes reparticularized in other contexts and other times. And so on. The global expresses itself only as local, and the local expresses itself in global terms. (p. 24)

Beyer’s explanation of the globalization process allows for change and diversity within a religious tradition. It is this process that sheds light on HIMMs in North America as a continual process of globalization within the tradition of Hinduism. Thus it presents us with an alternative to Williamson’s position that sees HIMMs as a new religion.

Historically, Hinduism existed as a very diverse group of cultures, traditions, and beliefs, which were woven across communities throughout India. Hinduism was a family of religious traditions, each with its own scriptures, leaders, symbols, and social location. One’s identity was not a matter of purely religious belief and practice but was also strongly defined by language, caste, occupation, sect, and in relation to geographical

location. The idea of a unified Hinduism, or the Hinduism we know today as a world religion, did not exist but developed in response to the globalization of a religious form. When we break down the globalization of Hinduism in accordance with the three logical moments provided to us by Beyer above, we can observe the process of change within Hinduism and how traditionally diverse forms of the tradition become unified under a global structure of religion and eventually give birth to the Hinduism we know today, as well as HIMMs. The process occurs as follows. The first logical moment arises in response to the creation of a global model for religion in Europe. It is this Euro-Christian model<sup>8</sup> for religion that becomes the reference point with which to understand religion in other regions. Religious form assumes a universalism. The second logical moment occurs when this global model of religion was introduced to India during the colonial period (1750-1813)<sup>9</sup>. The model acted as a vantage point from which to understand the religious nature of the local culture. In doing so, it provided a means to group together the diverse traditions preexisting in India. These regional traditions, now unified, became the world religion we understand to be Hinduism. In the third logical moment, we see the global model of Hinduism undergo further universalization. Here we observe the guru traditions take on the global task of promoting Hinduism's universal truth. Many elements of Hinduism that do not coincide with mainstream culture are dropped in favour of more universally accepted language and practices. It is this universalization that becomes the form for HIMMs<sup>10</sup>. Each of these logical moments continues to undergo this process of globalization thus yielding not one form of the tradition but many expressions of the

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<sup>8</sup> More on the Euro-Christian model as the global format for religion will follow later in this chapter.

<sup>9</sup> More on the colonial impact on Hinduism and HIMMs will be considered in Chapter 4.

<sup>10</sup> When we refer to HIMMs as a universal we are acknowledging the global intent of such organization with a claim to a universal truth. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 on HIMMs.

religious form under different contexts. These globalized expressions of the tradition create further expressions as the global interacts with the local and the local with the global, and these new expressions continue to undergo this process of globalization. Thus, we are given not one Hinduism but many forms of global Hinduism.

An understanding of this globalization process enables us to perceive the underlying thread that strings these different forms together under the same tradition. Therefore, in order to fully appreciate my argument that HIMMs are best understood through the lens of the globalization of Hinduism and not as a new religion, it is important for us to consider globalization theory in more detail. It is to this matter that we must turn our attention to the first logical moment, the Euro-centric model of globalization. Elements of this model shape Hinduism in the second logical moment<sup>11</sup> with the introduction of this model in India through colonialism, and create the foundation for the expression of HIMMs in the third logical moment<sup>12</sup>.

### **The Euro-Centric Model for Global Religion:**

Thomas E. Reynolds (2006) informs us that the Euro-centric model is the product of three main developments in European history. They are: the Renaissance, the Reformation, and the growth of nationalism (p. 20). He suggests that “the social and religious cohesion of European ecclesiastical culture began to splinter apart into unavoidably independent subcultures” (p. 21) as a result of these three developments.

During the Renaissance, the Church began to submit to the emerging nation states

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<sup>11</sup> The colonial influence on Hinduism will be considered in more detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> HIMMs will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

and more broadly to European culture. Because of the scientific understanding of nature and the development of a new form of humanism, previous assumptions as to the purpose of human life were called into question. The result pointed to a culture of inquiry and individualism that created a new framework of self-reflection. This new perspective allowed freethinkers to break from the contexts of the Church and establish an order founded on rationalism. The Renaissance period can be summarized as a time when the Church began to lose its control over European culture (Reynolds, 2006, p. 20).

The Reformation further put the position of the Church into question. Protest against Catholicism acted to dispute the hierarchy of the Church and its right to interpretation of the Bible. The fragmentation that occurred within Christianity as a result created a pluralism of orthodoxies and theological structures. Moreover, under the growth of nationalism independent subcultures gained association with sovereign nation-states and the previous notion of unity under Christendom faltered; tradition became traditions. Multiple Christianities made religious identity a matter of choice that further accentuated a belief in individualism and rational perspective (Reynolds, 2006, p. 21-22).

The Enlightenment developed these ideas of individualism and rationalism that became relevant during the period of the Renaissance. It was during this time, Reynolds informs us, that “human inquiry could discover the truth without recourse to external or imposed standards of meaning and value dependent on custom or tradition... truth and rightness were now thought to emerge from human inquiry, through autonomous questioning and critical examination, the telos of which is independent and free rational conviction” (p. 22). The result was a subjugation of the religious authority’s role of establishing worldview and human position. A measure of separation evolving between



the truths of reason and tradition encouraged society to break free from a Christian worldview and removed social and political institutions from religious control.

What this meant for religion is that in order for it to survive it too needed to undergo a process of self-reflection and redefinition. Religions became a matter of personal pursuit embracing the individualism of the Enlightenment. The framework of individualism and rationality was thus projected into religious intention; religion and the burgeoning sciences were embraced by religious systems as mutual contributors in the pursuit of knowledge and truth.

The search for truth under the guise of universalism meant that there was something of a “true” structure for religion. Due to the fact that Christianity was the dominant model in Europe, it became the model for all religions and the basis to analyze all other cultures and religions. An awareness of the religious ‘other’ was an instant byproduct of this cultural investigation. As Christianity began to differentiate into various sects and denominations, and varied religions, such as Judaism, Islam, and the Pagan traditions within Europe, a new understanding of religious difference developed. The result of this differentiation contributed to the understanding of religion as a distinct domain, one with a plurality of manifestations (Beyer, 2007, p. 174). This awareness of a religious differentiation helped to consolidate a Euro-Christian identity, which coincided with an expansion of this identity through colonial exploration. Through the processes of globalization, the ideals of a Christian mode combined with the ideals of rationalism, individualism and universalism became engrained in the cultural traditions of colonized countries, such as Buddhism in East Asia and Hinduism in South Asia. Peter Beyer (2007) states, “The idea of a world religion, it is argued, to the extent that it has any

validity at all, is essentially a Christian concept and therefore involves projecting the form of the dominant religion of Westerners onto the ‘other’ in the rest of the world” (p. 169). Beyer (2006) reiterates this idea stating:

As Euro-Christian understanding of ‘what the structure of religion constituted’ came into contact with other cultures religions were identified through the context of the European framework. This European imaging played a large role in solidifying the way the world conceived, understood, and institutionalized religion. (p. 74)

The Christian model for global religion thus became the ground in which to judge any religious manifestation as being a religion or not, and therefore became the standard from which Hinduism created an identity for itself. Beyer breaks down the Christian model-into five distinguishing categories: *fundamental transcendent reference*<sup>13</sup>, *programmatically reflexivity*<sup>14</sup>, *differentiation*<sup>15</sup>, *organization*<sup>16</sup>, and *voluntarization*<sup>17</sup> (p. 172).

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<sup>13</sup> *Fundamental transcendent reference* alludes to the idea that religion is basically about god or some form of transcendent reality. The implicit model favors monism. The one god is spiritual as opposed to material and holds the realm of ultimate reality. The purpose of religion is to access this ultimate reality through the transcendent or god. When we see this model reflected on Hinduism the monogamy of the Godhead is emphasized; the many forms of the gods are seen as reflections of the one true transcendent reality.

<sup>14</sup> *Programmatically reflexivity* refers to the idea that a religion has a set of self-referential beliefs and practices that are considered to be the way in which to access the transcendent. This model, according to Beyer, favors core sources and scriptures that assure this reflexivity. It is these beliefs and practices that differentiate them from other religious structures. It was during the implication of this model that key texts, such as the *Bhagavad-Gita* and the Upanishads, and practices were set out as being foundational to Hinduism as a world religion.

<sup>15</sup> *Differentiation* contributes the idea that religion is relevant to all aspects of life such as culture, society, politics, etc. ... yet is something different from it, especially with regard to secularism. Religion is a “thing” in itself and is not dependent upon other social structures for its relevance or existence. Previous to the implication of this model religion and culture in India were synonymous. It was after the introduction of this model that Hindus began to formulate a religious identity for Hinduism that could be considered separate from India and its culture.

<sup>16</sup> *Organization*, Beyer states, is that which acts “to render its differentiation and its identity clear, religion takes not just common institutional form, but organized institutional form” (p. 173). Thus the relationship of a group of people who identify with the organization is very important to this model. The differentiation between religions is the result of different organizational distinctions; ‘belonging’, ‘membership’, ‘practice’, and ‘faith’ are among these distinguishing factors. It was during the colonial period that Hindus began to reflect more on their identity as a Hindu and thus also reflected more on the organizational structure of the religion.

<sup>17</sup> *Voluntarization*, according to Beyer, “refers to the idea that religion is fundamentally and essentially a matter of individual and personal choice, not an ascribed or essentially collective affair” (p. 173). This for Beyer alludes to two important features: firstly, individual experience becomes essential for assessing the authenticity of religion; secondly, individuals can change their religion. The idea of conversion becomes

It is this five-fold model of religion that Beyer suggests is globalized through European colonialism. As colonials encountered other cultures, they introduced this model as a system of definition for religion. Therefore, it became not only the means to define a Christian structure of religion but the means that members of other world religions would use as they reflect and begin to reconstruct their traditions in the modern period. In this way, colonial influence contributed to the idea of a universal model of religion and homogeneity of structure by projecting a Christian standard from which to understand these ‘other’ religious forms.

Beyer (2007) is quick to point out however that “a particular religion can challenge almost any aspect of the model even while the ‘pressure to conform’ may also be real” (p. 183). Thus, though this model has clear historical and contemporary Christian influences, it can assume different manifestations allowing other traditions, such as Hinduism, to assimilate the framework in a means that becomes their own personalized expression<sup>18</sup>. For this reason, Beyer informs us that it is “not just a ‘Christian’ model,” this is because “religions other than Christianity ‘count’ ...” (p. 183).

The adaptability of this model, allowing for a unique interpretation of religion specific to Hinduism, created the space for the tradition to grow as the world religion we know it to be today. It provided the diverse and multiple local traditions clustered under the umbrella term ‘Hinduism’ with a mutual identity and religious understanding. This does not suggest that Hinduism was invented out of nothing. It merely states that European globalization played a significant role in reconfiguring and reinterpreting

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critical for authentic religion. With the advent of this model in Hinduism people could now convert to and from a religion that previously one had to be born into. This in turn creates the opportunity for the spread of the tradition to other cultures.

<sup>18</sup> We will see how Hinduism personalizes the Euro-Christian model during its encounter with colonialism in the following chapter.

aspects of those traditions which pre-existed it. It also does not pertain to the Christianisation of Hinduism, but to the fact that the Christian model provided a European framework in which Hindu traditions could express themselves as a homogenous unit. This process of globalization acted to provide traditional practices and beliefs with a structured form while at the same time introducing new aspects of religious discernment<sup>19</sup>.

Thus, as the Euro-Christian format became integrated into new Indian culture, it was done in such a manner that it is no longer just a Western imposition. The model introduced became localized and took on new meaning (recall the second logical moment of Beyer's threefold characterization of globalization). Hinduism now assumes ownership for the religious model. This, in a sense, created a new religious landscape within which the local traditions of India defined themselves.

### **Further Contributions of Globalization Theory:**

Although the Christian model played an important role in the expansion of a global form of religion, it is not the only factor that has come into play with regard to the globalization of religion. Beyer (2006) acknowledges that the construct of a single world religious system is not the result of religious actions alone. He brings awareness to the contributions of the postmodern era, declaring the role that significant function systems, such as politics and education, had in furthering the process (p. 95). Moreover, the expansions of industrial and economic structures within the global community assist in

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<sup>19</sup> More on the development of Hinduism as a world religion will be given in chapter 4.

globalization as religious systems are forced to come to terms with the 'other'. In this present context, the 'other' refers to various traditions, customs, lifestyles, civilizations, etc., which come head to head in a communicative process with ever-increasing speed. Arweck (2007) builds on this stating, "the notion of globalization can be understood in the sense that it refers to a situation in which available goods and services or social and cultural influences gradually become standardized in all parts of the world." She continues, "this results in uniformity and the homogenization of various aspects of life, including culture and ideas" (p. 255).

James Spicard (2007) agrees with Beyer that this homogenization process is a Euro-centric vision that is extended worldwide. When we are speaking directly about the globalization of religion, this Euro-centricity assumes a Christian structure. He continues this thought by adding that, as other areas of the world embrace these properties, they cease to be solely the possession of European culture but now exist as part of global culture. Spicard tells us, "in short... though there was once no universal image of 'religion', there is one now. Where it was originally a result of Western political and ideological imperialism, it has outlasted that origin" (p. 241). In this way, the globalization process acts as a negation of colonial intent by making global economic, political power, and even religious identity in a global context available to the formally colonized (this is evident as Hinduism incorporates a Euro-Christian framework and makes it its own). It also represents the fulfillment of modernity as an ideological hegemony. However, the irony of this matter is that it was the global spread of this modernity that cut it from its Eurocentric roots.

In the face of Eurocentric modernization, cultural modalities, especially religion,

were expected to decline and give way to a rational form of secularism. This, however, has not been the case, and, in fact, modernization has led to the resurgence of cultural traditions. Dirlik (2003) suggests that global modernity, as a result, is not only a product of the past but also its negation. Thus, Dirlik goes on to say that global modernity is also the nullification of Euro-centric modernity in the sense that the transnationalization of capital creates conditions for previously marginalized cultures to contribute to global modernity in their own way. By doing so, global modernity becomes decentralized. Dirlik introduces this concept of 'global modernity' as a way to understand the contemporary world and come to terms with its differences and conflicts. He suggests that 'multiple modernities' allude to the expressions of these contradictions that have become universalized within society. Thus, if we look at what Beyer, Arweck and Spicard have stated above with regard to a "universal image of religion" and a homogenization of cultural forms in light of the concept of global modernity, we can deduce that the process of globalization has not literally created one religion nor culture which is inherently the same. What globalization has provided is a structure for cultural forms to express themselves in a similar manner. Because these forms were based on the Eurocentric notions introduced by the Renaissance, Reformation, and the Enlightenment that valued individualization and rational choice, we now see forms of religion that reflect these values. This has resulted not in the extinction of religion but its reformation. With regard to Hinduism, this reformation has caused a more universal expression of the tradition. It is this attempt to incorporate the Eurocentric modality of religion within Hinduism that has paved the way for HIMMs to formulate as the expression of this attempt.

Beyer embraces this idea of multiple modernities put forth by Dirlik. In Beyer's (2006) account of the globalization process introduced in the beginning of this chapter (p. 26), we can see how these multiple modernities interact in the global context. It is significant to highlight in Beyer's assertion that, "The global expresses itself only as local, and the local expresses itself in global terms," in order to see how the globalization process works in two directions; the global becomes local and the local, global. This is an idea Roland Robertson (1995) contributed to the conversation introducing the term 'glocal'. In the global exchange, there is a give and take between the two, the global community and the local community. The result of this exchange is what Robertson refers to as the 'glocalization'. His main concern is to reveal the simultaneous function of global and local relationships while also projecting how they maintain difference within sameness. In this manner, glocalization brings together the universalism of the global with the particularism of the local making the means of the global available to the local and vice versa. It is perhaps best perceived as a relationship between the two.

Michael Wilkinson (2007) has referred to this passage of information between the local and global as 'global flows'. He states, "global society is increasingly characterized by social networks, a series of interactions and exchanges that are referred to as 'flows' because of the way in which they move back and forth, over and under, betwixt and between, the traditional borders of societies" (p. 377). For Wilkinson, these networks act to localize social relations and cultural interaction, as well as establish the process of glocalization. The process of these flows creates the space for a negotiation of "new realities, identities, and social relations." It is through these global flows that Hinduism was introduced to the Euro-Christian format for global religion, and it is through these

flows that a reformed Hinduism entered into North America and established itself as HIMMs.

George Van Pelt Campbell (2007) claims that as two cultures interact the exposure can relativize the way in which the people of these cultures view the world, and in doing so, the way they perceive their own tradition. What happens in these spaces of interaction is not always positive; according to Beyer (2006), it can result in either the implementation or the rejection of globalization and its methods of universalism. The rejection of new cultural forms can occur, according to Campbell (2007), due to “a sense of threat and insecurity because fundamental beliefs are called into question.” He continues, “predictable reactions to relativization are many, ranging from vigorously defending one’s tradition, to skepticism out of despair of finding the truth” (p. 287). Thus, the reaction to global flows of information can work to either reform a tradition (as seen in HIMMs) or reject change (as seen in some forms of Hindu diaspora).

Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) also acknowledge that the reaction of localities can be either positive or negative, one of acceptance or rejection. They state, “glocalization both highlights how local cultures may critically adapt or resist ‘global’ phenomena, and reveals the way in which the very creation of localities is a standard component of globalization” (p. 134). The response of the localities can vary in accordance to their positive and negative reaction to change and as a result different variations of the same religious tradition can develop through the globalization process. Giulianotti & Robertson (2007) offer a four-fold typology for glocalization. They break down the concept of glocalization into subcategories, each representing various degrees of assimilation and integration that can occur between two cultural forms as they interact with each other.



They classify these subcategories as: *relativization*, *accommodation*, *hybridity*, and *transformation*. This methodology can be useful for our purpose of understanding North American Hinduism in a global context as it can help us to understand the diversity of the tradition and how HIMMs constitute an avenue of the process of globalization.

### **Understanding the Globalization of Hinduism Through Glocalization:**

When we observe the globalization of Hinduism through Giulianotti & Robertson's four-fold typology of glocalization, it gives us a context from which to understand the various phenomena that occur in North America in response to the interactions between Hinduism and American culture. In doing so, it explains HIMMs as one of the possible outcomes of this interaction, and helps us see they are not a new religion.

Giulianotti & Robertson describe the function of their first category, *relativization*, in the following manner:

*Relativization*: here, social actors seek to preserve their prior cultural institutions, practices and meanings within a new environment, thereby reflecting a commitment to differentiation from the host culture. (p. 135)

For the most part, when we view Hinduism from the perspective of *relativization*, we are looking at the manner in which Hindus transfer, sustain, and cultivate core identities, practices, and institutions within North America. The focus of this form of glocal interaction is to relive the tradition native to India. As a result, there is a cultural emulation of the way of life that they left behind. Cultural and religious dress, practices and rites, and forms of worship are established in the same manner that they would have in the homeland. To use the words of Giulianotti & Robertson (2007):

...relativization involves social actors safeguarding their old cultural cargo. Core cultural forms, allegiances, and meanings are maintained within these new environs. Close ties arise where fellow nationals are populous, and in public spaces that have congruent cultural histories. Collective cultural memories, symbols and practices are sustained, while some forms of internal differentiation are imported. Pleasurable group sociality is prioritized, as actors imagine themselves within a deterritorialized community or 'family', while sustaining popular national identifications. (p. 8)

An example of this Hindu glocalization in North America are organizations such as Hindutva, which support the Indian national movement and play a strong role in developing the rudiments of the Hindu diaspora community in North America.

The second way that glocalization works is through a process of *accommodation*.

Giulianotti & Robertson define *accommodation* as follows:

*Accommodation*: here, social actors absorb pragmatically the practices, institutions and meanings associated with other societies, in order to maintain key elements of the prior local culture. (p. 135)

*Accommodation* does well to explain Hinduism in diaspora. Here communities of immigrants seek to maintain their Indian heritage while integrating and accommodating to a new environment. In the context of North America, Hindus engage with and absorb aspects of the host culture while maintaining the primary intention of preserving their previous cultural elements. The new culture is utilized to maintain old identity. In doing so, they often embrace aspects of the cultural norms of their host, yet only those that will not place their previous cultural identity in jeopardy. Because the emphasis is on ethnicity, the issue here is cultural preservation as a minority within a majority culture. Therefore, those elements of *accommodation* are incorporated only to the extent of survival within the new environment.

*Hybridization*, on the other hand, constitutes an entirely different response to the host culture. It is this third category of glocalization provided by Giulianotti & Robertson

where we can comprehend HIMMs as an expansion of the globalization process. Its authors define it as:

*Hybridization*: here, social actors synthesize local and other cultural phenomena to produce distinctive, hybrid cultural practices, institutions and meanings. (p. 135)

One of the defining characteristics of this subset of glocalization is the manner in which it establishes social spaces with unique atmospheres creating a different experience to that which would be found in a traditional setting. Giulianotti & Robertson refer to hybridization in the following manner, stating that it:

...involves social actors establishing distinctive organizational forms and practices. Hybrid spaces are characterized by unique atmospheres and distinctive characteristics relative to local or other cultures. Hybrid names, emblems and material products emerge, alongside new rituals and relationships towards established 'others'. Deterritorialized yet intensified senses of proximity with old cultural institutions can arise, marked by exceptional levels of physical proximity to iconic figures. New channels of intensified social connectivity are permitted by mass air travel and contemporary electronic media. (p. 13)

It is because of the fact that HIMMs set up these unique social spaces that Williamson defines them as a new religion. However, throughout the history, Hinduism has been a tradition of adaptation and change interacting with other belief systems and practices and creating new social spaces in response. Hinduism's brahmanical tradition has incorporated aspects of local and other cultures, philosophies and practices from its onset making the qualities of the 'other' their own and changing the face of the religion. Therefore, Hinduism has always been an evolving tradition and in a sense a *hybridization*.<sup>20</sup> *Hybridization* as a glocal phenomenon explains how HIMMs can project Hinduism in a new way, and help us understand the way the tradition adapts to cultural modes that are solicited through the process of globalization<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> More on the development of Hinduism as a tradition will be discussed in chapter 4.

<sup>21</sup> See chapter 5 on HIMMS for more information on Hindu-inspired meditation movements.

The final category of glocalization offered here by Giulianotti & Robertson is *transformation*. This classification is defined in the following way:

*Transformation*: here, social actors come to favour the practices, institutions or meanings associated with other cultures. Transformation may procure fresh cultural forms or, more extremely, the abandonment of the local culture in favour of alternative and/or hegemonic cultural forms. (p. 135)

Perhaps the best way in which to understand *transformation* in terms of the globalization of Hinduism would be the manner in which North American subcultures develop around HIMMs. Here we see a particular phenomenon where North Americans are drawn away from their local religious culture and embrace a global Hinduism in the form of HIMMs. The result is that “categorically different kinds of ritual exchange take place with ‘others’, while notable values, identities and institutions of the host society are internalized in part. Alternative social networks and strategies of cultural proselytizing are worked out” (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007, p. 16). The result of such a *transformation* on Hinduism in North America sees HIMMs take an organizational structure that is common to North American institutions utilizing methods of presentation, marketing, communications and advertizing to present the tradition in a conventional manner suitable to modern interests.

The four-fold typology presented here is significant for our study of Hinduism because it explains how the globalization process, while contributing a universal form for religious structure, can also be responsible for, to use Dirlik’s term, multiple modernities: a variety of religious forms manifest in response to the pluralisms that grow out of global flows. Each typology offered by Giulianotti & Robertson indicates a different reaction that Hinduism can have in response to the collision of cultures. Because there is the possibility that a religious tradition can have multiple responses to a cultural interaction, so, too, does globalization create the possibility of multiple forms of that tradition. The

result is not one global Hinduism but many global Hinduisms. These Hinduisms themselves, undergo the simultaneous and sequential operation of Beyer's three logical moments; thus recreating the circle of glocalization in which new local forms become global and vice versa. The various expressions of Hinduism in North America are a result of this process; HIMMs, Hindu diaspora, yoga classes, for example, are all expansions of this process, all forms of global Hinduism; each of which, in their own way, can embody aspects of the different categories within Giulianotti & Robertson's four-fold typology. It is because of this that an awareness of glocalization enables us to see the limitations of Lola Williamson's argument. Just because these multiple modernities assume different expressions of the Hindu tradition does not mean we are required to consider them a new religion. Furthermore, an awareness of glocalization allows us to extend the proper label of 'Hinduism' to HIMMs.

In conclusion, we can note the primary contribution of this chapter for comprehending HIMMs as an expansion of global Hinduism is an acknowledgment of the global exchange between cultures and traditions. That a given tradition, and in our case Hinduism, is not a static entity segregated from the influence of, and interaction with, other cultural forms. Globalization theory allows us the opportunity to acknowledge the give and take between localities and traditions. As this give and take happens through processes of glocalization, it is only logical to assume that the tradition adapts according to the passage of cultural forms. This certainly is the case with regard to colonial influence in India and the introduction of a global framework for religion, and it is also the case as Hinduism moved into North America and other parts of the world. Globalization theory allows room for transformation to take place within a tradition yet

stresses continuity at the same time. Thus a comprehension of globalization theory enables us to extend our view of HIMMs from a position of locality, such as that maintained by Lola Williamson, to one that considers the continuity of Hinduism within global and local interactions. In doing so, it enables us to make an argument for HIMMs as global Hinduism.

Having used globalization theory to establish this counter-position against Lola Williamson's argument of discontinuity, it is necessary that we follow it by acknowledging that Hinduism historically is a religious system of continuity within change. That it has from its beginning undergone transformation due to interactions with alternative worldviews. It is this continuity within the tradition in the face of change that grants us the foundation with which to extend this continuity unto HIMMs. For this reason, we will turn our attention to this matter in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4 – Continuity and Colonialism

In order to conceive of HIMMs as a form of global Hinduism, it is important to understand that Hinduism has changed over time. In the face of global interaction and particularly due to cultural exchange with the West, HIMMs' have developed as one of the most recent expansions of Hinduism expressed through globalization. Due to the fact that transformation is a constant within the tradition, and that it has changed throughout history, some scholars such as Frykenberg (1989) and King (1999) have argued that Hinduism actually did not exist until the introduction of a global framework for religion during the colonial period. While it is true that this period helped to greatly define the tradition in the manner that we consider present day Hinduism, offering it the global framework for religion, this argument falls short when we observe the pre-existing traditions in India prior to this period, and how elements of these traditions carried on and present themselves not only within today's Hinduism in India but also within HIMMs. In this chapter, we will address this continuity and therefore set the stage to see HIMMs as an expansion of this tradition in the chapters to follow.

Hinduism is historically among the most diverse of the world's major religions. Because the tradition has undergone so many changes and historically has never existed as a homogenous religious tradition maintaining one set of beliefs and practices there is much scholarly debate as to the origin of Hinduism as a religion.

Religion was not separate from the other facets of society; all aspects of communal life were interwoven. The word "Hindu" originally referred to the peoples and cultures east of the Indus River in what is now India. It was only when Islam entered into

India, and later when the British arrived during the colonial period, that the term became a means with which to distinguish native religious and cultural practices of the local people of India. The British colonial rule, which ended in 1947, was the most significant factor in formulating a structure for the Hinduism we recognize today. It was during this time that orientalist scholars developed a more unified interpretation of the diverse religious beliefs and practices of the tradition. They reflected on these determinants with a global framework for religion set out by the Christian model brought with them from Europe.

Though it was the work of these European scholars that set the stage for the homogeneity of Hinduism, Indians assimilated this method of differentiation utilizing the model offered to them. Many developed this framework as a means to distinguish themselves as a people. Wendy Doniger (2009) claims that it was “only after the British began to define communities by their religion, and foreigners in India tended to put people of different religions into different ideological boxes did many Indians follow suit, ignoring the diversity of their own thoughts and asking themselves which of the boxes they belonged in” (p. 25).

However, the possibility of a Hindu self-identification is further complicated by the fact that even today not everyone is willing to pick the same “box.” Many chose to define themselves by allegiances other than religion. Hindus have not usually considered themselves a collective entity; they have always existed as a wide array of people. Doniger relates this diversity to a rainbow, different colours calling upon a wide range of inspirational texts. These texts are conceived from a comprehensive list of sources. She (2009) tells us that:



[The Hindus draw] upon not only a wide range of texts, from the many unwritten traditions and vernacular religions of unknown origins to Sanskrit texts that begin well before 1000 BCE and are still being composed, but, more important, upon the many ways in which a single text has been read over the centuries, by people of different castes, genders, and individual needs and desires. And this intertextuality is balanced by an equally rainbow-hued range of practices, which we might call an interpracticality, on the model of intertextuality, practices that refer to other practices. (p. 25)

Because these texts and practices have been accepted by some and not accepted by others, and also because they have been interpreted in many different ways by those who have considered them a part of their tradition, it becomes very difficult to single out one thing that we can call Hinduism as a set governing belief or practice for the Hindu people.

Mann *et al.* (2008) agree with Doniger. They state, “Most Hindus in India... are not “Hindus in general,” even though their religious lives share many common characteristics. They are instead “Hindus in particular,” followers of specific varieties of Hinduism” (p. 51). Indeed, Hinduism is so complex and diverse that it might seem that each Hindu practices his or her own religion, but this is not the case according to Mann *et al.* An individual’s social position determines to a large extent the deity, teacher, temple, texts, and festivals central to his or her experience of Hinduism. Therefore the claim is made that, “each person’s religion is shaped by the beliefs and practices of the primary social groups to which he or she belongs” (p. 52). It is this diversity and complexity of Hindu identity that is important to remember when we reflect upon HIMMs. The fact that the label ‘Hinduism’ has historically been used to define such a vast array of practices and beliefs in the past gives us leeway to do so in the present.

It is because of this lack of structure and the diversity of belief and practice that predated European colonialism that scholars argue that Hinduism didn’t exist prior to the imposition of a global religious framework by the British. Unlike other religious

traditions, there is no one founder, no one institution to credit the construction of the tradition. Traditionally, Hindu orthodoxy is established by acceptance of the authority of the Vedas. There are six orthodox systems of Hindu philosophy, but the way they interpret the Vedas can be very different. Even those issues in the tradition that are generally considered important (such as vegetarianism, nonviolence, and caste) are all subject to debate. Furthermore, major texts can be extremely important to one group and completely ignored by another.

This is complicated by the fact that Hinduism is a very ancient tradition. Its origins date back much before the second millennium BCE, when the other major faiths of the world (such as Jainism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Sikhism) were nonexistent. Due to its long history, it has encountered and undergone a variety of change, accommodation, and adaptation. Hinduism has constantly adapted and evolved due to interaction with various cultural modes and belief systems. Thus, unlike the other world faiths mentioned above, Hinduism has never really existed as a homogenous entity. It has always continued more as a flow of different traditions, philosophies and practices moving together. In this manner, Hinduism is an ideal case study for the process of globalization, because it has always been developing in a wide variety of ways. The image of a jungle has been used to explain it. It is the wild and chaotic growth of diverse plant life that makes up a jungle and not a single plant. Because of this, when speaking of the tradition, one is confronted with a problem, how is it that we describe Hinduism?

What exactly is it? Zaehner (1966) addresses this issue:

Hinduism is a vast and apparently incoherent religious complex, and any writer on Hinduism... must choose between producing a catalogue or school textbook which will give the student the maximum number of facts within a very limited compass, or he will attempt, at his peril, to distil from the whole mass of his material the fine essence that he considers to

be the changeless ground from which the proliferating jungle that seems to be Hinduism grows. (p. 3)

The reference here to a “proliferating jungle” stipulates that, with regard to Hinduism, there is often an attempt made to gather collectively parts that differ from each other individually. That is to say Hinduism acts as an umbrella reference to gather cumulatively various denominations. This implication therefore adheres to the notion that there is no standard Hinduism. Not only is there no one thing that makes up Hinduism, but there is no principle coherence between the various parts that make up the whole.

Indeed scholars like Richard King (1999) seem to deny any argument for homogeneity within the tradition. He states that to suggest that Hinduism exists in the manner of a unified institution requires a “highly imaginative act of historical reconstruction” (p. 181). That is to suggest that to arrive at an idea of homogeneity one has to look back at the history of the tradition and interpret it with an eye that seeks out this said unity in order to make any sense of the matter. For King, to do so, is an injustice to the truth and creates an historical fallacy.

King is not alone in this thought. Frykenberg (1989) continues on this note stating:

Unless by “Hindu” one means nothing more, nor less, than “Indian” (something native to, pertaining to, or found within the continent of India), there has never been any such a thing as a single “Hinduism” or any single “Hindu community” for all of India. Nor, for that matter, can one find any such a thing as a single “Hinduism” or “Hindu community” even for any one socio-cultural region of the continent. Furthermore, there has never been any one religion – nor even one system of religions – to which the term “Hindu” can accurately be applied. No one so-called religion, moreover, can lay exclusive claim to or be defined by the term “Hinduism.” (p. 29)

If we take Frykenberg’s words above as truth, it would seem to deny our claim that HIMMs exist as a form of global Hinduism, as he denies that the term ‘Hinduism’ can be used as a descriptive reference. He bases this claim on the inconsistency of beliefs and

practices contained within the term. Such an argument, if validated, would support Williamson's attempt to register HIMMs as a new religion. However, academics such as Lawrence Babb (1986), Cynthia Talbot (1995), Peter Van der Veer (1994), Lorenzen (1995) and Doniger (2010), for example, do not share these views of King and Frykenberg. Despite the apparent inconsistencies and variations of belief with regard to the structure of Hinduism, these academics are in general agreement that there does seem to be a subtext that is shared in later texts and practices, and it is these subtexts that are carried forth into HIMMs. We can observe that texts and practices often reference earlier ones dating right back to the *Rig Veda*. This gives us something that we can label a tradition. Klostermaier (2007) adds to this stream of thought. He suggests:

The relative geographic isolation of the Indian subcontinent facilitated the development over long periods of time of a civilization that was little influenced from the outside. Cosmological and other ideas developed and found fairly universal acceptance throughout India... The Hindu worldview appears in a number of variants, but it also shows a surprisingly large number of common features. (16)

Furthermore, Doniger (2009) tells us that this tradition has often been defined in the negative when brought into contrast with other traditions. These people find ways to describe themselves as a collective because they are different from Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians. She (2009) states, "they call themselves the people of the Veda, or the people who have four classes and four stages of life" (p. 26). She elaborates on this idea further with relation to the British Empire and how the term "Hindu" was sanctioned to mean those who were "not Muslim, not Christian, not Jewish, or hence, not Western" (p. 27). Moreover, she tells us that the term is often given in desperate measure by a number of people to define the religion of those "who cannot or will not define their religion" (p. 27).

Lorenzen (1995) contributes to this idea of a negative self-identification. He makes the claim that Hinduism in some form pre-existed any modern construction of its identity. He supports this argument by following a manner similar to Doniger above. He looks at how the Hindu people existed in contrast to other traditions. In doing so, he states, “the notion of an Indocentrism which treated foreigners and foreign religions, even indigenous Buddhism in an Olympian fashion, the systematic ignoring of non-Hindu cultural traditions suggested that a premodern Hinduism existed” (p. 647). Moreover, he later adds:

Whatever the reason for the scholarly acceptance of the idea that there was no religious Hindu self-identity before 1800, the evidence against this view in vernacular Hindu literature is clear and abundant. The bulk of this evidence takes the form of texts composed by the popular religious poet-singers of North India, most of them members of non-Brahmin castes. This literature does precisely what Sanskrit literature refuses to do: it establishes a Hindu religious identity through a process of mutual self-definition with a contrasting Muslim Other. In practice, there can be no Hindu identity unless this is defined by contrast against such an Other. Without the Muslim (or some other non-Hindu), Hindus can only be Vaishnavas, Saivas, Smartas or the like. The presence of the Other is a necessary prerequisite for an active recognition of what the different Hindu sects and schools hold in common. (p. 648)

In the above passage, Lorenzen stipulates, that while there was not an organized unity to the tradition, the presence of a commonality existed within literature and the works of the locals.

This, of course, brings us to the question, what is it that makes these non-Buddhists, non-Muslims, non-British people a collective group? Doniger tells us that many scholars have attempted to identify “clusters” of qualities that some Hindus can agree upon (not all) which are important yet not essential to Hinduism. Thus, things like the Vedas, karma, dharma, bhakti, puja, for example, have been listed<sup>22</sup>. People who can

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<sup>22</sup> We shall see in Chapter 5 on HIMMs that these are all elements within HIMMs, and thus according to this argument HIMMs would fall under the category of Hinduism.

relate to a combination of these things are considered Hindu. This approach attempts to free Hinduism from the restrictions of a fixed consistent tradition with non-contradictory beliefs and practices. The suggestion is that Hinduism be viewed as a common conversation in which distinct concepts are shared and debated. Such an approach owes a great deal to the concept of family resemblance provided by Wittgenstein, and can be represented by a Venn diagram, a chart consisting of intersecting circles. Doniger (2009) claims that such a diagram could be constructed as follows:

It might be grouped into sectors of different colors, one for the beliefs or practices that some Hindus shared with Buddhists and Jainas, another largely confined to Hindu texts in Sanskrit, a third more characteristic of popular worship and practice, and so forth. But since there is no single central quality that all Hindus must have, ... (there is an) emptiness in the center. (p. 29)

The emptiness found in the center of the diagram to which Doniger alludes suggests that there is no central core to which “the peripheral people were peripheral.” Thus, there was no one central thing that could be called Hinduism. It is a polycentric phenomenon, one that evolves and changes throughout time, space, and with each individual.

This, of course, poses a great problem when trying to define the tradition. Doniger is aware of the problem. She (2009) states that “pluralism and diversity are deeply ingrained in polyethnic Hinduism... (and that) the lines between different beliefs and practices are permeable membranes” (p. 43). She continues this thread describing the pluralism that existed in India to be an “eclectic pluralism” or an “internal or individual pluralism.” She defines this eclectic approach by means of a metaphor describing a person holding a toolbox of different beliefs simultaneously and drawing upon one on one occasion, another on another, to suit whatever need is at hand (Doniger, 2009, p. 44). The issue of an eclectic pluralism is addressed between religions as well, albeit more

cautiously. Doniger tells us that “the sorts of permeable membranes that marked one sort of Hinduism from another also marked Hinduism from other religions; the dialogues were both intrareligious and interreligious” (p. 45). Hinduism had conscious and unconscious dialogue with many different traditions (such as Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and tribal traditions), which led to the shaping of Hinduism itself either through acceptance or rejection. Thus we see a tradition that is shaped by its interaction with other worldviews. Because Hinduism has a history of transformation in accordance to both acceptance and rejection of other cultural modes, it is not inconceivable to say that this is what is occurring in North America with regard to HIMMs.

Peter Beyer (2006), in his book *Religions in Global Society*, writes, “that Hinduism may indeed seem to be more appropriate as a name for the religious dimension of a broad cultural identity than it is a designation of a distinct self-referential system” (p. 223). If this is the case, then why not share this broad perspective with the phenomenon of HIMMs? ‘Hinduism’ has become a term used to locate under an umbrella-like structure, a diverse group of beliefs and practices that have been characterized within Indian culture, but, when these beliefs and practices become globalized, they interact with other cultures. Just because this cultural interaction is taking place outside of India does not mean that we should assume that the products of this interaction are not to be embraced by the umbrella term ‘Hinduism’ as it has in the past. By contrast, Williamson’s argument claims that the interaction between North American and Hindu culture has created such a change that it now exists as a new religion. This position is wrong. As we shall see in our final chapter on HIMMs, HIMMs are the continuation of a Hindu guru-lineage presenting

practices and beliefs in a manner that continues this tradition in a globalized world. Even in India under the context of various 'Hinduisms', the way these lineages were represented was not always embraced by the culture in entirety. In fact, Doniger states that:

You could easily use history to argue for almost any position in contemporary India: that Hindus have been vegetarians, and that they have not; that Hindus have objected to suttee, and that they have not; that Hindus have renounced the material world, and that they have embraced it; that Hindus have oppressed women and lower castes, and that they have fought for their equality. Throughout history the tensions between the various Hinduisms, and the different sorts of Hindus, have simultaneously enhanced the tradition and led to incalculable suffering. (p. 688)

The fact that Hinduism is not a static system of beliefs becomes very clear when you read these lines. Doniger stresses "various Hinduisms" and "different sorts of Hindus." Yet, at the same time, she states that these various Hinduisms and different sorts of Hindus have at times "enhanced the tradition." Therefore, there is an acknowledgement that a phenomenon exists as a collective unit that we can call 'Hinduism', a tradition that we can then extend to include HIMMs through the process of globalization. This tradition, however, has never been constant and often differentiates within itself. It is an ever-evolving tradition that is constantly changing due to interaction and confrontation between different worldviews both within the tradition itself and outside of it as it interacts with other religions and cultures. At times, this development is slow, and in other cases, it occurs more swiftly. Major historical changes such as the introduction of Buddhism and asceticism to the Brahmanical imaginary, the evolution of Bhakti and Tantric thought, interaction with Islam through the Mughal rule, and the colonization of India by the British regime without a doubt have shaped Hinduism in new ways. It is in



this way that Hinduism becomes a fluid tradition continually undergoing a process of globalization in similar and often more geographically limited processes.

What is important for us to take away from this section is the idea of a consistent process of globalization at work within Hinduism. It is crucial to acknowledge that this tradition is not new; it is ancient and has adapted and evolved through interactions with the other. It is through this globalization process that Hinduism has attained many particularizations. The multiple modernities and polycentric nature of Hinduism help us understand how such diversity can be maintained within one tradition. Acknowledging this diversity, its nature to change, and the continual process of globalization at work within Hinduism allows us to perceive HIMMs as an expansion of this process.

### **Colonial Influence and Religious Change:**

Now that we have discussed the meaning of continuity within Hinduism, and acknowledge that it is a religious system constantly undergoing and accepting change, it is important for us to be aware of just how much one particular situation of globalization affected the tradition. Nowhere does the process of globalization become more apparent than during the period of British colonialism. It was during this time that the British regime introduced the global framework for religion and helped unify the various Hindu sects of India. The result of this unity played the greatest role in developing Hinduism as the world religion we understand it to be today. It also administered the particular philosophical outlook and organizational methods that were necessary in providing the grounds from which to develop HIMMs. Thus, from the following section of this chapter,

we will see just how much a tradition can change due to global interactions and also understand the pre-context that set the stage for HIMMs.

I have mentioned in the second chapter, in reference to the work of Alexander Soucy, that American Buddhism is best understood as one of many Buddhist responses to colonialism in Asia. It is because of this that American Buddhism shares similarity with other responses around the world. Due to this shared identity, scholars have argued that American Buddhism is best understood as a form of global Buddhism. Much in this same way, an understanding of colonial effects on Hinduism grants us a more comprehensive view of HIMMs and Hinduism in America allowing us to perceive them as an expansion of globalization. For this reason, we now turn our attention to the British colonial influence in India.

The British presence was felt in India in three waves. These waves brought with them different facets of Orientalism. In each we can observe a shift in the manner in which Indians began to reflect on their Hinduism. Each influence demonstrates how the attitude between the British and Indian people gradually changed over time. As the relationship between the two cultures changed, so, too, did the way that Hinduism responded to colonial influence. Thus, we see the manner in which the process of globalization contributing to Hindu identity also changed from a position of acceptance to rejection.

The first wave happened roughly between 1750 and 1813 when the British first entered into India. This period was marked with a mood of appreciation and tolerance. The British merged with the upper classes of Indian society. They considered the princes of India at the top of the social hierarchy. During this period, there was religious freedom

and conversation; the British and Indians learned from each other and attempted to understand and appreciate what the other had to offer (Doniger, 2009, p. 589). This was a time of synchronism in which practices and ideas were considered and assimilated into the tradition. The result was a peaceful and mutual coexistence of the religions.

The friendly nature between the two cultures soon transformed as conversations led to conversion, a one-way conversion in which Hindus were encouraged towards Christianity. The response of Hindus to this religious imposition ushered in the second wave of Orientalism. Doniger defines this period as projecting a feeling of scornfulness between the two cultures (p. 593). The ill feelings were brought about when the East Indian Company renewed its charter in 1813. When they did, their pact not to interfere with Indian native religions changed in accordance to the growing evangelical fervor in England that forced it to allow Christian missionary action. It is during this period that Christian influence began to affect Indian law. Furthermore, the East India Company acted to foster the institutionalization of social power structures that appeared very different to the ones set up by previous regimes, such as those introduced by the Mughal Empire. Beyer (2006) insists that the most important of these changes are several modern social systems, which include: capitalist economy, a centralized and increasingly invasive regulatory state, courts administering positive law, academic education, mass media and differentiated religion (p. 191). It is the differentiation of religion that is most significant for our purposes. This differentiation occurs as a result of the Euro-Christian religious model that the colonials brought with them. Certain aspects in particular, such as

*programmic reflexivity, differentiation, and organization* were key in developing this new understanding of religion<sup>23</sup>.

The hostility that emerged in the second wave went from bad to worse in the third. Doniger (2009) claims that the catalyst of this period was a technological one, with the introduction of a new rifle, the Enfield (p. 591). The cartridges to this new gun had to be greased; the British employed tallow containing both pigs and cow fat. Because the bullets had to be bitten open to pour the gunpowder down the barrel, they broke dietary laws for both Hindus and Muslims. If they would not load cartridges, they were publically humiliated, imprisoned, or expelled. In 1857, five sepoys were arrested for refusing to handle cartridges. The following night, other sepoys banded together, massacred the English residents of the town Meerut, and moved on to Delhi. More sepoys joined them, Muslims fought alongside Hindus, and Sikhs, who hated the Muslims, fought alongside the British. This historic incident is important because it marks the first rebellion of the Indian peoples against the British. Here, in this third wave, Hindus saw the need to define themselves against colonials as separate people. In doing so, they sought to redefine their tradition and self-identity. The need for unity in the revolt against British colonials created a new motif to further the homogenization of Hinduism that was already occurring. Hindus embraced this identity as a means to define themselves from their colonial counterparts. The irony is that, in doing so, they embraced the means of religious distinction imposed by the British but utilized it to their own advantage.

In each of these three waves, we can observe a process of globalization as the two cultural modes came into contact with the other. In this case, the local culture, being

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<sup>23</sup> Recall Beyer's Euro-Christian model for religion discussed in the previous chapter on globalization.

Hinduism, responded in each instance differently to the presence of the other. What was at first an open dialogue with a willingness to adapt and learn from the other soon was met with resistance. This resistance, however, did not reject the changes that had occurred in Hinduism to that point but embraced the unity found in these changes as a means to define themselves against the British and work together.

British education and ideals of rationalism, individualism and universalism were incorporated and valued by the upper class Indian population. Ideas propounded by rationalism were evident in the first generation British to serve in India. As a result, Indian intellectuals became exposed to this rationalism as they were indoctrinated into Western philosophy by the British education system, and through the influence of Orientalists who genuinely tried to understand Indian culture (Doniger, 2007, p. 23).

It was this Western way of thinking and the organizational structures that were introduced and established by the British, like the educational system, which were crucial in terms of influencing Hinduism to gather in solidarity, form a homogenous system, and further a universalist ideal of religion. Moreover, it is the accommodation of these aspects of colonialism that demonstrate how Hinduism adapted to the Euro-centric model of globalization. Peter Beyer (2006) states, “that context of power is what enlisted new and old indigenous Indian elites in the production of new social forms and new knowledge that was both continuous and discontinuous with what came before” (p. 190). The construction of these social systems, as seen in the second wave of Orientalist influence (shown to us by Doniger), acted to encourage the rapid increase of social movements and organizations as the most appropriate way to express these systems or react against them. Thus, religious movements and organizations amounted to the reformation of cultural

traditions in the image of those introduced by the British, though they also maintained elements of Indian appropriation. Here, we see the master discourse expounded by the British, in a colonial context, appropriated by Indians who manipulated and constructed their own positive response to colonial thought. According to Beyer (2006), the forms and knowledge that followed from this fabrication were related to British constructs but did not mimic them. In fact, they created new social realities that “colonial observers neither foresaw nor likely intended” (p. 190). These new social realities were the developments of globalization as Indian traditions incorporated aspects of the global framework introduced by the British and, in turn, transformed them in respect to their own local traditions.

One of these social constructs was Hinduism as a homogenous unit and form of Indian identity. Brian Pennington (2005) points out that this new structure of Hinduism was a social religious system generated from text, ritual, mythical imagination and a social caste system (p. 174). Before British contact, there was no single traditional Hinduism that adhered to all of these in essence. Hindu intellectuals set out particular aspects of their tradition to define themselves in response to British colonial influence. This definition followed the structure that colonialism set forth. When the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century realized the importance of understanding the local people they ruled, they emphasized particular aspects of the local tradition. That which fit with the Euro-centric framework for global religion took prominence over those aspects of the tradition that did not. Those that were accentuated were in turn reflected in the Hindu nationalist response as Indians reclaimed their identity. Thus, key religious texts such as the Vedas, the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and the Dharmashastras were prioritized (all texts that were accepted as

primary Hindu works by Orientalists and Colonialists alike). In this way, by carefully selecting the important sources of the tradition, the British helped fashion models for what Hinduism actually was or at least enhanced particular models over others. Peter Marshall (1970) comments on this stating:

As Europeans have always tended to do, they created Hinduism in their own image. Their study of Hinduism confirmed their beliefs and Hindus emerged from their work as adhering to something akin to undogmatic Protestantism. (p. 43-44)

British colonial identity found its way into an Indian way of thinking through a variety of sources such as media, education, and institutional forms of control. All of this contributed to the modern identity that the contemporary Indians experienced. As European institutional models eventually dictated the way in which political, educational, legal systems, etc. were to function in India, an idea of differentiation between religion and other aspects of society began to formulate. Previously, religion was not seen as something separate from the rest of society, but intertwined within all things. However, because colonial identity became engrained in Indian thought, it, too, made its way into Indian cultural traditions. Now, under the new model, religion became another separate function of culture. This, in turn, created a clear organization of the religious system. A sense of 'Hinduness' was created in which a very diverse group of people found unity under a now homogenous system of Hinduism.

Richard King (1999) claims this is directly reflected in the work of Rammohun Roy, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda and Mohandas Gandhi as they incorporated Orientalist ideas of spirituality in their anti-colonial Hinduism (p. 151). It was this response to colonialism in which these people discovered a newfound sense of nationalism. While experiencing a sense of the other, it helped them form an indigenous

identity for the Indian people in the modern world. Hindu nationalists in response to British hegemony appropriated the Euro-Christian framework for religion as they sought to define themselves as a creditable tradition in the eyes of Western imperialists. This is very evident in the neo-Vedantic Hinduism publicized by Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda placed special attention on the spirituality of Indian culture as a way to confront the materialism of modern Western culture. Here Orientalist concepts of Hinduism were embraced and seen as something special that India had to offer the world. In this manner, Vivekananda reversed colonial stereotypes and used them to combat against the subjugation of Hindu identity under British colonialism.

The notion of a Hindu patriotism was further enforced by Ram Mohun Roy, who was the founder of Brahmo Samaj. Brahmo Samaj was a Hindu-based society that called upon a rational interpretation of the Hindu religion (Williamson, 2010, p. 23). The movement focused primarily upon inner worship and an intuitive understanding of God. It rejected many of the traditional Hindu practices that might be considered superstitious or nonsense by the standards of Western rational thought. It is the Brahmo Samaj that is responsible for establishing the idea that Hinduism is a universal religion. Williamson (2010) makes us aware that:

..while missionaries were busy trying to convince Indians that the one universal truth could be found in the Christian faith, Hindu reformers asserted that Hinduism contained a universality superior to that of the Christian faith for it, unlike Christianity, could include all other faiths. (p. 25)

This hypothesis of Hinduism as a flexible and adaptable tradition that could incorporate other religious traditions within its fold is quite a radical concept. Reformers, like Ram Mohun Roy, assimilated the framework of religion introduced by the colonials and recreated Hinduism in its image. The result was a rational form of the religion that



embraced universalist concepts. In making the claim that Hinduism was the true universal religion, one which encompassed all other religions, they utilized the European framework for religion to their advantage, brought unity within their own tradition, and surpassed the religion of the colonials in making claim to the ultimate truth; in doing so, they re-empowered Hinduism. This process acted to re-empower Hinduism for many, but not all. However, it is precisely this re-invigorated Hinduism that forms a method and ideal that is carried forth by HIMMs. It is this Hinduism that provides the initiative for HIMMs to carry the tradition globally. It is a redefined Hinduism founded on this principle of a universal spiritual truth.

Previous to this specific response to colonialism, the idea that HIMMs were an expansion of global Hinduism could never have been considered. HIMMs would have had to be perceived from the perspective of Williamson as a new form of religion in North America because Hinduism would have never been able to transcend ethnic boundaries. It could never have left India. Ursula King (1989) states, “Traditionally, Hinduism has always been ethnically rooted, particularly through its caste-structure into which an individual must be born to qualify as a Hindu” (p. 86). However, it was the idea of a Hindu universalism that allowed the tradition to reach beyond the borders of India and welcome people from other cultures. King adds that it is “only during the nineteenth century that Hinduism, for the first time in its history, became a proselytizing religion, a change made possible through the reinterpretation and universalization of its message” (p. 87). The shift from viewing non-Indian peoples as outsiders who did not have a right to their spiritual culture to one where the tradition was solicited to them, clearly

demonstrates the influence globalization had on the tradition, as it became an all-inclusive Hinduism, a global religion.

In conclusion, what we should take from this account of Hinduism and colonialism is the manner in which the tradition is able to undergo incredible change in accordance to the influence of the other. The interaction between colonialism and Hinduism acted to create a very new form of the tradition contributing religious and philosophical elements of European culture. This “new Hinduism” is very different from historical Hinduism and yet maintains continuity with the religious sects of India that preexisted it. This transformation within the tradition demonstrates how religion evolves in the face of global interaction. Therefore, we can use this instance as an example of how Hinduism in a global context, and particularly in North America, can also adapt to the cultural frameworks imposed upon it in new environments, especially because HIMMs share so many commonalities with colonial Hinduism. In doing so, we are able to perceive HIMMs as the result of such an interaction. It is to this phenomenon of HIMMs in North America as the globalization of Hinduism that we now turn our attention in the following chapter.

## Chapter 5 – HIMMs

We have now laid the foundation for our thesis argument that HIMMs are best understood as one aspect of a global Hinduism. Lola Williamson observes the phenomenon of HIMMs in North America under the context of new religion, failing to see that transformations occur within given traditions in relation to global and local exchange. We have used the model of the scholarly interpretation of American Buddhism to demonstrate how North American Buddhism is interpreted through the lens of globalization. Similarly, we have provided an account of scholarship that argues for a continuity of the Hindu tradition in the face of global interactions and change, and demonstrated how globalization as colonialism has provided the framework in which to understand Hinduism as a tradition with universalist intent. It is from this position that HIMMs develop and contribute to Hinduism's ideal of a universal spirituality on a global stage.

This chapter will provide an account of HIMMs acknowledging them as an expansion of the global phenomena of Hinduism. I will begin with a discussion of HIMMs defining them as an extension of the guru tradition within Hinduism. From this understanding, I will consider the fusion of American culture and Hinduism that takes place as HIMMs establish organizations within North America, and conclude with further arguments as to why HIMMs should be considered the global expansion of Hinduism and not a new religion.

In the previous chapter, we have observed how colonialism acted to shape Hinduism in a manner that enabled it to travel outside of India. Hinduism made its way

unto the global stage in two forms: through diaspora communities, and through HIMMs. Each of these responded to the globalization of Hinduism in different ways. Some diaspora communities, much like their Ethnic Buddhist counterparts, acted to reject cultural adaptation and maintained ethnic and nationalist agenda with the intention of preserving much of their Indian culture. HIMMs on the other hand opted to drop the cultural and nationalist agenda of Hinduism and present the tradition as a means to universal spirituality, a spirituality that could be embraced all cultures and ways of life. It drew upon the practices, beliefs, and philosophies of Hindu guru traditions and adapted them to a new global context. Interaction between local cultures and the global tradition of Hinduism helped shape HIMMs in new ways. HIMMs in North America became one of these expansions of this new global Hinduism.

It was the Hindu gurus of India that saw this global interaction as means to distribute their teachings worldwide. Many of these teachers had obtained a western style education and contributed to the change of Hinduism in response to colonialism in their homeland. In this way, they were prepared to interact with the West as they undertook the initiative to make the universal message of Hinduism global. These initiatives were very similar to the approach of Buddhist teachers in the development of global Buddhism.

Swami Vivekananda was the first of these Hindu gurus to introduce the global form of Hinduism in North America. In 1893, he traveled halfway around the world with the vision to spread his conception of a rational Hindu faith and universal message. Vivekananda was trained in a devotional form of Hinduism by his guru Sri Ramakrishna; however, British colonial thought and Western philosophy also heavily influenced him. He spoke at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago. It was this event that acted as

a launching point for Hinduism in North America (King, 1999, p. 161). Propelled into virtually instant fame and recognition Vivekananda became an example to others. His journey to North America served as a bridge for other gurus to follow his example.

North America, at the time, embraced a renewed ideal of individualism, freedom, and liberation. In this way, the American mindset was primed for the message of universalism, spiritual freedom, and liberation that Hindu gurus brought with them from their tradition. These teachers offered that spiritual truth could be understood through direct experience through forms of meditation and yoga. Both were imported from Hinduism and accepted enthusiastically by people eager to experience this knowledge. Led by Indian gurus, in whom the aspirants could directly perceive one who had experienced this truth in their own being, they were encouraged to do the same within themselves. These gurus thus passed along traditional techniques, and philosophies that accompanied these techniques to their followers. Lola Williamson (2010) points out that probably the most defining aspect of the practice was the commitment to meditation as a means for attaining inner peace and more importantly raising their consciousness to a state of enlightenment or union with the transcendent (p. 9). In this way, HIMMs and American Buddhism shared not only a common goal but also a common means with which to achieve this goal. It is thought that the founder of these movements, the guru, who had attained this heightened state of contemplative existence through their meditation practice, was able to provide direction to their followers to receive the exact same experiential reality. In this way, the guru of the organization functions more as a guide than a professor of intellectual knowledge. The relationship with the guru is a personal one, and each HIMM acts as sort of a family centered around and on him/her.

Some examples of these teachers and their movements are, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar with the Art of Living Foundation<sup>24</sup>, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi with the Transcendental Meditation Movement<sup>25</sup>, Swami Muktananda with Siddha Yoga<sup>26</sup>, and Paramahansa Yogananda with the Self-Realization Fellowship<sup>27</sup> to mention just a few.

The practices and beliefs that are followed by the adherents of these groups are considered universal, that is, to be of potential benefit to those of any religious affiliation. This particular outlook stems from Swami Vivekananda's Hindu response to colonialism that offered Hinduism as a global spirituality and universal truth able to encompass, support, and enhance other religious teachings within its fold. Examples of several of these beliefs held by HIMMs are the belief in karma, reincarnation, and the notion of spiritual enlightenment or liberation. The participants also share a particular lifestyle. There is an understanding that a level of purity is required in order to attain the desired result of union with the transcendent, therefore many undergo dietary restrictions, abstain from substance abuse, and avoid stressful situations in their lives (Williamson, 2010, p. 5). Williamson (2010) elaborates on the conduct that makes up the way of life for the participants of these movements stating:

The commitment to daily practice is strong among followers of these movements. They feel that meditation provides a basis for feeling stable in the midst of chaotic situations. Embracing the values of Karma Yoga, they believe that service to others is part of the path that will take them closer to God. They do not view God as someone other than the deepest part of their own selves. If they can experience their own transcendent source (atman), then they have also touched the transcendent source of everything (Brahman). They have great faith in their gurus, whom they believe have attained the state of realization, which means they are no longer touched by suffering, having merged with the transcendent God. They believe their gurus' experience is one of continual bliss. They have experienced their gurus' spiritual charisma through reading their books, seeing pictures and videos of them,

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<sup>24</sup> [www.artofliving.org](http://www.artofliving.org)

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.tm.org>

<sup>26</sup> <http://www.siddhayoga.org>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.yogananda-srf.org>

and in some cases, being in their presence – perhaps even speaking with them. They receive guidance from their gurus through dreams and inner intuition. They relate to the “inner guru” when they meditate and experience the calm and blissful state that they believe to be the same as their gurus’ state. (p. 216)

Alexis Avdeeff (2004) reflects on this structure of practice and belief within HIMMs stating that it is best understood within the neo-Vedanta context of Swami Vivekananda (p. 8). Neo-Vedanta advocates colonial ideas of Hinduism with a focus on rationalism, individualism, and universalism. The universal ideal of neo-Vedanta views itself as being the core of the Hindu tradition with something of spiritual value to offer the world. In this way, HIMMs act as the globalization of Hinduism in response to colonial change. Avdeeff suggests that these gurus, like Vivekananda before them, want “to use Vedic traditional values to play a role in the spiritual awakening of the West” (p. 8). They use their organization as a means in which to foster these values and share them with other people.

Avdeeff is not alone in advocating that these movements integrate Hindu values into North American society. Forsthoefel and Humes (2005) break down HIMMs into four different categories, and align them with four different traditional substreams of Hinduism: Yoga, Advaita Vedanta, Bhakti, and Tantra. Of these four subsets, they argue that certain assumptions can be made about their method of thought and practice. Their following contribution describes the core concepts that each branch of these Hinduisms base their system of teaching upon:

... all four traditions share the notion of a soul, although its relationship to the Transcendent is often construed differently. Secondly, all four traditions note an existential human problem with the ego, and all assert that the struggle with egoism results in suffering. Third, all four share the conviction that there exists a state of unconditional bliss behind or beyond the flux of samsara, phenomenal, mundane reality. (p. 5)

The purpose of these Hinduisms is to take the human soul beyond the struggle with egoism, beyond suffering, to the state of unconditional bliss, beyond mundane reality, through an association with the Transcendent. Thus, although these four subsets of traditional Hinduism stem from different lineages in India, they come to represent a similar process utilizing different techniques to achieve a shared goal. It is these similarities that are reinforced in the process of globalization. The traditions act to support each other and present a universal model for Hinduism as HIMMs.

This method of Hinduism offered through HIMMs is for the most part modeled upon the Hindu guru-lineage traditions. In this model, the guru is both the teacher of the tradition and the living embodiment of the goal of this tradition. The concept of guru-centrality is one of the most common traits of HIMMs, a quality that is a derivative of the Bhakti tradition. Joel Mlecko (1982) suggests that it was the custom of guru-centeredness that shifted the emphasis within Hinduism from ritual and austerities to devotionism and personalism. He states, “Bhakti became a path of liberation open to seekers regardless of intellectual and sophistication or social rank” (p. 57). Furthermore, it was during this period that the guru became more than just a figure born into a priestly caste but was acknowledged for his/her “existential and inspirational qualities rooted in his (her) personal realization... In this context, the guru often assumes the role of deity” (p. 57). Thus we see that the collapse of sacrifice in favour of Bhakti within Hinduism brought with it a focus on the guru; it is this focus that continues in North America. The devotionism that develops around the central figure of the guru in HIMMs serves as evidence of the “Hinduness” of these organizations. It also contributes to some Bhakti movements in Hinduism, which corresponds to the wide variety of HIMMs in North



America. Essentially, what we see in the phenomena of HIMMs is the globalization of Hindu guru sects.

The term *guru*, literally can mean several things that go beyond the significance of the English term “teacher.” *Gu* means “ignorance” and *ru* means “dispeller.” Thus *guru* pertains to one who dispels ignorance (Mlecko, 1982, p. 33). McMullen (1982) informs us that the notion of the guru is of utmost importance to Hinduism. The guru acts as the source of all learning. In fact, so important is the person of the guru to the tradition that the Tantric scriptures state that there is no god higher than the guru. McMullen mentions the *Kularnava Tantra* that states that the guru is “none other than *Siva* enclosed in human skin” (p. 16). The importance of a guru for the sincere spiritual seeker extends back to the origin of the tradition itself. The sacred texts of the *Vedas* are riddled with references alluding to the relevance of such a figure. Mlecko (1982), in his work *The Guru in Hindu Tradition*, mentions “in the *Rg Veda* (IV, 5,6) the guru is described as the source and inspirer of the knowledge of the Self, or the essence of reality, for the seeker” (p. 35). He continues stating, “in the *Yajur Veda* (VII, 27) the guru is described as the one who blesses and enhances the seeker’s spiritual life” (p. 35). This certainly reflects what McMullen mentions above. The guru is more than just a teacher or a learned man but is considered a reflection or manifestation of divinity as he/she has attained, and therefore is, the highest reality. A guru becomes not only he/she who can lead the aspirant on the path towards the spiritual goal but also the goal itself. He/she is both god and human being. In fact, in the Hindu mythology, even the gods themselves require a guru for spiritual fulfillment; such is the importance of the guru system itself.

It is thought that one cannot realize the highest reality on their-own. For this reason, in order to realize one's inherent divine nature, a guru is needed. One who has already experienced this nature within themselves can then direct others to this same experience. The ability to impart this divine knowledge is the defining character of the *sat guru* (true guru). Mlecko (1982) provides us with six different classifications of a guru. Once again, this demonstrates the rootedness of HIMMs in Hindu Tradition. He defines these six classifications of the guru according to the *Kularnava Tantra* as follows:

... *preraka*, who stimulates interest in *sadhana*, the method of spiritual practice, by drawing attention to its beneficent results; *sucaka*, who opens the eye of the seeker to the *sadhana* and its objective; *vacaka*, who explains the method and the goal; *darsaka*, who shows them in convincing detail; *siksaka*, who teaches step by step the discipline and details of the ritual; and finally the *bodhaka*, who endows the aspirant with the necessary understanding of mind and illuminates his being with his own spiritual light. (p. 45)

The *sat guru* is one who embodies all six aspects of guruhood. However, it is perhaps the emphasis on the experiential knowledge of the tradition and the passing of it on to the disciple that has placed the guru as a cornerstone upon which HIMMs have built themselves. Trout (2001) also addresses this quality of guru as transmitter of spiritual experience. She states:

The disciple has an opportunity, through his relationship with his guru, to realize the same perfection in this lifetime, provided he works hard enough and trusts the guru completely in all things. In this sense, the guru functions as a spiritual parent; although he is now the supreme authority, the purpose of the relationship is to train the disciple to spiritual maturity, at which point the disciple himself becomes the enlightened guru to a new generation of seekers. (p. 178)

Individual experience is extremely important to these movements. The idea that someone who has already achieved this realization of ultimate reality and can act to pass that experience along thus becomes very appealing. Discipleship with a guru therefore is a schooling in this highest reality.

The importance of the guru as a central figure within HIMMs is well understood by Christopher Chapple. A follower of the guru Anjali himself, he (2005) proclaims the significance of the guru in his article *Raja Yoga and the Guru*. Chapple quotes William Cenkner, who declares the following about the centrality of the guru within the tradition:

The Guru occasions the immediacy of the religious experience of the devotee. For the faith-filled devotee, he [*sic*] is the center of mystery. The sacred center of Hindu life is the living guru... his followers experience him as the restorer of the *dharma* order... The guru is the center of sacredness. In his company the scriptures, idols and even liberation paths pale in importance... The guru is the context wherein an individual gathers spiritual resources in order to encounter mystery; likewise, the guru is mystery itself in the faith experience of some devotees. (p. 33)

The description of the guru that Cenkner provides is an astute example of the role that the charismatic figure has to play in HIMMs. The guru acts as not only the creator/ president of the organization but also as the foundational pillar. This leadership figure embodies the tradition, and as the embodiment, becomes, in some way, more important than the actual tradition itself. The figure is equated with divinity. The goal of the spiritual organization is developing and deepening one's relationship with divinity. Therefore, the relationship with the guru acts to fulfill this very goal.

Chapple (2005) acknowledges the fact that spiritual traditions in India are accustomed to the idea, that "divinity can be revealed through one's relationship with a living teacher" (p. 33). He continues describing that people who approach this relationship usually enter into it with a conception that two things are crucial for succeeding on the spiritual path: a desire to learn, and a desire for liberation (p. 25). It is this desire for spiritual knowledge and freedom that attracts Western aspirants to the guru. However, the idea of an accessible living embodiment of divinity is foreign to western thought. For this reason, the role of deity attributed to the guru is not delineated with the

same weight in North America as it is in India. Upon first introduction to HIMMs, the guru figure will appear nothing more than a teacher. However, there are various levels to HIMMs, each revealing a deeper layer of Hindu thought. As one moves into the inner circle of these organizations, the role of the guru as a divine authority becomes apparent.

The Art of Living Foundation provides a clear example of the central role of the guru. Sri Sri Ravi Shnakar, having founded the organization, has based its principles on a form of spirituality that is Hindu. However, the organization does not claim to be Hindu itself, nor religious for that matter. Milda Alisauskiene (2009) argues that the foundation has largely avoided a religious status by describing itself as a NGO and claiming to be a ‘secular spirituality’ (p. 339). She says, “Shankar’s teachings are based mainly on Hinduism, supplemented by new interpretations and involving techniques derived from Transcendental Meditation and some new ones of Shankar’s own devising (p. 339). She continues:

...the orientation of Ravi Shankar’s teaching is ‘this worldly’: he teaches about everyday things like feelings, mind, daily problems and how to deal with them; the purpose of the breathing techniques he introduced is to enable people to cope with the stresses they experience in their everyday lives, and there is no need to withdraw from the world to learn and practice them. (p. 346-47)

Other HIMMs share this focus on secular issues. Because they are addressing people who exist within the “world”, householders and working people rather than renunciates or monks, their teachings advocate a lifestyle that caters to these people and supports their needs. As a result, much of their teachings work with the state of mind as the aspirant meets everyday issues such as work, family life, and leisure.

It is this focus on providing a response to the stresses of daily life in a modern world that distinguishes HIMMs from historic cultural Hinduism. In fact, if this were the

sole focus of the organizations perhaps Lola Williamson would be correct in asserting that HIMMs were a new form of religion. However, the truth of the matter is that HIMMs function on several different levels catering to the level of involvement of the participant. As one becomes more involved with the organization, the 'Hinduness' of the foundation becomes evermore apparent. From the viewpoint of the public, HIMMs present themselves in a secular manner and address real life issues such as a healthy mind and body. Using the Art of Living Foundation as an example, we can note that its introductory courses and public outreach refrain from religious ties and any reference to the divinity of their guru while maintaining a focus on the benefits of relieving stress concerning health, as well as for increased productivity and efficiency in life tasks. The spiritual emphasis of the organization is considered at a minimum. However, the inner circles of these organizations propound teachings founded upon Hindu concepts (Woodrum, 1982). They are based upon the Vedas and other Hindu texts that offer particular philosophies and worldviews. It is very common for gurus, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar included, to draw upon the *Bhagavad-Gita*, Upanishads, the *Astavakra-Gita*, the Bhakti Sutras, and other Hindu scriptures in order to proclaim their philosophical outlook and instruct their students in proper living. With regard to the Art of Living Foundation, these teachings are reserved for more advanced courses with prerequisites and language designed to ease the participants into more philosophical and spiritually based lifestyle. It is only as the aspirant progresses within the organization taking these more advanced courses that the divine connection of the guru is revealed, as well as the teachings on divine reality and spiritual truths.

The entire spiritual practice of HIMMs can be articulated in three Sanskrit words: *sadhana* (spiritual practice), *seva* (service), and *satsang* (gathering together in truth). *Sadhana* in these organizations, as mentioned earlier, is largely meditation and yoga techniques designed for introspection and inner contemplation. *Seva* however, is charitable activity performed within the community or society through selfless action. The method of service can be a vast array of activity but always involves service in some way to the guru or divinity. This can be through direct action or just by the mere intention that their actions are for this aim. Finally, *satsang* occurs when the spiritual community gathers either to listen or discuss the knowledge put forth by the guru, or to sing songs directed towards the divine. From this perspective, the Hindu influence is very apparent. Moreover, the fact that these organizations have a hierarchy of teachers and embrace the tradition of a lineage of teachers in a guru-student relationship is also revealing.

### **The Appeal of the Guru in the West:**

I have argued for the centrality of the guru within HIMMs. It is this connection with the guru and his/her tradition that exists as a link between Hinduism and their organizations. In the following section, I will move on to discuss the contributing factors that led to the expansion of Hinduism within American culture and the globalization of this guru tradition. It is these factors that created the opportunity for HIMMs to make a smooth transition into North America.

Through the process of globalization, Hindu guru lineages were introduced to North America. Globalization of Hinduism created a situation in which the cultural and

spiritual could be separated. This division created an opportunity for those who did not wish to integrate into an ethnic Hindu lifestyle to be able to partake in the spiritual guidance of learned gurus of the tradition. It was this differentiation between social custom and spiritual customs which appealed to Western aspirants who were already beginning to look outside of their own traditions for spiritual insight and guidance. As a result of this division, the spiritual tradition of Hinduism became much more acceptable and assessable to the Westerner. Mlecko (1982) comments on this development stating:

[Hinduism] was a fusion between an organization of social life on a horizontal plane and paths that lead to liberation or beatitude on the vertical. In the last century, those paths were to some degree extricated from the social organization of life; that is, seekers from outside the Hindu community more readily received spiritual guidance from its gurus without the necessity of integrating themselves into the Hindu social community. (p. 53)

The idea that one could reject their traditional methods of religious experience and turn towards a method of spirituality which valued personal experience and self-reflection mirrors a way of thinking common to many aspects of contemporary American lifestyle. In this sense, many were easily able to rationalize and justify the method of spirituality taught by HIMMs in light of a continuation of this tradition of rationality and personalism looking to a more universal method of religiosity. The fact that HIMMs utilized the institutional framework introduced by British colonialism acted to present this form of spirituality in an amiable means, and gave it a structure with which it could be readily assimilated. Thus, it is important to note that the grounds were well tilled; it was not a sudden jump from traditional American way of life to the one offered by Hindu gurus. British colonialism acted to prepare Hinduism in India to make the transition in North America while at the same time the spiritual mentality of many North Americans were gradually changing and, in some sense, being groomed for the introduction of HIMMs.

Williamson (2010) states that there were two “Great Awakenings” that occurred which made the transition for HIIMMs to integrate into this environment much easier. The first of these happenings took place between the 1720s and 1740s. A man by the name of Jonathan Edwards lectured that theological ideas and moral practice were second to direct experience of spiritual truth which constituted the essence of religion (Williamson, 2010, p. 21). This idea put forth by Edwards challenged the authority of the church and other religious structures. Secondly, in the 19th century Emerson, influenced by his study of Hinduism, challenged religious structure further, stating “that knowledge was an inner intuition found in quiet contemplation rather than through doctrines and scriptures” (Williamson, 2010, p. 28). As the nineteenth century progressed, the prevalence of Hindu ideas in North America grew. In 1875, the Theosophical Society played a significant role in popularizing Hindu and Buddhist ideas. Their thought was a woven fixture of Eastern and Western mystical traditions, along with ideas presented by the leaders of the organization, such as Madame Blavatsky (Williamson, 2010, p. 29). Theosophy shared many commonalities with HIMMs, such as the ideas of transmigration, karma, pantheism, monism, meditation, as well as drawing on the Upanishads and the Bhagavad-Gita for inspiration. In fact, the theosophical movement played a strong role in popularizing the use of Hindu Sanskrit words in English, like that of ‘karma’, ‘maya’, ‘nirvana’ and ‘yoga’ (King, 1989, p. 78). Ursula King (1989) suggests that this movement was important in “transplanting” Hindu ideas to the West, and did so by targeting charismatic leaders belonging to the social elite” (p. 88). Furthermore, Theosophy also played a definitive role in developing the New Thought movement that grew out of its foundations. New Thought taught that everyone, regardless of class,



gender, race, or religion had access to divinity through direct personal experience. Thus, an idea of religious harmony was introduced to North American thinking as well as the concept of a universal spirituality. New Thought was thriving during the time that Swami Vivekananda came to America, and, as a result of the above-mentioned influences, many people in North America were ripe in mind to receive his teachings of neo-Vedanta and accept that he could have direct perception and divine experience. In a sense, his timing was perfect. Moreover, the fact that Vivekananda, and others like him, were coming from an ancient tradition of realized spiritual masters added credibility to their teachings.

North America was primed for the introduction of Hinduism. Due to the shift in libertarian thinking and the method of spirituality introduced by organizations such as Theosophy and New Thought the grounds were well tilled to incorporate the seeds of Hinduism presented in the form of HIMMs. Therefore, when HIMMs arrived, having already been accustomed to Western thinking in response to European colonialism, there was little they had to do in order to adapt culturally. The changes that occurred within HIMMs in North America were not so much the manner of the tradition but the method in which this tradition was presented.

### **Further Arguments for HIMMs as an Expansion of Global Hinduism:**

Lola Williamson sees HIMMs contribution to the changing landscape of North American religion as a continuation of a process established by organizations such as Theosophy and New Thought. For this reason, she deems HIMMs as the latest edition of these new forms of religion considering them in the context of a North American locality.

However, in doing so she fails to acknowledge with due credit the globalization process and the history of Hinduism that HIMMs bring with them. Whereas I acknowledge that she has a point regarding the interaction of Hinduism with American culture, and that this interaction acts to transform the practices of Hinduism, I can not stress enough how her insistence on separating HIMMs from Hinduism stems from a narrow perspective which fails to acknowledge the global scope of the phenomenon. In the previous chapters I have laid the foundation to understand HIMMs as a much larger happening shedding light on them as the latest edition in an ongoing globalization of Hinduism. When we broaden our view to include globalization, it allows for religious change within the tradition.

Thus, when Williamson in chapter 2 (p. 15) refers to the “family resemblance” within HIMMs she should extend this categorization to include Hinduism, linking Hinduism and HIMMs through the guru lineage. Furthermore, in chapter 2 (p. 23) Williamson differentiates between the followers of HIMMs and Hinduism claiming that there is a difference among those who are raised in Hinduism and those who incorporate aspects of it. However, she fails to acknowledge that there are differences among those who are raised in Hinduism as well. Rituals, foods, prayers and ethics within Hinduism are extremely diverse and there is not one way of practicing them traditionally, but many. Being born into the tradition does not imply that one is completely immersed in all aspects of the tradition (as Williamson alludes to). Thus difference in rituals, foods, prayers, and ethics would not only vary between HIMMs and Hinduism but between Hinduisms as well. I have pointed out in the previous chapter on Hinduism that the tradition only assumed a homogenous structure recently in response to globalization and

colonialism. Previous to this various traditions existed within Hinduism that is arguably a composite of various sects. Therefore, the subtle differences between mainstream Hinduism and HIMMs need not pose a problem to the idea that HIMMs exist as a form of global Hinduism. Moreover, it is not necessary for followers to be completely immersed in the tradition as a whole for them to be active in perpetuating Hinduism. Beyer (2007) claims:

Religion, like other key institutional domains, can be carried in its differentiation by a minority and by relatively little explicitly religious activity, as long as there is sufficient occasional (even if not 'serious') participation by much larger segments of society. (p. 179-180)

For Beyer, participants of HIMMs by their mere activity alone can continue the tradition of Hinduism. They do not have to acknowledge that they are Hindu, but their association as a group, their centeredness on the guru, as well as their focus on practices derived from Hindu spiritual lineages all contribute to the globalization of these Hindu lineages whether they recognize it or not. Beyer furthers this idea stating, "Just as religions do not necessarily have to have strong central authorities, they do not have to have strong belonging. Some sort of mechanism for assuring programmatic reflexivity, however, probably must be present" (p. 178). Programmatic reflexivity is assured inherently within HIMMs by their organizational structure.

Furthermore, to deny HIMMs Hindu association based upon this criterion raises issue with similar studies conducted on Buddhism in North America. In chapter two, I have portrayed a common academic agreement that a distinctive form of Buddhism in North America exists. Whereas there is debate as to what this phenomenon best represents, it is very much still considered a 'Buddhism.' American Buddhism is not denied the categorization of 'Buddhism' based on an association with Western

practitioners and interminglings with American culture. The fact of who is practicing the tradition does not change where the tradition is coming from. Moreover, as with American Buddhism, we see a particular phenomenon occurring in North America that is not new. The qualities of rationalism, individualism, and universalism that Williamson attributes to American religion are actually distinguishing characteristics of the Reform and Enlightenment in Europe (recall chapter 3, p. 28-30). These characteristics were brought to North America through colonialism just as they were brought to other areas of the world, such as India. Thus the encounter between these characteristics and Hinduism is an encounter that had previously occurred in India through colonialism. It was this encounter that prepared the guru traditions of Hinduism to migrate into North America. Having already accommodated to these Western ideals while continuing to undergo processes of globalization at each stage HIMMs became an expansion of this globalization process.

As with all cases of globalization, a tradition will undergo change and accommodate to new cultural understandings or reject them. The ability to adapt to the contexts of a new environment does not constitute grounds to warrant an entirely new tradition nor discordance with a traditional lineage of teachers. Froystad, in her article *Anthropology of a Western Yogi*, claims that when considering the globalization of a tradition it is equally important to pay attention to the particulars of Hinduism and Indian society as to draw on globalization theory. She states that we must “transcend the notions of spatiality that underpin globalization studies and attend as much to the particular characteristics of the religion and society in question as to frameworks from the anthropology of globalization” (p. 298). With regard to HIMMs, we are required to take

into consideration the lineage of the teachings. Froystad acknowledges the significance of tradition in Hinduism and mentions that, though the tradition exists unchanged, each master is expected to implement adjustments to coincide with radical change in social and cultural contexts. This is the reason the tradition can survive. The implications of such a view on the tradition in a global context are obvious. It is assumed within the tradition itself that the teaching will adapt to the current conditions of the practitioners. Swami Vivekananda and others did this in response to European colonialism and brought their adaptation to North America, but it very much remained a continuous Hindu tradition. Froystad declares, with respect to HIMMs, that, “the ‘export ‘ of spiritual beliefs and practices to the West not only was accepted but appreciated as well. Within Hinduism concerns of authenticity that hamper dissemination and reappropriation are rare” (p. 285). As HIMMs brought the lineage tradition to North America, from the perspective of many Indian Hindus these movements still remained Hindu. Froystad further supports this argument describing what she calls a “return globalization” or a “U-turn lineage” (p. 285). Using Ananda Sangha, as an example of an HIMM, Froystad demonstrates how a lineage of teachings can be transported from India through an Indian guru (Paramhansa Yogananda) and accommodate to North American culture, and how a North American can continue this lineage of teachers. J. Donald Walters went on to study with Yogananda, become a swami himself, and return to India to perpetuate his guru’s teachings. The fact that Walters was accepted as an authentic guru himself, due to his place in Yogananda’s lineage upon his return to India, clearly shows that despite the changes a tradition may undergo with regard to the globalization processes, it nevertheless is still part of a continuing tradition. It is an expansion of an ongoing lineage that has adapted to change

from its very beginning. The lineage always has and continues to make room for adaptation and change.

Whereas it has been the case in the past that religious traditions, such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, have broken off from Hinduism to form their own new religions these examples are very different from HIMMs. The most important point to be aware of here is that their followers acknowledge the disconnect. Their lineage begins with a charismatic founder whose teachings form the foundation for the new religion. In regard to HIMMs, this is not the case. The organizations acknowledge a direct link to a lineage of spiritual teachers that maintain the purity of the practice and teaching. These lineages were not created anew in North America but exist as a historic chain of gurus connecting HIMMs to the Hinduism of India.

Moreover, the relationship between Hinduism and HIMMs is further enunciated by Hindu Diasporas in North America. Both HIMMs and diaspora communities bare many similarities in philosophy and practice. Indeed, they both focus on the idea of karma, reincarnation, monotheism, and stress a rational form of spirituality that has removed much of its devotional aspects that would be considered strange or superstitious to a Western mentality. The commonalities are not that surprising however, for they are both rooted in the Hinduism of Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda's neo-Vedantic Hinduism forms the basis for Hinduism in North America for both HIMMs and ethnic Indian communities.

The obvious difference between the two is that diasporic communities often have a stronger nationalist intent and therefore proclaim themselves as Hindu; whereas HIMMs have a universalist intent and thus maintain some form of disassociation to its

religious nature. One way in which HIMMs attempt to reinforce their claim to a rational spirituality is to integrate more fully into a modern-day Western society. Nevertheless there maintains a connection with India. HIMMs inspire people to connect their practice to the nation through pilgrimages to ashrams and other holy sites. This “transnational” pilgrimage practice thus becomes a way to identify with the Hinduism of HIMMs but not with the Republic of India.

In conclusion, this chapter has argued that HIMMs are an extension of an ongoing lineage. Acknowledging the existence of the guru lineage creates clear connections between HIMMs and Hinduism. As a result HIMMs should not be considered a new religion but a continuation of this tradition. It is my argument that this continuity is best understood as an expansion of Hinduism through globalization.

## Conclusion

I would like to revisit my personal experience with the Art of Living Foundation. I recently received an invitation from the organization to participate in an *upanayanam*. It was this ceremony that led me to investigate the nature of HIMMs in North America at the beginning of this project, so it seems fitting that I was revisited by it at its conclusion. The fact that I, a Caucasian Canadian, was asked to participate in a Hindu rite of passage reaffirmed my position on HIMMs. It demonstrated to me the fact that, though HIMMs have presented the Hindu tradition in a new way, it, very much, is a form of Hinduism. Through processes of globalization, HIMMs have learned to adapt Hinduism to the cultural container of their new environment in a skillful manner creating a more welcoming image for people who do not stem from a Hindu background. The efficiency of these movements in doing so, has led to the rapid growth of these organizations in North America and the creation of a sustainable platform for continued success. The very name ‘Art of Living Foundation’ suggests the global appeal of the movement with a message that living is an art form that can be done in a particular way. The organization offers their methods as a means to achieve the best way of living. Furthermore, the use of ‘foundation’ is a technical legal term that portrays an almost corporate image of the organization creating an illusion of credibility. The example of the Art of Living Foundation is a device for the larger model of HIMMs; it represents a particular way that Hinduism has responded to globalization in North America. This is in direct contrast to pseudo ethnic Hinduisms that have taken a different form of globalization, such as the



‘International Society for Krishna Consciousness’, well known as the counterculture movement the ‘Hare Krishnas’.

The purpose of this thesis has been to consider how we properly view organizations like the Art of Living Foundation in the context of religion in North America. I have responded to this question stating that HIMMs should be understood as a global expansion of Hinduism. Lola Williamson’s response on the other hand fails to acknowledge the global connection between HIMMs and Hinduism. She looks at HIMMs from the limited perspective of locality. Her argument is that HIMMs share more in common with American religion than Hinduism, however they are best understood as a new religion. I have strongly disagreed with Williamson and argued for a counter-position based upon globalization. In doing so, I have drawn upon several elements to support my argument that HIMMs are global Hinduism. Scholarship on Buddhism in North America, globalization theory, Hinduism and colonialism, as well as, scholarship on HIMMs themselves has helped shape my claim.

In drawing upon the conversation regarding Buddhism in North America, I have set the stage from which to view HIMMs. The latest academic perspective of American Buddhism considers it to be a form of global Buddhism. The argument made here is that American Buddhism shares more in common with various responses to Colonial Buddhism occurring in other areas of the world than it does with traditional Buddhisms. For this reason, the latest scholarship states that we must broaden our view of the phenomenon to look at it globally and not as an isolated happening within North America. In presenting this information, I have drawn a connection between American Buddhism and HIMMs stressing that HIMMs must be observed in a similar manner.

In order to demonstrate that global Buddhism and HIMMs are developments in response to colonialism, I have presented an academic perspective on religious globalization theory. Here we have seen how colonialism acted to distribute the framework for global religion that played a huge role in laying the foundation from which HIMMs developed. Using concepts such as ‘Beyer’s logical moments’, ‘Dirlik’s global modernity’, ‘Wilkinson’s global flows’, and ‘Robertson’s glocalization’ I, have demonstrated how the global can interact with the local and vice versa creating cultural change and transformation within a religious tradition. Theories that emphasize concepts of various global modernities and the process of glocalization demonstrate how it is possible to have multiple responses to globalization and therefore multiple expressions of a religious tradition. Thus it allows us to express unity within diversity, and continuity rather than discontinuity, with regards to HIMMs and Hinduism.

This issue of continuity versus discontinuity is crucial. The ability to perceive continuity within Hinduism throughout its various changes is necessary in order to understand HIMMs as a global expansion of this tradition. It is because of Lola Williamson’s failure to do so that she considers HIMMs as a new religion and not as Hinduism. The chapter on globalization theory grants us the information needed not to make the same mistake. The issue of continuity is further developed in the chapter on Hinduism and colonialism. In this chapter, unity within the diversity of a historical Hinduism was acknowledged as well as the transformative influence British colonialism had on the religion. In the face of colonialism, notions of Hinduism changed so drastically that some have claimed the religion did not exist in the same way prior to this interaction. Using the work of scholars, such as Doniger and Lorenzen, I have

demonstrated that this was not the case and that elements of a preexisting Hinduism were carried on in a colonial Hinduism, which then in turn were later distributed globally in the form of HIMMs.

HIMMs are the result of the globalization of a colonial structure imposed upon Hinduism. Elements of this framework such as rationalism, individualism, and universalism were incorporated into a Hindu response that sought to distribute their spiritual truth globally. As Hindu gurus developed a global form of Hinduism, they drew upon their historical lineages as well as the elements of colonial Hinduism. The transformation they had previously underwent in response to colonialism prepared this new form of Hinduism to interact with the Western world. However, similarly, religious developments in North America and Europe, such as Theosophy and New Thought, also prepared the Western world to accept this new form of Hinduism. As Hinduism spread globally, HIMMs developed in response to its interaction with new cultural forms incorporating organizational and institutional methods that would help distribute their message most efficiently.

It is important to realize that as HIMMs interacted with North America and other cultures they always maintained their connection to lineage. Unlike other Hindu-inspired religions (such as Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism), HIMMs have never proclaimed a disconnection from their traditional roots but in fact honor and proclaim them. The means in which these lineages have undergone transformation and the manner that they portray their message and teachings, as well as the organizational structure of their foundations, are all testaments to the ‘glocal’ interactions that they undertake through the process of globalization. As Froystad brings to our awareness, it is the nature of guru lineages to

adapt their teachings to best suit the means of those undertaking the tradition. In an ever changing and globalized world, it only makes sense that a lineage would continue to undergo alterations. This does not entail that the core of the teachings have changed, nor does it entail a severed connection from the tradition but an expansion and continuation of this very tradition.

Therefore in conclusion, by providing scholarship on globalization, colonialism, and Hinduism I have supported the idea of a traditional continuity within change. In doing so, we have provided sufficient evidence to conclude that HIMMs are the latest edition of this ever-changing tradition. Thus, when considering the question, 'In the context of religion in North America how do we view HIMMs?', we are best advised not to perceive them as a new religion, in the manner that Lola Williamson does, but should acknowledge them as an expansion of Hinduism through globalization.

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